Chapter III

Connotative Cruxes

Family politics is purposive of fostering healthy societal norms. Its importance as a basic social unit that defines human welfare cannot be contended. The connotations of a basic family set up are directly relevant to society—a conventional and normal family life equates to a peaceful societal setup whereas an abnormal one injects oddities and atrocities. Issues of home and identity correspond to issues of location and nation thereby contributing to group behaviour which affect societies. Family matters thus.

Sharon Pollock's investigation of individuals against their family setup revolves around the genesis of the import of their psychological well-being towards securing an ameliorated society. She dissects their behavioural patterns with the prerogative of explaining to the audience the pros and cons of any given situation. Her perspectives are multi-faceted--- she ensures that the plot development merely lays out the background for the play while the audience sit in judgement and draw their inferences while remaining empathetic. The freedom thus accorded to them helps in defining or re-defining their set impressions. The space provided helps them draw inferences based on their own experience of the play thereby creating awareness and moulding them to act as responsible citizenry. The all-time appeal of the selected plays rests in this special aspect, wherein the audience is not forced to digest the dictums of the playwright. The choice of focusing on an opinion based on their own intellect comes as a breath of fresh air working towards involving the audience in active participation. It helps the playwright attain her objective of focussing on societal betterment.

Three plays of Pollock — Generations, Blood Relations and Doc are so placed in this chapter as they all have the similarity of a familial setup in the background. Pollock explores the relevance of an individual's perspectives when placed against the backdrop
of a healthy family. She explores the aftermath in the case of a disturbed family set up too. Communal heritage assumes relative importance because only happy families can produce respectable citizens. On the contrary, possible broken hearts languishing from derelict families cannot serve well or foster humanistic values. Such people, encircled in a foreboding doom can only be expected to reflect these sentiments in everyday affairs. Pollock's concern for a peaceful environment underlies all of these plays, wherein she reiterates that a society's primary requisite is a harmonious relationship among its inhabitants. Freedom from disputes within a family inevitably leads to repose. This quietude definitely feeds the social conscientiousness that is so mandatory for removing ideological barriers and for installing hope for general welfare.

A.P. Dani has critically analyzed the concept of family in his article, “English Canadian Drama in Retrospect.” He states that the family or surrogate family dominates Canadian drama. He says that it is either the source of strength (citing the Donnelly plays) or a battleground (citing Pollock's Blood Relations or Tremblay's Forever Yours, Marie-Lou) or a ground of corruption and self-destruction (19). His contention is that “we see the reconstituted families with complex personal relationships often betraying dreadful psychological terrors” (20). He further states in his article “Joan MacLeod's Toronto, Mississippi: A Protest Play about ‘Women as Victim’” that:

A family drama is a common situation for modern playwrights. . . .they have regarded the home as crucible "in which character and identity are crystallized and through which social values are perpetuated or challenged." . . . Canadian playwrights like . . . French and Pollock . . ., conceive the family on the stage as a battleground on which men act out their life-and-death struggle for primacy and independence, while women
(mothers, wives or sisters sometimes) are the submissive onlookers.

However, Canadian women playwrights of the 1980s brought a different perspective to this family play. In plays like *Doc*, daughters and sisters instead of sons and brothers are the dramatic protagonists, challenging norms, traditions and behaviour (76-77).

Thus, one sees how Pollock akin to the new generation of women writers of the 1980s in Canada, champions the cause of conditioning in familial set ups. She ascertains that in all possibility families of love breed goodwill, family bonding ensures communal togetherness whereas complexities in families invariably beget psychological disorders of a disastrous nature.

In *Gen* (1980), Pollock focuses on the drama of family politics. Widely considered as a regional writer, she analyses, through the characters of Old Eddy, Alfred, Young Eddy and David, the attitudes of three generations towards their family homestead. The difference in the temperaments of the principal characters offer scope for conflict — Alfred's wife Margaret and David's girl friend Bonnie; Old Eddy and Young Eddy; Young Eddy and his brother David are set as foils with contrasting ideologies. The conflict of these temperaments on the one hand and the awesome 'power' generated by the Prairie Land, on the other, provide fertile ground for the exploration of the inner most feelings of human beings. The surfacing of the dormant desires of the Nurlin family household and the consequences begotten invite the audience to gauge the importance accorded to familial behavioural patterns in the wider spectrum of communal living.

*BR* (1980) is another play concerning private life and family politics. However, here ends its similarity with *Generations*. In this play, Pollock has dealt with the subject of the acquittal of Lizzie Borden, the New England woman who in 1892 was charged
with the axe murders of her father and step-mother. Although, a docudrama based on a historical incident, its sociopathic relevance acquires essential significance. In the play, Pollock's main intent in depicting events of a by-gone century is to highlight that there is always another side to any verdict. She literally 'takes' the audience through the events of the past by projecting the enactment in the carefully structured play-within-a-play, a "dream thesis" (*BR* 13). She satisfies their curiosity by helping them draw a conclusion through an effective justification strategy.

*Doc* (1984) is by far, Pollock's most autobiographical play. Ev Chalmers (the Doc of the play's title) is representative of her own father, Everett Chalmers, while Catherine is shaped along the lines of her own personal self. As Catherine, she is able to speak across time to her younger self, Katie, projecting her own opinions and analyzing the conduct of her kith and kin. A session of interrogation facilitates the father- daughter duo to exorcise the ghosts of the past and for reconciliation of a fair degree to set in. Catherine's embittered soul finds relief once she learns that peoples' priorities in life differ and accepts things as they exist without obliterating herself.

The roles played by the respective families in these three plays suggest the importance of the care and love that composes and evolves the being of humankind. Human mentality can be shaped to mould a Utopian society and family circumstances, would be, to a large extent, responsible for this moulding. Pollock's plays based on the family- politic seem suggestive of this concept. Her approach is not so much the verdict that forces the audience to accept her norms but is a natural overflow of feelings that do not fail her in her mission to open up new avenues of strategic thinking. She is able to achieve this end by allowing them the space that is required to sum up their views after the thorough experience of witnessing her plays.
In the case of *Gen*, the ideologies of the Nurlin family inmates bring out their dissimilar responses in similar situations. Old Eddy's affinity to his land is quite natural, acknowledging the difficulty he had encountered in its acquisition. Young Eddy, his grandson, though, has contrasting views given the nature and intent of one belonging to another generation.

*BR* with its repetitive questions, "Did you, Lizzie?" "Lizzie, did you?" (*BR* 19) plants the concept of doubt in the reader/audience's mind. However, Pollock presents the prospective other side of the situation. She leads the audience into questioning themselves and checking their own responses when or if placed in similar positions.

*Doc* that has the family back drop, goes to prove that emotional stability can be achieved only if one is brought up in a congenial atmosphere. The sufferings that Catherine undergoes are definitely an aftermath of the confusions that she has endured as Young Katie.

Social conscientiousness is aroused when the revelation that a stable family produces sensitive adults is projected. Moreover, it is worthy to note that only people who are at peace with themselves are befitting enough to care for society. Otherwise, engrossed and entwined in their own troubles they would not be inclined to devote themselves to higher objectives or be conscious of societal issues. That social conscientiousness is facilitated by family remains indisputable. This is because an individual from a respectable background is generally without the oddities of one who has emerged from a disturbed setup.

Themes such as generation gap, women's liberation, revenge motif versus expectations, affinity and guilt consciousness pertaining to the two plays are dealt with in this Chapter. These themes are connotative to the importance of stability in the basic
setup of a society (i.e.) family. It is the scholar's purpose to establish this very fact.

Pollock's family plays deal with real life situations wherein one can relate to things and perceive that an individual's action largely stems from the soil that he has been planted in.

Generation gap is a defining feature that is invariably present in all families across the globe. Cultures and languages differ but the differences in views and outlook bypass all else and persist with a predominant definitive that remains unquestionable. The astonishing feature is that this gap that evolves over time, remains, irrespective of the many concentrated efforts to outdo, and does not get filled in. However, it becomes noteworthy to cite that this gap does not have only detrimental implications. Generation gap has, on various occasions, brought in a change for the better. Differing attitudes bring in new and alternate perspectives. These are, in most cases grounded in reality and subjected to cultivate goodness. Danger arises only when these differences aim towards eroding the established values of an existing society. It is then, that there arises a situation for concern.

The plays discussed here, shall be examined with the view to point out the differences in the opinions of the various people involved. The theme of generation gap shall be discussed with reference to specific situations in order to suggest that this gap carries a ripple effect. Different generations react differently in same situations, and this affects society bringing in its aftermath sometimes pleasant and at times unsavoury consequences. In both conditions, however, Pollock's intention to sensitisise people to pressing issues of concern remains established.

In *Gen*, this generation gap is perceived in ordinary situations as well as in matters of serious concern--- a preference in choosing a drink and reactions to the crisis over water supply. The three generations of Nurlins reacting from different nodules, present a
specific social milieu that hints at the naturalistic fostering of adaptations and repulsions to change. The Nurlins are a close knit family; most of its members are outspoken as the necessity to put up a false front does not exist. The first scene in Act I that depicts the ease in the relationship between Old Eddy and David provides ample proof. Each, however, has varying tastes in drinks. Old Eddy gently chides David asking him to choose a strong cup of coffee in the morning over the water that he gulps to quench the dryness of his throat, an aftermath of drinking beer the previous night. Moreover, according to Old Eddy, a good rye can find no match.

The crisis of the water supply involves the Native Canadians, who, as political action, have cut the flow of water from a dam to their reservation. This is done to prove a point and to get the government to pay them more for the irrigation water, let out from the reserve river. Water shortage causes hardship to farmers living downstream like the Nurlins. Old Eddy's decision to meet Charlie Running Dog, a member of the Native Indian band and his long-time friend is ridiculed by David, who feels that "it is not gonna do a damn bit a good talkin' to Charlie!" (Gen 145). He prefers that this be postponed until after the scheduled meeting that night, thus provoking the response "I may be old—I'm not stupid" from Old Eddy (Gen 146). His approach to rectifying the problem is direct and quick — he intends to talk Charlie into accepting their terms as against gathering support and tackling it with "Alternate action" (Gen 152). Although the effectiveness of this program remains questionable, David is a staunch supporter of this strategy.

Old Eddy's opinion varies with regard to his son's too. Alfred, his only surviving son is made to choose farming as his occupation as there is a need to carry on the family establishment much against his wish. Old Eddy's remark, "your heart was never in this" (Gen 154) clearly marks this discord. Alfred's choice of an occupation is more an act of
compliance with tradition and consideration for Old Eddy than a desire for farming. He cannot follow the dictates of his heart because he understands that he has to take over from his father, there being no sibling, to shoulder the responsibility.

Conflict between generations is a way of life but the special bond shared between Old Eddy and David is very formidable and warm. At crucial points in the play when argument warrants an exit, David and Old Eddy settle for a walk, out, in the Prairie land. This physical exercise is a way of coming to terms with the given situation. It provides them the space to rue and evolve. This suggests the deep connection, the bond that love for the Prairie ushers in. Land holds out a captivating promise; it hints at the permanence of things valuable. Old Eddy's remark, "Real things, things that count, they never change" (Gen 194), endorses that certain things are beyond clichéd paradigms. The permanency of these can be comprehended only with a thorough understanding of the valued objective. Here this observation that he makes to Bonnie, his grandson’s fiancée comes to state that generational perspectives on relative issues remain marked by dissimilarities. Whereas Bonnie believes in the permanency of change, Old Eddy's notion belies this.

Another breeding ground for a widening generation gap can be perceived in the attitude of Young Eddy towards his family homestead. David's older brother, Young Eddy has settled for a career in law and this has taken him to Calgary. Financial requisitions compel him to seek out his family's consent "to sell some of his precious acres to stake his new law firm" (Mallet 273). This evokes dramatic responses from the Nurlin family inmates. Young Eddy slowly discloses his intent and impinges upon the fact that Alfred's decision to take over the family reins was partly forced. He argues his case by stressing that he himself could never follow suit because his outlook of life would definitely not permit him to choose out of his own preferences. Although Alfred has no
definitive for an answer he is flabbergasted at the suggested prospective of selling off a part of the farm. In the interests of Old Eddy and David, his reaction is predictable:

ALFRED. It wouldn't be right!

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YOUNG EDDY. Look, I'm not like you! . . . This opportunity's the most important thing in my life. . . . This place might have been alright for you and for Grampa, but it's not the same for us. (Gen 179)

This strong statement infuses that compromises might not be a way of life for the younger generation. Alfred had settled into this life as a farmer after compromises and considerations of the circumstances that he was placed in. However, the present is totally different in that the values of the older generations have given way to newer ones. It has now become trendy to form values based on an individual's likes and dislikes. Accepted norms for basing values are disqualified without any qualms. Fixing values based on conformity to tradition has become passé. There are a few exceptions as is always true of human nature. David's convictions are far removed from this, in this regard. He claims that they would have to remember the hardships perceived by his 'grampa' to come to own this property. He does not believe that selling "a piece here" (Gen 184) would be right. Thus, it is clear that conceptualising of ideologies differ even within the same generation.

Old Eddy's reaction, given the bond with his land, is predictable. The land, this farm is in reality an extension of his own self. So he cannot bring himself to retaliate or reply to this absurdity. Young Eddy's statement, “it . . . Just seemed the easiest way” (Gen 184) astonishes him into silence. The stage direction, at his juncture, effectively brings out Old Eddy's consternation --- “Old Eddy stares at Young Eddy. His gaze moves to
Alfred. He looks away from both of them. He blinks several times and then exits from the kitchen. He slowly starts out of the yard” (Gen 184).

The closing scene of the play seals the bond between Old Eddy and David. Old Eddy seeks solace by walking off into his farm. His words to David, asking him to walk in silence without talking, depict that arguments may not be fruitful and that it is difficult for different people to fall in accord with the same values. It also depicts that compromises have to be made if people were to live in compatibility and as a society. Thus, infusing the concept of generation gap fosters a certain awareness that helps people understand that the capacities of reasoning, thinking and judging are relatively subjective. It also helps to state that the higher cognitive process of acceptability and palatability would set the stone rolling towards destroying barriers to concordant living.

Generation gap is markedly perceived in BR because it features the revolutionary Ms. Lizzie Borden. Lizzie Borden is seen as misfit in a society which is peopled with men and women who never question tradition and who venerate conformity. Men, did not require a change as the prevalent atmosphere best suited their needs while women were made to understand that it was their duty to be generally concerned with others' well being. It was also accepted that they were not to focus on their desires and prioritize their wishes. In such a set up it is only natural that the differences of opinion which abound in Lizzie's family cause a widening gap in relationships.

The differences are more opinionated and pronounced as Lizzie has to cope with the increasing difficulty of living with a step-mother, for whom she has no regard. Lizzie's relationship with her step-mother is strained and her conclusive estimate of her step-mother's motives fuel her dislike. She openly displays her dislike. This is evident when The Actress in the role of Lizzie in the play-within-the play tells Lizzie who is
herself enacting Bridget, the Irish maid, that only tripling her intellect could cure Mrs. B (shortened to mean Abigail, her step-mother) and goes to call her "a silly ass too!" (BR 24). A thirty-four year old spinster who is not inclined to marry any time in the near future rests as a burden in the Borden household. Mrs. Borden's effort to marry her off to Johnny Mac Leod, a widower, remains an unfulfilled task.

Lizzie has her way with her father. Her periodical tantrums have helped her maintain a restrained distance from the rest of her family. Mrs. Borden, therefore, feels that Emma, Lizzie's older sister should not continue to be used to convey messages from their father. Instead she feels that Mr. Borden should "have to talk straight and plain to Lizzie and tell her things she don't want to hear" (BR 31). Lizzie resents the hold that her step-mother desires to have on her. She resents the fact that her family wants her to settle down by accepting the first offer of marriage that comes her way just so as to cease being a liability to her parents. The situation is worsened by Emma, who has submissively given in to their demands and accepted her lot unquestioningly.

Mr. Borden's relationship with Lizzie ought to have been better as he is her biological father, but here again their expectations from each other prove as deterrents. His dreams of "bouncin' a grandson" (BR 35) remain distant. His dejection that, "girls... don't seem to have the same sense of family" is intensified in his inability to make Lizzie accept his line of thinking. Lizzie's adamance thwarts his aspirations in life. His dejection makes him confide to Harry, his brother-in-law that one is blessed if he/she has not brought forth any children into the world as dealing with children has come to be a real challenge in life.

As far as Lizzie is concerned, her own aspirations are not valued by someone as close as her father. She is depressed that her own sensitivities remain inconsiderable:
Mr. BORDEN. I want what's best for you!

LIZZIE. No you don't! 'Cause you don't care what I want!

... 

LIZZIE. I'm supposed to be a mirror. I'm supposed to reflect what you want to see, but everyone wants something different. If no one looks in the mirror, I'm not even there, I don't exist! (BR 38, 39)

Any member of a family would consider it important to be considered a cherished part of that family. The sense of belonging that ensues is incomparable. It is in fact a lifeline which provides emotional anchorage for the individual, which in turn helps that person to live a wholesome life. This, being denied, Lizzie becomes vulnerable to ebullitions and melancholic sombreness. This lays the foundation for the drastic conclusiveness that she embraces towards the end of the play.

Lizzie's efforts to bring her parents to understand that her attitude to life is different and that she purports to base her life on her own credentials emerge disappointingly unsuccessful. Her desire to make herself useful in some way— to take up a job— is met with contemptuousness. The pressure to marry Johnny Mac Leod adds fuel to fire. Her disappointments in her family gradually build into a crescendo. The seriousness of her words — "There's something you don't understand, Papa. You can't make me do one thing that I don't want to do. I'm going to keep on doing just what I want just when I want— like always!" (BR 41) is incomprehensible to Mr.Borden. The issue of the inheritance of the farm also remains a bone of contention extending the generation gap between the two of them. The incident of the bird-killing seals this gap. In Mr. Borden's harsh deed, Lizzie begins to realize that she was likely to lose all that she had
cherished one after the other thereby leaving her no other option than to adopt the same strategy as her father (i.e.) to get rid of 'obstacles' obstructing the path of livelihood.

Lizzie's failure in making her father understand the need for different people to lead "individual" and "separate lives" (BR 53), her unfulfilled desire to be considered "precious and unique" (BR 61) combine to propel her to have her step-mother hacked to death. Pollock makes the audience understand the circumstances by working her way towards the climax in such a way that one is left with no pity for the sad ending of Mrs. Borden. Lizzie's resoluteness in not letting her father find out anything that might make him hate her leaves her with no other alternative but to use her axe yet once again. The extreme and rigorous decision that Lizzie had embraced brings to light the effect of the generation gap. People disagree on various issues but when the disagreement threatens to stifle livelihood perhaps one is left with no other option than this. It is noteworthy to mark here that Lizzie Borden was acquitted when this case was taken to court.

In Doc, this generation gap is perceptibly rampant as the play is structured on “the sometimes shared, sometimes singular memories of the past as relived by Ev and Catherine, interacting with figures from the past" (Doc 367). The simultaneous presence of Catherine (in her mid-thirties) and Katie, her younger self, on stage creates an ambivalent atmosphere for the confrontation with her father, the Doc of the play, to take place. Catherine, as Katie, had grown bottling up her frustrations, as a consequence of feeling neglected. Her father's priorities in life afforded him little space for his family as his dedication to the medical profession demanded a substantial part of his time. Now, back home (after a gap of four years) as a writer, Catherine finds the time appropriate for a confrontation with her father. She wants to make him realise the consequences of his option to prioritise work over family and for not being able to strike a balance between
the two. She blames him for driving his mother to commit suicide. She also blames him for neglecting his wife which ultimately forced her to commit suicide. Is the Doc really the cause for these disastrous happenings? Does he hold responsibility for these suicides or is it merely a facade of Catherine's divided self? The play's progression unfolds answers to these questions by analyzing the modalities of the human mind. A good portion of this rests on the difference in the approach to things by the different generations.

Catherine speaks across time to her father, mother and her younger self. As the "AUTHOR'S NOTES," at the beginning of the play, indicates, Catherine and Katie, although the same person, do not fall in accord with each other's opinions. In fact, they are often in conflict with opposing ideas. However, on one issue they remain united—in the attribution of the disasters encountered by the family, to the estrangement of Ev Chalmers.

As a doctor, Ev had prioritised the need to seek fulfilment through devotion to his service. Consequently, his family had to stand neglected. He had commanded respect as a doctor but had failed miserably as a family man according to Katie. His family members, each of them—mother, wife and daughter, had appealed, yearned and craved for different things. The Doc, unable to fulfil any of their aspirations, failed to satisfy their inner urges. Therefore, Bob, having her desires curbed, sought peace by embracing death, by swallowing an overdose of sleeping pills. This seemed to her the only way of ending her foreboding depression. The sentiment reflected here was nothing new to her as it was in fact an extension of her mother-in-law's. Bob, failing to accept dejection as a way of life, had considered it proper to walk into a running train, seeking relief. Catherine destined not to fall in track with this family malady, strives hard to establish an identity of her
own. Requiring the space to enable a makeover in perceptions and to help herself in
overcoming the grief caused by these mishaps, she had decided to fly the nest. Now, back
home, as a writer, she finds herself more confident to face her father. Her accusations are
encountered with dignity and grace by her father who, now an old man, wants the
reassurance of love from his daughter. It is pathetic that she does not find the need to
reassure him simply as retaliation. Did he not do the same, when she had been in need of
it, the most?

Differences in opinion begin from the very utterance of name— she prefers being
called Catherine whereas Ev earns her irritation by addressing her as Katie. Thus, one
sees that her protestations have had early beginnings. Further, Catherine's frustration in
not having been regarded as a close associate is evident when she questions him as to
whether he would have sought her help, at the time of crisis, when he had been having a
heart attack. He had called Valma, the head nurse. That he had not even thought of calling
his son, Robbie, is Catherine's accusation. Communication is a glaring defect in the
doctor's family and one can relate this to be reason enough for its disintegration.

Perhaps, *Doc* is the most intensely personal play that Pollock has written till date.
Pollock has herself stated that she wrote it because "I had a need to write it"
(Zimmerman, Sharon Pollock: “Anatomising” 6). In her endeavour to seek a re-union
with her estranged father, is hidden an effort to seek out her true self. While pinpointing
his follies she is truly trying to connect with her inner self and seek explanations in order
to restore the peace that she desperately needs to carry on with her life.

CATHERINE. Why do we always end up yelling and screaming, why do we do
that?
EV. I care 'bout you! ... I want to see you settled, Katie. Happy. I want you to write letters, not... I want you close.

CATHERINE. ...I do write somebody you know. I write Uncle Oscar... Every once in a while... when the spirit moves me. (Doc 375)

Ev's wish to see his daughter settled in marriage is another bone of contention between the two. Moreover the closeness that he, now, so desires is definitely not forthcoming. Oscar, his close friend who had always acted on his behalf, and filled in for Ev in times of need had literally come to occupy his position. So as a consequence, all the love and affection of Ev's family members are showered on Oscar. Thereby, the gap between the father and daughter widens. The character of Oscar, placed as a foil to the doctor, denotes that he would have definitely made a better father to Catherine and a doting husband to Bobbie because he is able to understand their pining.

Oscar identifies the thirst and drive of the Doc as similar to that of his own father. However, his preferences in life do not align with that of his father, who had chartered a particular course for his son and expected him to follow it without pausing to consider if that choice did interest his son at all. Oscar, allowing that "forging ahead" (Doc 378) was simply not his cup of tea, prefers to lead a carefree life (bask in sunny New Orleans) rather than "go into medicine" (Doc 377). He knows that both his father and the Doc would have no qualms in trampling anything that stood between them and their ambitious goal. Although relegated to the periphery, Oscar is always there for Katie, for Bob, and for the Doc who himself acknowledges that Oscar has been "a pseudo" (Doc 401) all his life.

Thus differences in perceptions can be seen in all of these relationships. If Oscar had been Bob's husband and Catherine's father, then it would have been ideal for them.
He would have catered to their needs and found fulfilment in that. If Ev had been born into Oscar's family, his ambitious father would have been delighted in him. But, these 'ifs' are far removed from reality. It would do people good only if they remain grounded. Otherwise the frustration in realising that their cherished dreams would never materialize will definitely ruin them. The gap between generations thus abounds with the younger generation understanding this fact only when they themselves perceive it in their old age.

Women have, for long, been deprived of something that is analogous to food for life (i.e) the right to live their lives according to their own convictions. They have all along realized this deprivation and have struggled to free themselves from this chain of oppression. This struggle is to help them acquire, not necessarily victory, but meaningfulness in life. It is indeed cruel when one is not able to do things that are close to one's heart, for no valid reason. The joy that is derived from being able to do those very same things can find no match anywhere.

Women's liberation encompasses women's emancipation as it involves concern for purposeful elevation of women's status in society. Female responses to situations differ essentially because their experiences are different from that of men. In male dominant cultures as patronized across the globe, women tend to become the marginalized sector. Selfish motives and exploitative temperaments result in unequal treatment of women. Pioneers have, since the times of Mary Wollstonecraft, envisaged and worked towards liberating the female gender from constricting barriers. Gender justice based on humanism is a necessity. Absence of this establishment deflates and deflects principles of refinement and a change for the better. A source of new awareness marks the emancipation of subjugated women. It generates power and knowledge to face life on neutral terms without injecting the tenuity that is often associated with the feminine
gender. However, liberation cannot be 'fed' from the outside; it is not a commodity that can be procured either by force or by pleading. It is an inherent aptitude that has to be cultivated and harnessed.

As a woman writer, Pollock has displayed feminist sensibilities in her plays. Evoking sympathetic feelings and exposing social notorieties are her forte. Her strength lies in the outlook that her female characters generate. She is however clear in demarcating that her profession is to be identified without the modifier female, feminine, or feminist (Zimmerman, Introduction 25). As she puts it,"I certainly don't understand how a woman with any sense of justice cannot be a feminist, but I object to those people who think that 'feminist playwright' means that there is a hidden ideology by which aesthetic choices are being governed" (Rudakoff, 215).

Self-preservation is a strong factor that sets Bonnie apart from the others in Gen. One is able to see a strong-willed and determined character in Bonnie. In her conversations with her fiancé, in Act II, Scene I of the play, it is evident that she is aware of her preferences in life and that she will definitely not let anything or anyone come in-between, obstructing her from living her life the way that she considers it right. She wishes that David should not be binding to norms and take over the farm just because it is expected of him. She tells him that she wants "What's best" for him (Gen 167). Her advice is that he should not take over the farm responsibilities, if he does not derive satisfaction out of it. Her words are laden with a passion for life —"this country uses people up and wears them out and throws them away! I saw it happen to my mum and dad, and it's not gonna happen to me!" (Gen 170). Her decision to abandon him on their opposing views on this issue takes Margaret, Bonnie's mother by surprise because she has lived a life quite contrary to that of Bonnie.
According to Margaret, sacrifice is a way of life and compromise, a path in the life of womanhood. Margaret, being a true romantic had always fashioned her emotions to befit her position and status within their homestead. She, however, has no complaints — the warm camaraderie between her and the others in the family stands as evidence for this. The excessive care she bestows on them is proof enough. For instance, her habit of double checking with Alfred, her husband about the quantity of salt used in the food she serves is really amazing. She delights in fulfilling these daily requirements. A household chore is thus transformed into a labour of love. This is the reason for her to hold back from making a reply to Bonnie, when the latter asks if Margaret does not ever tire of being involved with concern for family members and of devoting her time in looking after their needs without caring for herself.

Bonnie, "the fiancé of the youngest incumbent is infected with notions of women's lib" (Bessai Introduction 9). Bonnie has faith in an ideology which is quite different from that of Margaret, the only other female character in the play. She cannot fathom how Margaret has lived on this farmstead, deriving satisfaction by merely serving her husband and tending to the needs of the Nurlins in general. According to her, Margaret has dismissed her self-identity and self-respect in order to conform to tradition. Relating to the issue of Young Eddy's wish to sell off his portion of the land, she tells Margaret, "I know. You're going to agree with whatever Alfred says. No matter how you feel you're going to agree with whatever the "men" in the family decide" (Gen 188). In Bonnie's view each and everyone, irrespective of gender, should live by one's own convictions and notions of right, wrong, good, bad, ideal or controversial. Blind conformation to accepted and expected norms will not lead to a life of contentment.
Although it may be true that Margaret has failed to exert herself because of her submissive nature, Bonnie does not blame her. In fact Bonnie herself states that she has marvelled at Margaret's conduct. On the other hand, she knows that she cannot be content to lead such a life. She understands that she is herself cut out to live a different kind of life and to her; a life at the farm would be too confining and stifling. She feels that nothing in life is worthier than having the freedom of choice. She establishes that she can never become like Margaret, she does not want to, either. She has a mind of her own and she is afraid of losing herself in the mire of mundane surroundings if she marries David and settles down in the prairies. She wants to lead a full life, be complete, live with self-respect and be self-sufficient. She intends to stick to these principles even if that places the prospect of her marriage in jeopardy. This is because in her opinion not being able to live by these would be far worse than being lonely.

Bonnie's convictions may not be noble when placed in comparison with those of the Nurlins', but they remain definitely her own. She has clear views regarding her likes and dislikes and also the courage to pursue them. She has economic independence (she is a teacher by profession) which helps her to pursue her interests and thus she is able to accomplish her goals. Therefore, she is empowered and emerges a perfect example of the modern woman who will give up all else to live a life of decorum and dignity. This is exemplified in her decision to call off her engagement and leave the homestead of the Nurlins'.

This strong undercurrent links Nora of Ibsen's *Dolls House* to Bonnie. One can recall how Ibsen had portrayed that the zest for life is no different for a woman than for a man. Pollock, through her sketch of Bonnie, has endeavoured to drive home the importance of according 'living space' to individuals especially women. Bonnie is a role
model to those who are yearning for fulfilment in life and to those multiple, voiceless lot, who are silently enduring subjugation of sorts. Bonnie's courage and self-belief are infectious in that they are an inspiration for individuals to live life to the fullest. Such people are destined to end up as a boon to society because their contentment would definitely reflect in their life styles. This ensures that the mechanism of social togetherness is well oiled to run smoothly.

In BR, Lizzie Borden's prudent level-headedness marks her off as someone living much ahead of her times. First, signs of opposition are a natural occurrence as the path-followers of society object to anything that is different or which threatens their conniving existence. Cynthia Zimmerman celebrates Lizzie as "Pollock's first female protagonist" in her article "Sharon Pollock: The Making of Warriors." Shecondones Lizzie's eccentricities by proclaiming her as "an individualist who has to make a terrible choice" (72).

Diane Bessai seconds this opinion by citing that prior to BR, “female characters, although important, had served essentially as adjuncts to males” and that in this play "with its essentially feminine point of view”, the playwright concedes to be 'feminist.' She cites that although political and social issues remain central concerns, “this work subsumes its issues entirely within personal character conflicts” (46).

Lizzie Borden's transformation is an amazing journey. The dramatist's focus is neither on psychological analysis nor on the mental makeup of the protagonist. On the contrary, it is on the circumstantial aspect —what made Lizzie commit those murders? That is, if at all she had done them. It is to be noted that she is not much concerned with their moral implication. How can one ever turn as base as to kill one's own parents? Her concern is only based on the stifling nature of circumstances that has warranted such a
horrendous action. The playwright strategically manoeuvres the reader-spectator into accepting that circumstances can make anyone capable of committing a murder. That the protagonist is a female character is purposive of painting a role-model, a trend-setter, who is capable of encountering any hardship in order to elevate her lifestyle and establish her rights.

The play structured in two acts is "a compelling study of Lizzie Borden" (Bessai, Introduction 7). It dramatizes the strict conservatism of the nineteenth century and offers a feminist perspective to the then prevailing conditions. Lizzie along with her sister Emma, lives with her father and step-mother in Fall River. Lizzie is under great pressure as she is not free to follow her pursuits in life. She reveals an individualistic trait which sets her as an eccentric and craves for economic stability and solitude. She does not wish to tune herself to satisfy the dictums of her step-mother. Lizzie is slotted as a failure, simply because she refuses to get herself a suitor. No one acknowledges that a woman could live a fulfilling life without marriage. Her light tete-a-tete with Dr. Patrick is ridiculed and condemned, as talking to a married man is considered a taboo and labelled as 'illicit conversation'. Her father too comes down harshly on her for this. He fails to understand that Lizzie enjoys Dr. Patrick's friendship only because she feels she need not look eligible or alluring when she is in his company.

People seek different things for fulfilment. Lizzie's aspirations to live on her own, to be able to fend for herself, are all denied to her, on the basis of her gender. Her longings are ruled out as irrational and nonsensical. Moreover, the family's plan to marry her off to a widower, Johnny Mac Leod and the issue of the possible bequeathal of their farm to Abigail Borden infuriate her and instigate her to set about making efforts to achieve her ends.
Lizzie's transformation forms the crux of the storyline. Pollock's emphasis is more on the transformation than on the recognition. Self-discovery and self-recognition are pushed to the periphery. Lizzie's strong conviction to bring in a change is given predominance. She realizes that she has to act if she has to change the shape of things to come. The two paths open to her at this juncture are probably suicide and murder. She selects the later and that completes her transformation. A docile, repressed, unhappy individual breaks the shackles of horrible subjugation by removing the obstacles to her freedom. Lizzie supposedly hacks to death first her step-mother and later her step-father. There is no direct presentation of this event as it is a "dream thesis" where Lizzie 'acts' out the entire drama with her Actress friend who wants to know whether Lizzie is guilty or not. Lizzie dons the role of Bridget, the Irish maid and the Actress takes on the part of Lizzie herself.

Act II intensifies the seriousness as it opens with talks of elimination. Elimination of things that Lizzie had always loved (the sick puppy, her birds) reveals the plight of the ageing spinster placed in an uncompromising situation. The climax is hastened by Emma's disappearance from home on a week-end trip and by her father's decision to pass over the ownership of the farm to his wife, their stepmother. The farm's relativity to the sisters—both materially and sentimentally—makes her resolute to take, according to her, the only way out. Taking advantage of the situation (the presence of none except her stepmother at home) she follows her upstairs with an axe hidden amidst some clothes. She, later, descends with a certain calm and a smug satisfaction. She follows up this act with a raised hatchet over her father. The black-out on the stage that happens at this juncture, explains many a thing. The dream-thesis ends here and the Actress realises that Lizzie could have committed the murders. She says, "Lizzie you did" (BR 70). Lizzie's response
is simply "I didn't you did." This response, direct, factual and spontaneous, brings the play to a close.

The play is Pollock's response to the paternalistic, dictatorial structure of families. It takes a feminist dimension because the transformation of Lizzie sets her on the path to empowerment. Lizzie has shaped her destiny by transforming herself. As against self-sacrifice she has practiced self-preservation. Pollock pleads for the cause of Lizzie. It must be pointed out, here, that Pollock is not so much concerned about the moral implication of the savage deed than on the motivations for Lizzie's action. Zimmerman's comment regarding this aspect in the play is noteworthy, "... it ignores the astounding savagery of the deed. To address that savagery would be to take the play in quite another direction" (“The Making” 74). While acknowledging that murder is hardly a creative solution, Zimmerman states that the play lights up a new angle when projecting the crisis of individuals placed in constraint (“The Making” 77-78). "In moving away from an interior, psychological study of a maddened individual and shifting responsibility for this tragedy to society, both then and now, Pollock's play raises important feminist issues" (“The Making” 76).

Endorsement of women's empowerment and the power to resist patriarchy creates a conscientiousness that is socially implicative. These make one accept the need to change and to give a chance for the female gender to prosper. The playwrights' stress is on the importance of respecting the rightful desires of women, on the importance of letting them be, and allowing them to seek out a fulfilling life.

Bob and Catherine stand up for the cause of the female gender in Doc. While Bob depicts one extreme, Catherine represents the other; where the former is unsuccessful, the latter is able to establish that the wishes of an individual, irrespective of gender, have to
be acknowledged and respected. In this aspect, Bob is presented as a foil to Catherine.
One is able to comprehend the importance of pursuing interests. One is also able to
identify the fact that when opportunities are purposely denied to individuals, the element
of danger creeps in and becomes a constant. This is because desperation drives humans to
commit unimaginable blunders that can lead to total annihilation. In *Doc*, by presenting a
constant in Bob and Catherine, Pollock is able to cite the necessity of projecting women-
oriented issues and delineate that such issues are capable of bringing a difference in
approach to life. Therein lies its worthiness as uplift of women leads to bettering the
quality of human life. One is thus able to see in Bob, the sorrow of denial and in
Catherine, the triumph of an exultant spirit.

In “Sharon Pollock: The Making of Warriors” Zimmerman discusses that in *Doc,*
“there is an overt feminist dimension which needs to be addressed” (88). While she points
out that Bob's problem cannot be relegated, she is quick to acknowledge the autonomy
denied to Bob on account of her marriage with the Doc. It is true that Bob's own character
conflicts forbid her from extricating herself from the constricting confines of
conventionality but it is also true that the achiever in Bob suffers a terrible setback
because in marriage she is forced to lose her whole personality. The career of nursing,
which had opened new avenues for her, ends with her marriage to a doctor. What society
views as a success becomes, for her, a trap. Her choice of resorting to alcoholism depicts
her weakness because she could have otherwise chosen to leave the restricting household
in order to make something of herself.

Zimmerman quotes Pollock in John Hofsess' “Families” in *Homemaker's Magazine* to prove her point, “there's nothing wrong being a mother and wife if that is
what a woman WANTS to do: but to be forced into that role, whether it fits or not, simply because you're a woman and a man expects you to conform, can be a terrible form of imprisonment’ (“The Making” 88).

The clarity of vision that is projected here makes it relevant to be applicable at all times, to all the people and in any place of the world. Does not Bob's statement, “That's not all I am” (Doc 60) echo the same sentiment? If the true intent of the aforesaid formula is absorbed into the societies that make the world, then the result would be advancement and forging ahead for the members of those societies.

While confinement makes Bob succumb, Catherine decides to leave in search of greener pastures. Her choice in deciding not to follow her mother and grandmother, in not desiring to inherit their psychological disorder of resorting to commit suicide, gives her the empowerment to follow the dictates of her heart. She is far too independent and confident to aspire to follow in the footsteps of the female forerunners in her family. Zimmerman identifies the same--- “Her mother and grandmother have come to represent surrender, weakness, suicide; Katie/Catherine identifies with her strong ambitious father” (“The Making” 87). Catherine's comment, “I am like you, daddy. I just gotta win and you just gotta win ... (Doc 124)” echoes the same sentiments.

Her desire to move out and prosper germinates from her dislike of what her mother and grandmother had stood for. The crux of the play lies in Catherine's words---“I don't want to be like them” (Doc 108) and also in Bob's sentiments---“I'm the same. Inside I'm the same. I'm Eloise Roberts and they called me Bob and I can run faster and do better than any boy I ever met!” (Doc 93). The difference between the two lies in the choices they have made outside of the patriarchal influence in their lives.
Catherine's success is the result of her ability to get away from the overbearing influence of her father; in resolving to keep him as a role model but not to succumb to his dictates, she is able to leave home in pursuit of fulfilling her aspirations. The confrontation which happens upon her visit home after a gap of four years lends credibility to the justice demanded by women to be permitted to do things close to their heart and not to be forced into complying with the demands of the menfolk, who populate their lives. In Catherine, one can witness the emancipated and celebrated female self.

The desire to seek revenge when expectations are thwarted is a common feature amidst people. The revenge motif surfaces when unfulfilled aspirations frustrate individuals to the extent that they are driven to seek expediency. In most cases, the revenge motif is carefully charted and intended to be carried out as per plan with the desired objective in mind. In other cases, though, revenge becomes a necessity without which living life becomes impossible. It becomes an obsession, compelling the afflicted to react with a dangerous urgency that defies reasoning of any sort. In yet other cases, it remains static and comes to bear its exact opposite phenomena. It finds expression by seeking out positive effects. Instead of retaliation, peace is sought in letting others get what one himself has lost.

In other instances, this revenge motif has remained shrouded—no blatant expression is given to the ulterior motives of the individual. In such cases, the expectations of the individual although unfulfilled, are relegated to the periphery, because of the absence of a strong desire to procure the same. When expectations are fulfilled, joy and satisfaction result but when these remain unattainable, deep resentment and bitterness
prevail. This motif has, in drama, set the plot in motion and fed the audience, the essence of the playwrights' intent.

The aftermath of such perspective occurrences make or mar man. This is because an individual's beliefs and motives stem out of these experiences. A contented individual finds self-complacency with ease whereas acrimoniousness marks the discomfited. The former becomes a boon to society as such people are less likely to perpetuate notoriety that disrupts normal functioning of society. The latter, however, cannot be slated along the same lines as their residual emotional disturbances become a cause for concern. In Pollock's plays (Gen, BR and Doc), the expectancy quotient staggers between two extremes. One can perceive the maximum harm it can cause when relating to BR; in Doc, it is suggestively moderate and in Gen, it remains a force that motivates the action in the play. The conjoining factor is that this quotient is responsible for accelerating a social conscientiousness that seeks to wash out vengeance and breeze in, the sprightliness that is so essential for life.

The decision taken by the Native Canadians in Gen to cut off the supply of the irrigation water from the reserve river is in itself an act of revenge. It is done with the purpose of avenging the insufficient payment made for their service. The Native Canadians' intent to make the farmers raise their voices is that, in turn, their pleas would be taken seriously by the government. Whether the objective of the revenge motif is justified or not, what remains true is that this motif of seeking revenge becomes the last resort, when all other roads to the destination are blocked. Eventually one sees that the Natives achieve their target in at least drawing the attention of the government although the extent of their victory is yet to be conceived.
The “Alternative action” (Gen 152) suggested by David takes the revenge motif ahead by another step. Action should have been taken to ensure that the Natives retreat their stand, give in to the local farmers' plea and release the dam water, because the contention of the Natives is with the government for low wages and not against the farmers. However, the essence of the purpose gets lost somewhere in between. No longer is the end objective of getting water important. David's statement, “We're not talkin' water. What the hell, water!” (Gen 153), proves that the root of the problem that had lain in the issue of water supply had branched out and taken a different dimension. What had begun as a revolt against presumed injustice had resulted in kindling animosity between the Native Canadians and the farmers. Although the elders in the farmers' clan object and discourage this “alternate” action of resorting to violence, the youngsters remain adamant.

As proposed, the government officials gather at the meeting but “all hell breaks loose” (Gen 194) when the purpose of the meeting, which is to resolve the differences, changes directions and threatens to emerge an election campaign. David's involvement stupefies the Nurlin's but much harm had been done before they could take steps to prevent it---between the two of them, Sneider and David have set the back section of the meeting place on fire. The vengeance has excited and flushed David but he is soon brought back to reality and made to focus on the extremity of his action by Old Eddy.

The sky opens up and quenches the fire, thereby exerting that nature's power subsumes man-made intentions. David realizes his mistake. The revenge motif is stalled. What needs to be noted here is that the connection between the original intention for the revenge and the final outcome of the action has been lost somewhere because in the due course of the negotiations, notions change and direct different motives. Likewise in most
cases the end result does not necessarily bring satisfaction or contentment to the propeller of these actions as was initially proposed. Instead a deep remorse and guilt set in, threatening to dissipate the peace of the initiators.

The revenge motif takes a somersault with the unpredictable few, like Alfred. His expectation to do justice to his inner callings has remained a distant dream, because he could not bring himself to openly state his longings. This is the mark of respect that he bears for Old Eddy's hard work and toil. Alfred, being the only surviving son had taken it upon himself to assist his father and carry forward the farm activities as its care-taker. His is a humble sacrifice, which he makes without fuss because he looks at it as a way of life. His acceptance in willing to let go of an important aspect of his life depicts his love for his family stead. It is this love that prevents his thwarted expectations from snowballing into revenge. Instead he focuses his delight in encouraging his younger son Eddy, to do things according to the dictates of his own heart -- “I know I give in to Eddy. I know that,” (Gen 182) he tells Margaret. What Alfred depicts here is a natural outcome borne out of his unfulfilled desires but what makes it a remarkable feat is its positive depiction. Alfred perceives a certain satisfaction in letting Eddy get what he himself had been deprived of, at that age. It is his way of finding a sense of fulfilment; in gratifying Eddy's aspirations he is actually deriving a contentment long sought after.

Thus one is able to look at two sides of the revenge motif. There are two perspectives to the same aspect. Both differ in their operational methods as with their results. One can, by drawing parallels; see for himself that the one which best suits him should definitely bring him to a plane where he can continue with his every day activities without malice or discontent. Otherwise he should definitely consider revising his plans.
Lizzie, in *BR*, bears the brunt of the unequal and partial treatment meted out to her and her sister Emma by their father, Mr. Borden. Influenced to a great extent by the directives of his wife and her brother Harry, Mr. Borden comes to be mollycoddled into abiding by them. The helpless situation that the sisters are placed in forces Lizzie to take over the reins and sort things out. Harry's initiative to sign over the rent to his sister flares Lizzie's temper. She begins to realize that if things are left unchecked then she might have to suffer in future. Economic instability makes her wary and in her own interests and for her own well being, undertakes to take charge.

Lizzie's occasional enjoyment that lies in the pigeons she rears in the backyard are marked off as an eccentricity and hacked to death by her father, in a fit of a frenzy. This act shatters her beyond remedy because she finds in that deed the demolition of all that she had ever cared for in her life. The birds are gone and with them she imagines that all else that mattered to her would go too. The killing of the birds analogically denotes the killing of her hopes. She shrieks to Emma, despair-ridden, “He didn't care how much he hurt me and you don't care either. Nobody cares” (*BR* 53). Emma's abandonment adds fuel to fire and from then on she sets to do things resolutely. Her words “I can do anything” (*BR* 54) acquire a different layer of meaning. It proclaims her love of life, she is adamant in exerting her rights and most importantly her firmness of purpose. The impact of the brutal hacking sows in her the need to act fast if she wanted to safeguard her interests.

Lizzie's demeanour cannot exactly be slotted as revenge; it is more a consequential attribute of thwarted expectations. Her policies have to be justified in the light of her rightful aspirations. Her dream to live her life as a spinster in her father's
house up on the hill and to be able to socialize is fated to remain only as a dream. The reason, she fathoms, is the doing of her old-fashioned, conniving step-mother. Her main concern comes to be that they will be left with no money if "he [father] keeps signing things over to her" (*BR* 26). She's clear that she does not want to live at her step mother's mercy in the event of her father's death. Her reason for taking such a brutal decision, although not fully justified, does have a standing.

Deftly, she justifies with Dr. Patrick, the subject of killing in order to let live. Her explanation is filled with the clarity that not all life is precious and that the bad, the evil, should not be allowed to prosper. On that note, whatever little cobwebs of doubt that hitherto lingered get cleared and she gets ready to 'act'. In order to set right bad things "must die" (*BR* 63). The ease in which Lizzie occupies Borden's chair explains the happenings at the top of the staircase. Lizzie has gotten herself 'rid' of the encumbrance. She quickly follows it up with her dad for she now has no other choice. She has to complete what she has started.

The children's voices that are heard singing, in the background, reverberate with certain wisdom:

Lizzie Borden took an ax,

Gave her mother forty whacks,

When the job was nicely done,

She gave her father forty-one!

Forty-one!

Forty-one! (*BR* 68)
Lizzie Borden's acquittal has not cleared the air of lingering doubts. Still no proof could be established to prove her guilt. So if righteousness paves the way of life then does Lizzie stand justified for her acts of brutality? Is selfishness a virtue? Pollock gingerly leaves the judgement to her audience after presenting the case.

Lizzie's is therefore a case wherein the revenge motif is shrouded in the mysterious layering of necessity. Hers is not a revenge sought to appease an itching need to fulfil. It is rather a retaliation undertaken in a bid to seek self-preservation. Atrocities of human beings are at times besotted with a queerness which defies rationalizing. Therefore, it is best to permit people be in their propensity so that they may live sociably. Such instances, by evoking consciousness, cry out for stability and constancy of preserving human rights. Lizzie is a reason to reckon with.

Mary Wollstonecraft strongly views “The Effects of Discrimination Against Women” thus, “The being who discharges the duties of its station is independent; and, speaking of women at large, their first duty is to themselves as rational creatures…” (153). She goes on to state that, “those writers are particularly useful, in my opinion, who make man feel for man, independent of the station he fills, or the drapery of factitious sentiments” (158). Her words charged with such power and wisdom; proclaim that only “dear bought experience” would bring home this truth “to many an agitated bosom” (158).

Doc makes an inquiry into the lives of individuals who cannot resist self-expression. The focus on different interpretations to the same issue highlights that morality depends on the point of view projected by the speaker. As is characteristic of Pollock's plays, “opposing values” and “divided loyalties” bespeak her concerns in Doc:
The presence of difference points of view espoused by different characters with different agendas emphasizes the complexity of the subject. However while there are many ways of seeing, the drama demands that one is empowered, for circumstances will allow only one tiger to a hill. (Zimmerman, “Anatomising” 7)

The bitterness in Bob makes it excruciatingly difficult for her to live a contented life. As a trained nurse she takes pride in her duties and in the satisfaction that is a natural derivative of the trade. However her hopes come crashing down when her husband, as doctor, feels strongly that “as a matter of policy” does not “want her there” (Doc 54). Ev reminds his wife that as the financial provider, his priorities take precedence when placed in a situation of competing rights (Zimmerman, “Anatomising” 8) but Bob's expectations are lost out due to Ev's convictions. Her lament that she feels she has lost something, has deep connotations as it relates that her mother's toil in educating has been wasted on her. While Ev cannot understand why she should be complaining when others of her category were inclined to feel jealous of her position, Bob feels constricted in filling the slot of being just a wife.

There are other issues that add up to the above cause as well---Ev is absent at all times of dire necessity. He fails to offer moral support to her when she is in labour, to accompany her to the Medical Ball or to New York to see the entertainment shows or even fishing. “Everett doesn't do anything except go. . . around. . .” (Doc 70), she complains to Oscar. She realises that that his priorities do not lie with her and this aggravates her dejection. The restricting claustrophobic indoor space pushes her to seek revenge. Her agonising cry “Sometimes I want to scream, to hit something, to reach out
and smash. . ." (Doc 93) falls on deaf ears. As a consequence she begins to take delight in rejecting Ev's demands---she refuses to name their son 'George' after Ev's dead brother, to resign to a life at home, to engage a maid or to go out often enough to keep herself entertained without making any demands on the Doc's time. When she feels that these are not sufficient to project her dissatisfaction or soothe her agitated self, she retaliates by resorting to alcohol which placates her tired brain. Her weakness in not being able to muster enough courage to just leave or to do the things that are so dear to her, drives her to desperation. The contemplation to commit suicide soon materializes into a foreboding reality. Her revenge is therefore against her own self. She could have expanded herself worth by doing myriad things to her liking, but she chooses not to follow the dictates of her heart. Instead, she decides to seek revenge by killing the self which did not permit her to be herself.

As far as Catherine is concerned, the splitting of her character as Katie/Catherine is in itself a device created to remind her father of the past and to make him acknowledge that she is capable of retaliation. She intends to give back squarely what had been meted to her in her formative years. Catherine has met her father only on rare occasions over the past years, i.e. since the time she had flown the nest. She had not considered it important to come home to see him just as he had not fulfilled her girlish desires when she had been little. Can this not be considered an act of revenge? Now, when she has finally come home, it is to see him recuperate from heart attack. While she has kept in touch with Robbie, her brother, by writing to him, she says she didn't have the time to write to her dad:
EV. Some people make time.

CATHERINE. Why don't you?

EV. I'm busy.

CATHERINE. So am I (Doc 17-18)

The time factor is a sensitive issue for Catherine because all her life she has battled with questions related to time---Why did the Doc not find the time for her or for her mother when he seemed to tend to his patients with so much love and care? Had grandmother too felt the same? Will mom quit alcohol if the Doc changed priorities? --- these questions had squeezed happiness out of her childhood.

Ev, now an old man aspires for love and warmth, but Catherine is not forthcoming, at least not until she has exhausted her set of questions. She wants explanations for the Doc's negligence of his family; his answers do not satisfy her and so she engages in arguments to make him realise that he has lost his rights to advice or question her. It amuses her that he should be asking her to consider raising her own family when he had himself been far too busy to think of his family all these years. As Kate, she says: “My father is never home. He goes to the hospital before we're up, and when he comes home we're asleep” (Doc 58).

Moreover, the fact that her dad wasn't around for her mom irks her beyond limits. While talking of the privileges afforded to her mom, Ev says he has provided everything for Bob and Catherine's comment, “She wants you” (Doc 66) is a stoic reminder that they had all been deprived of the most defining factor for a happy family i. e quality time spent together. However, the revenge factor is not severely vengeful here because once she has
given vent to her pent up feelings, she comes to be reconciled with her father. With the past behind them, they decide to forge ahead with purpose. Instead of letting the strong desire to seek revenge consume her, she overcomes the moment and decides to bask in positive overtones. Cynthia Zimmerman calls such a quest as “moral inquiry”:

Inquiry provides the play's structure, as well as its moral imperative. . . .

The quest for truth (How did this happen? Was it worth it, after all?) gets dramatised not only in the embedding of conflicting viewpoints in the characters or even in the splitting of a single character. . . these also point to the “multiple realities” and the dissolving of certainties which the questioning consciousness experiences. The creation may surpass the creator's intentions, but that inventing, discerning consciousness is the playwrights'. Behind and beneath the presentation itself, one can feel Sharon Pollock deliberating, debating, and situating the issue in question around her own powerful centre of moral seriousness (“Anatomising” 13).

Inquiry thus subsumes or consumes the revenge motif in Doc and compels the audience to sit in judgement to gauge the element of truth in bringing in conscientiousness into the consciousness. Moral seriousness is conscientiousness redefined, indeed.

Affinity to persons and materialistic objects makes man vulnerable. On the one hand, this attraction gives him joy and satiation but on its flip side brings untold suffering and confusion. An affinity is the attachment, the involvement without which life becomes meaningless. Noble deeds and actions are often based on this affinity. This becomes the base from which stem all virtues necessary to distinguish man from beast. However,
danger results but only when this emotion becomes an excessive obsession. Otherwise, it remains the bond which cherishes love, the bridge which cements relationships, and the warmth which facilitates growth.

Affinity is the most important aspect for man, in a society. Lacking this would mean catastrophe, for, when an individual ceases to feel a natural attraction or relate to the dominant resemblance to things, he ceases to be man. When this happens, then the earth becomes a breeding ground for the contents of Pandora's Box. A bond that is measured and nurtured helps to evolve goodness. It brings out the best in man. It kindles the augustness in him. It helps to bind him to society by creating a conscientiousness which glorifies the higher ideals of wishful living.

The quality of affinity that is predominant in these three Pollock plays in its varying degrees is as much the cause for arousing pity and dousing discord as for creating awe and igniting overwhelms amidst audience. In *Gen*, affinity to the Prairie land rules, whereas in *BR* it reaches an excessive level. In *Doc*, it finds expression in the relationship between Doc and his daughter.

The permanence of the prairie soil and its irrefutable influence on its occupants is the cognitive factor which governs the behaviour of the Nurlins' in *Generations*. Old Eddy, the first-generation farmer shares a bond so strong with the land that he has tilled and tamed, that to him, it has come to acquire more meaning than a mere obsession. A.P. Dani in his “Sharon Pollock's *Generations*: A Drama of the Permanence of the Prairie Soil” compares the play to O'Neill's *Desire under the Elms* and marks the contrast in approach. Where, possession of the farm as 'mine' becomes a ruling passion with O'Neill, in Pollock the natural regard for the land extols a communion with nature (48). Affinity to
the prairie land has made his life more meaningful. He derives satisfaction in its
association and to him the hardships associated with farming are baseless for it is this
very quality that makes it endearing. This is why he openly accepts David's statement,
“Some people say there ain't no hell. If they've never farmed, how can they tell?” (Gen
185). At a most vulnerable moment, Young Eddy expresses his desire to “sell a parcel of
land” as it “just seemed the easiest way” (184), Old Eddy is left speechless. Considering
himself incapable of an appropriate response he opts to take a walk in the farm. The
desire to walk without talking proclaims his affiliation, with great precision.

It is this affinity that makes Old Eddy present the plea to Charlie asking him to
open up the dam to facilitate water supply to crops. Old Eddy cannot bear to witness
derprivation of any sort, to the prairie, “I give my whole life to this place, built it outta'
nothin’, ain't nothing here I didn't give blood for” (Gen 154). Each word in this
declaration remains weighed down by the truth of its content. Old Eddy's love for his land
is similar to a fanatic devotee's to a supreme Godhead. Therefore, it makes him endearing
to the reader/audience who respects his ideals because they are able to relate to his
feelings. His remark to David “it’s a legacy” goes to prove the seriousness in his wish to
bequeath. No compromises on this whatsoever. Even Bonnie's repeated requests to make
him sell a portion of his land to fend off the immediate deficit of funds fails to procure the
desired effect. Old Eddy's conviction in his decision to “leavin' land, not money” upon his
death has to be taken with a pinch of salt considering that he had single-handedly built his
empire.

Common interests draw Old Eddy and Charlie together. Although the two differ
drastically in terms of origin and standing, their love for the prairie has a magnetic pull
for each of them. Their association with each other runs back a long way and their contrasting approach in depicting their love for the land is amazing. Whereas, for Old Eddy, the land was like some kind of monster which required heroism to rule it, to Charlie, it was like a woman, to be wooed and won (Gen 163). Two views to the same objective, but each with a passion writ large.

The climax of the play concords to the flavour by appropriating that the damage caused by the fire set by David and miscreants, in a state of frenzy, to avenge the wrong done to them by the natives, is checked by the natural fall of the rain. The dialogue between Old Eddy and Charlie is charged with their affinity to the land. Old Eddy cites that this land had stood by him in the time of his difficulty and helped him recover from the profound grief caused by the loss of his eldest son and wife. It had infused in him the positive note of resilience and had filled a void which had seemed bottomless then. Looking back, Old Eddy still feels the same. His verdict – “We're here ... We'll always be here” (Gen 198) closes not only the play but all doubts relating to the power exuded by the feeling of affinity.

David's prerogative to take over the farmstead comes as a saving grace to Old Eddy's convictions. Although, it did involve a certain amount of sacrifice on his part, David reconciles to continue in the farm. His decision is conditioned by the desires of the elderly folk of his family, although no one forces him to take this decision. He takes pride in his position, takes pride even in the worn-out look that the prairie accords to the physical body of the farmer. This is because in this he is able to read the affinity of his grandfather and to share the ethnic roots of the family. It is this bond that sees him through his argument with Bonnie, his girlfriend, who tries to make him accept “what's
best” for him. David overrules this “what's best” as against his passionate liking to don the role of a farmer and live in the prairie. He says, “I love this place” (Gen 169), and that says it all. His drive to continue on, in the farm makes him explain to Bonnie that he has discerned the “power” of the prairie. He says that nothing can be equated or compared to the glory that he perceives while being “there on the prairies” (Gen 196). He has to respond to the “feelin’” and so he has to forsake Bonnie, because her callings are different.

An affinity (here, to the land) thus creates a certain respect, the awareness of which instils positive energies in man thus preventing him from extolling an unhealthy environment and persuading him to act towards social welfare.

The protagonist Lizzie's affinity (in BR) towards her father and her homestead stand as reasons for the crime she is accused of. Lizzie is a product of a broken home---her mother's death and her father's remarriage come to weigh down heavily on her. They cause her insecurity and she begins to feel vulnerable to the danger exposed by the new entrant, Abigail Borden. Mrs. Borden's comment on their relationship and her future irk Lizzie--- “Your father's no fool, Lizzie. . . Only a fool would leave money to you” (BR 42). They instigate her to plan her moves so that she would come to no harm in the future.

Lizzie longs to revel in a sense of belonging. She has, now, only her father who can provide her that. But, he is too withdrawn to express his feelings. Moreover, Mrs. Borden would never entertain such a thing to happen. So, with no one on her side, she is left to brood by herself. However, it is to be understood that it is not that Mr. Borden is incapable of understanding her needs; it’s just that he prioritises other interests over her own. So Lizzie is forced to make a decision. Her love of life forbids her from taking her
own life and so she decides she has to take away the lives of those who pose a threat to her.

Her mission does not stop after the elimination of her step-mother for she does not like to make her father unhappy. She craves for his attention, his care and love but then it is too late to undo or rectify her act. She has to complete what she has started. She recollects the pleasant memories of her younger days and wills her father to reciprocate. Mr. Borden ignorant of her intent lets perviousness take over.

Mr. BORDEN. You're a good girl.

LIZZIE. I could never stand to have you hate me, Papa. Never. I would do anything rather than have you hate me.

Mr. BORDEN. I don't hate you, Lizzie.

LIZZIE. I would not want you to find anything that would make you hate me. Because I love you. (BR 67)

The conversation clearly lights up the demands of the situation. Lizzie's great attachment with her father ironically becomes an encumbrance. It comes to stand in the way between her and her father. In order to project herself as an ideal daughter, she now has to do to him what she had done to Mrs. Borden. She has no choice in the matter. It is a pity that she is forced into this situation by none others than her own family members. The tears that she sheds could have been for the quality time that they had just spent or for those times that they will, hereafter, never be able spend together, considering the seriousness of her intent to eliminate her father. Her tears seal the bond that she feels for her father but at the same time releases her from bondage. She emerges an emancipated
woman; carefree, and by the wisdom of her deeds—-an economically sound woman. Justification from her side rests as such.

Pollock's intent, as mentioned earlier, is rather on the situational element and not on the morality of the act. Thereby, the playwright weaves into the Lizzie-story, a certain pathos which hits directly at the audience, who begin to respond to Lizzie, unconditionally. Such is the power of her persuasive abilities. An element of doubt --- “Did she or didn’t she?” is woven into the fabric of the story and a wrong-doing is accomplished as an occurrence of consequence rather than as a conspiracy.

Affinity thus concedes a strong and dark undercurrent in the case of Lizzie. Its capacity to infect heinous thoughts and elicit illicit results comes as no surprise in the aftermath of its heady quality of rampant attraction.

Personal relationships that form the crucial thematic dimension for _Doc_ connote to familial issues. Therefore affinity and bonding come to acquire importance. Catherine, Ev's partially estranged daughter probes into her father's nature, seeking to find solutions to her predicament. As a young girl, Kate had craved for her father's attention but being deprived of it then, she feels that she cannot be recompensed now or ever. Her stance is that Ev's total and sincere dedication to his profession had been entirely at the expense of his family. She relates the consequential disintegration of their family to his excessive attachment to health issues of the society. Ironically it has caused friction and made the family situation as unhealthy as possible.

On the one hand Kate/Catherine is proud of her dad's achievement and accomplishment—-to have a hospital dedicated to him is no easy task. However, on the other hand, she relates his dedication to the subsequent agony caused to all at home—-her
mother, grandmother and through them to her. The affinity that she nurtures for her dad becomes the reason for her ultimate estrangement. He, having not reciprocated her sentiments, feeds disapproval in her. She, having been denied of paternal love sets out to put him to task. Confrontation is painful for her though, “have you got any idea how hard it is for me to come home . . . , we could never talk again... all the things never said, do you ever think about that?” (Doc 26)

Ev's dedication hovers on the verge of making him a 'God' within the community. His is an affinity that is born out of pure passion. Having come up the hard way, he has put his heart and soul into his profession so he refuses to give away the satisfaction derived from its practice for any other valuable. Therefore a compromise has to be made and he chooses his profession over his family. Diane Bessai vouches for this involvement in his work:

... as a physician he is impressively committed to the suffering poor with an approach to patients that is entirely personal. This makes him a dedicated humanitarian with a domestic blind spot that is never fully accounted for; this also puts him on the defensive throughout the whole course of the play. (64)

“We've been waitin' for you, Doc” (Doc 77), is reiterated many times, in order to show the magnetic pull the doc feels when his patients utter those words upon sighting him outside of hospital premises. Further, involvement in procuring technological facilities and expertise for his community, drain him of the free time that he would have otherwise spent for his family. Things line up as such so that finally his close friend Oscar becomes his duplicate, usurping all the love that should have been directed to Ev. Thus, it
is seen that as points of view differ so do the moral implications of what is right or what is incorrect in particular situations. The difficulty in appeasing everybody associated with oneself can be comprehended when considering the plight of the Doc. Its impossibility can be evidenced. The bonding that is considered essential by one thus becomes a base for rebuttal. In due course, faiths are split. Such is its nature.

Bob's is another example of the destructive element of an affinity. Her desire to make herself useful in some way, is the affinity she nurtures, to express her worthiness. This plea being rejected, she seeks to find relief in forming an affinity with alcohol. The bond, with an inanimate object, will not let her down, she believes. Alcoholism embraces her paving her way to destruction and death.

Catherine's bond with her father, eventually brings about reconciliation. Ev acknowledges his abandonment of family. He however he justifies this, by citing his professional commitment. Catherine, on her part, learns to empathise with the aging doctor. She understands that Ev, now craving for acceptance needs her support. She decides to forget the past as nothing good will possibly emerge out of the accusations. Moreover, Ev's advice asking her to “grab” (Doc 125) whatever she wanted from life provided she could apprehend its purpose, helps her feel his good will. It lifts the lump that had weighed her down all these years and sets her free from the tangled mass of compressed emotions. The imaginary bars, constricting her, have dissolved not only because of the clarifications rendered but also because of Catherine's resolve to let go of the past. In the end, with the matured understanding of an adult, she sets about with new vigour. Relieving her father from the encumbering hostility and being relieved of long-suppressed emotions set her free.
An affinity thus relates to both negative as well as positive aspects. Whatever be the consequence, it does arouse the consciousness of the spectator who is able to acknowledge its power. Old Eddy's association with his land is applauded and so is David's. It is after all David's love for his occupation that helps him overcome his destructive zeal. Affinity towards life takes Lizzie to dizzy heights and blinds her from seeing reason. Her case creates the awareness of the destructive element present within it. Catherine's cause is fair and the ultimate decision that she makes helps one to conclude that in the absence of an excessive absorption, an affinity can be truly associated with goodness and goodwill.

“Guilt is the source of sorrows, 'tis the avenging fiend, Th' fiend that follows us behind, With whips and stings” (Rowe). A guilty conscience never feels secure. It feeds self-reproach constantly, thus thwarting efforts of furtherance. It impedes self-improvement by transgressing the delicate grounds of confidence. However, as in all cases, there is also another side to it. The remorse caused by feeling responsible for some offence done sows the seed for rectification. Guilt instils in the doer a desire to change for the better. The redressal that is in the offing is born out of the need to recompense so as to calm the distressed mind of the doer.

Guilt thus becomes the purger and cleanses society by creating a conscientiousness to combat the wrongs done. When the mind becomes aware of past misdeeds and when it regrets those doings, it begins to crave to set right unjustness. Individual characteristics define group behaviour. So when an individual displays moral excellence it comes to be reflected in his mannerisms which in turn affect group dynamics. In this way, guilt becomes the stepping stone to promoting societal well being.
In the plays undertaken for study in this chapter, guilt becomes the guiding force which sets a consequence of actions in motion. *Gen* presents the difference in the temperaments of its principal characters. Old Eddy's affinity to his land is justifiable but it has instigated Alfred, his son to submissively carry on the legacy. Alfred's decision, though noble, does inject in him a feeling of guilt which resolves itself in his empathy to his own son, Young Eddy. David too suffers his share of guilt. In *BR*, although Lizzie Borden's guilt of the axe murders of her parents dominates the play, attention must be drawn to the guilty conscience that her farther might have probably suffered. *Doc* presents the guilt, aroused in her father, by Catherine in order to infuse in him the harm caused by his negligence. Guilt is, here, used as a weapon, by Catherine to attain the desired effects. Thereby, in all these cases, conscientiousness is kindled wherein society at large is targeted by the playwright.

Bonnie seeking to be a trend setter, tries to make Young Eddy realise that his own decision to quit the farm has greatly influenced David to stay on. She instils in him a guilt factor wherein she believes she could get David to stop being a “Dumb Farmer” (*Gen* 162) and help him seek greener pastures. Bonnie tries to make David understand, that he is guilty of not listening to his conscience. According to her, all his choices have been made for him. She feels that he has decided to prolong his selection of career not out of will but out of a certain compulsion. The certainty of choice is dictated by his matter-of-factly prudence which finds no other simple way to sort things out, under the given situation which required someone to carry on the family legacy. However, Young Eddy's bond with David makes him clarify. He soon finds out that there is no bitterness in Young Eddy. His is a sacrifice, made stoically and with great concern. His words “Your's won't” (*Gen* 164) when referring to the toughened farmers' hands, shows deftly, that sacrifices
within the family need not be blatantly advertised. The feeling of guilt which Bonnie
aspires to build up is cleverly doused by the wisdom of David. According to him, his
needs are trivial when placed in the wider sphere of the family's well being.

Robert C. Nunn in his article “Sharon Pollock's plays: A Review Article,”
comments, emphatically, on the play thus:

But the play is about inheritance, about how you can inherit an
obligation that slowly ripens into a vocation, and about the family
farm as not just a way of growing food but as a way of preserving
a sense of life spanning generations, indeed as a human construct
that is bigger than the individual and so permits him to hold his
own against the vastness of the Prairie landscape. (40-41)

As Nunn says, it is a difficult theme to depict onstage because the acceptance is
“fundamentally inarticulate” as it is a “product of time not of purposive action”
(41). Pollock meets the challenge through her stage directions and her demands on stage
designs. The audience is able to conceive the intent and extent of the playwright and the
extent of the prairies' influence on the people who inhabit it. Eventually, this attachment
helps David emerge intact from the manifold pressures (his brother, his fiancée, the
faceless government representatives) with a definite affirmation of following the path that
he had already chosen—“an honest-to-goodness farmer”; he celebrates his decision, thus,
“...Yaaaaahhhooooooo!"(Gen 164).

Young Eddy is of a different make, though. All of Bonnie's strategies fail to make
him emote a guilt feeling. Even her straight forward questions like—"Do you ever feel
guilty about leaving the farm?" and "Do you ever feel guilty about asking them to sell?"
promptly fetch a negative response. Young Eddy is able to move on only because he is free of any guilt which would have, otherwise, weighed down on his stability and threatened his constancy.

Bonnie is able to note that David is taking the same path as Alfred did, years ago. But David's resolution is just as firm and she realises that it is beyond her capacity to curb its influence. Young Eddy clarifies that the situation had been a little different then, as in Alfred's case there were no siblings to take over the responsibilities and run the farm. So it had squarely rested on Alfred's shoulders to plod on. Probably it is these experiences which make Alfred treat Young Eddy with a little partiality and let him do things the way his heart dictates. His, "I know how you feel" (Gen 179) statement reveals a lot more of his longings. His guilt for not following his likes and shunning his dislikes is subsumed by the liberty which he bestows on Young Eddy. Therefore the guilt is forthcoming; therefore, it is vitalising.

Guilt thus strikes a chord with the emotionality of the characters' behaviour. This in turn strikes a chord with the audience because people are able to relate with ease to the situations described. This is precisely what Geetha Budhira explains while discussing the play's production response amidst an Indian audience:

*Generations* is a realistic play ... The conflicting values which are the source of the tension, had clear appeal for an Indian audience, who could identify with a family crisis .... the central conflict of values (between the young and the old and between the ways of life in the country and the city) and the demands of farm life, particularly in the face of calamity---in this case, a drought--- resonated with the Indian audience watching Pollock's
play . . . the son's dilemma about whether to continue working on the
farm out of loyalty to the family and its traditions or move to the city was
one which many in the audience had faced. (24)

K. Santhanam in discussing "Sharon Pollock's Generations: A Feminist Reading"
discloses a purely Indian outlook to the play. He considers that the play primarily deals
with David's coming to terms with whatever destiny had in store for him. The critic talks
of David's stubbornness in clinging to the family heritage against all odds, of the final
moment of the play which seals the rapport between Old Eddy and David and of the deep
attachment to their land (7). It is truly a defining moment, when the two of them walk
away together, tethered to the common interest of persevering in the farm and preserving
it. So, hereby it becomes evident that David's stand in hindering the onset of guiltiness
tightens his grip over the piece of the prairie which belongs to him by descent and which
is their perpetual preserver.

Commenting on BR, Brian Brennan, in Calgary Herald lists that the Borden
murders had already been “enshrined in American folklore and told in drama, ballet and
opera” but that Pollock's play “succeeds in opening up whole new fields for conjecture”
(260). According to him Pollock’s’ is a balanced account intended to “provoke renewed
discussion among playgoers on the question of Lizzie's guilt or innocence” (260).

Lizzie's guilt has elicited various responses from people who have read into her
case study. However Pollock's version is intriguing---she seems to believe in Lizzie's fault
but she never really spells it out in her play. Pollock's ambiguity is marvellous although
one can see that Lizzie could have actually committed the crime. Pollock's device of
making her characters act out the scenes and behave as the original people had, on that
fatal day, prompt the playgoers/readers to analyse the situation and make up their own minds (Brennan 260).

Another facet to the crime is illuminated when instead of accusing Lizzie and condemning her to hell, one is able to empathise with the emotional sensitivity of the character. Lizzie's appetite for freedom and the search for a route to define her desires threaten to fall through. The circumstances (her own unemployment, her father's supposed disinheritance, her step-mother's unfair treatment) fuse to make it impossible for a spinster in 1892 to refrain from making use of the chance which surfaced at an opportune moment.

In addition to the guilt of having been held responsible for committing these heinous murders, Lizzie also suffers from the guilt of not having been able to live up to the expectations of others. Even as a little girl, she had purposely gone against conventions---she would pick up scabs by exposing her knees to infection, just to defy conformity. The "magic formula" (BR 36) for being a woman was never stamped on her, she says; perhaps because of the untimely death of her mother, soon after giving birth left her "defective," Lizzie concludes (BR 36). Thus, guilt grows with her and encompasses her, until she decides to get over it by stamping out all the norms that mark her as a failure. She decides not to marry, have children and please elders but to tend to her own needs and resolve to wipe out all obstructions if the need arouse.

Lizzie seeks justification to her forthcoming act by convincing Dr. Patrick that a bad "person," a person "who was evil and wicked" (BR 61) was definitely not fit to live and that a good person should be protected and safeguarded. Just as slugs are poisoned in the garden, cleansing society of wrong-doers in order to usher in the right becomes
essential, so her verdict remains that “not all life is precious” (BR 63). Thus she pleads her case as not guilty.

Lizzie's persistence and guile fetch for her what she might have otherwise never have achieved. As one can see, this achievement helps her emerge guilt-free. At the end of the play, she is an embodiment of confidence. If this were not the case, would she have been able to relegate responsibility of crime to the situational aspect rather than the charged individual? In the final stage direction, when the Actress donning the role of Lizzie proclaims “I didn't,” she looks at the hatchet then at the audience and speaks these closing words, “You did” (BR 70). These words uttered before the final blackout, associate both of them in guilty reconstruction. Thus, the cleverly oblique relation comes to involve the audience. They also impel the audience to accept that this would have been the outcome, had they been placed in her situation.

Emma, Lizzie's elder sister and almost her mother, is guilty of abandoning her sister at a time when she needed her support the most. At a crucial point in their lives, when their father was on the brink of signing them off his will, Emma decides to forsake Lizzie. The little trip that she plans is to help her avoid discomfiture; her escapism aggravates the gravity of the situation and quickens the climax. Emma's decision to quit being a messenger between the parents and Lizzie sets Lizzie on a spree of rebuttal. Had she not been Emma's puppet all along? She had indeed been a scapegoat, soiling her own credentials while enabling Emma to escape unscathed.

Stratton explains how Emma too has to share complicity in the murders. In extending this complicity to the audience as well, she suggests the involvement of everyone associated with the crime to feel guilty for having been responsible in creating
such a compelling situation. “In the final scene, Lizzie rebuffs Emma's persistent questioning about whether she committed the murders. . . . Emma, Lizzie claims, created Lizzie to respond to a situation as Emma never dared to herself. . . . the good girl needs the feminist, which is why Emma stays with Lizzie, even though she has good reason to fear her. One might say that Emma deliberately absented herself from the home on the day of the murders, to give Lizzie more opportunity to act” (Stratton 76-77).

In Jerry Wasserman's Introduction to *Doc* in his compilation *Modern Canadian Plays*, he states that *Doc* has three variations on the traditional memory-play structure. The most important of these being "Pollock's decision to split the character of the daughter into an older and younger self, Catherine and Katie, played by two different actors" (364). The split characteristic permits the projection of the acute ambivalent feelings that she has for both her parents. It makes the audience empathise with Katie who is struggling to judge which of her parents is rightful in conduct. She, torn between the feelings of love and hatred, is doomed to feel guilty for her own actions. While she admires her father's stubborn single mindedness that made him "such a good doctor" (364) she is confused that the same should make him "such a terrible husband" (364). The hatred that emanates towards her parents stems from her father's neglect of filial and familial duties and her mother's weakness in allowing her self worth to diminish. These juxtaposing sentiments that are so graphically represented by the Catherine/Katie split become the "wound adult Catherine carries within her, a kind of internal hemorrhaging made more acute by her perception of her own guilt in her mother's death" (364).

Katie is engulfed by the guilt that her parents' marriage happened only because of her---"that's what went wrong" (*Doc* 101), she believes. Inside of her, she claims, she
knows that they had not wanted her. She believes in this so much so that her guilt grows manifold, with time. The play moves towards a reconciliation of the two selves:

But that self-reconciliation is possible for Catherine only through reconciling with her father. Since she has been accusing herself of essentially the same crime as Doc, she has really only two choices: to convict him or drop the charges. She chooses in effect the latter. . . At the end she speak's her father's language, lets him have the last word, . . . Catherine appears finally to have cast her lot with the charismatic (and living) father. But the cost is heavy: a silencing of the dead victims, mother and perhaps grand-mother, whose cries for justice reach from the grave. They are heard, but in the end rejected, that the living might carry on" (Wasserman 364-65).

In her decision to reconcile with her father, she is able to disassociate herself from the guilty conscience that repressed her development and impeded her from flowering. Guilt, therefore, helps her shed her inhibitions and permits her to live complacently.

Another person who suffers from guilt is the Doc himself. The glaring negligence of his family pushes him to become miffed with himself although he justifies his cause very honourably. Cynthia Zimmerman, in "The Making of Warriors" says that the moral and ethical issue of negligence rests on the Doc, "We know from the outset that the doctor feels guilty. When we first see Ev he is holding the unopened letter his mother wrote him just before the suicide" (86). Others (Bob's and his own mother's) accusations that he had not cared for his immediate family begin to take their toll. Even his best friend Oscar
claims the Doc would, without a qualm, trample on all else, if they were to pose a hindrance on his way to reach his fixed goal. The man who had been steeped in unshakable faith in the nobility of his actions begins to find the need to question himself. He doubts whether his involvement in work, the bond with his chosen profession has really been worthy.

The profession which had absorbed his sympathies all through his life, had become impersonal with the adoption of high-tech gadgets. Recollecting an incident at the hospital, Ev recoils, “Do you know how they knew he was dead? Straight lines and the sound from the monitors. Nobody looked down at Frank. Just at the monitors...” (Doc 80). The wellbeing of his patients (the women who was diagnosed with breast cancer, the poor women at the tar paper shack who needed him during labour, Frank Johnston's kid who fell under a thresher, the little kids at the day clinic and Billy Barne amongst others), had been his foremost concern. The mechanical quality of approach that had set in vexes him beyond endurance. His defence is that he cannot be blamed for all the mishaps. However it is true that he had refused to permit Bob to go back to nursing and the charge of negligence set against him is sound too. The consequence therefore rests that he has to shoulder responsibilities for all these; however, the climax resolves to lift his impeachment. This is because relief comes in the form of Catherine's decision to destroy the incriminating evidence of Ev's mother's letter. This act of reconciliation relieves Ev of any trace of guilt carried over from earlier accusations. Moreover Ev is able to accurately sum up the case against him, "Suppos' it were, her death my fault, put a figure on it eh? Her death my fault on one side--- and the other any old figure, thousand lives the figure--- was that worth it? Was it? ... Was that worth it?" (Doc 123)
The nobility of his cause must be used to remove all cobwebs of his guilt. It certainly elevates his worthiness and the reader/audience is influenced to accept his justification. The question that had troubled one repeatedly throughout the play has been tackled cleverly. Can this not be addressed as 'social conscientiousness'? In all probability it has to be.

An overview of Sharon Pollock's works often classifies her as a “didactic playwright whose characters are merely mouthpieces for social criticism” (Nunn, 42). He elucidates thus:

> The grain of truth in it is her steady attention to the impact of public issues and public myths on individual lives . . . when Canada's answer to Ibsen emerges, it will be someone like Sharon Pollock, with her long haul commitment to the discipline, with her experimentation and expansion of the boundaries of her dramatic universe . . . (Nunn 42)

This prediction has been proved worthy as Pollock has emerged worthy of her commitment to social welfare. In citing familiar familial situations, she has been able to relate comparatively difficult issues with ease. In being able to identify with people and situations, she allows the audience/reader to form independent opinions on important matters ensuring that they apply their cognitive powers to draw just conclusions, based on which they may pattern their decisions and actions in their lives.

*Generations'* focus is more on the choices made by individuals in a family than on other conflicts. The Nurlin family inmates have each a priority which each thinks overshadows the other's preference. In each person's approach, Pollock connotes factors which closely take up the public cause. David's frustration makes him resort to vandalism,
Young Eddy's opportunism deprives him of the finer feelings of concern for others' predicaments, and Old Eddy's attachment to the land bespeaks his congeniality. In Margaret, one can perceive a positive aura and in Bonnie, the strain of a critical feminist who will not refrain from speaking her mind. Whatever be the scope of these people, the fact that emerges from each of their predicaments is that is that a supportive family is necessary for one to be a responsible citizen of the world. A disturbance in the family resonates malfunction in its members and in the long run, comes to reflect on societal issues. Individual choices have to be respected but again it should be understood here that this should be bound by certain limitations---one's choice can be an independent domain but should not overlap or restrict others' interests.

In “The Making of Warriors” Zimmerman cites that Doc, which is partly autobiographical “derives much of its emotional power from being so firmly rooted in reality” (84). She continues:

Head of the Alcohol and Drug Abuse commission in New Brunswick, Pollock's father praised the work's social usefulness: Most people deny the pain associated with such family situations . . . . But you've [Pollock] publicly acknowledged the pain. Everybody in that family is a victim” (84).

These words can be interpreted to reiterate that the family's role in shaping the contours of its members is crucial and inimitable. In the climax scene, reconciliation between the father and daughter is facilitated only because they have learnt to respect each other's choices and priorities. When they decide to bury the past, they find the path that leads to their future clearly lit and smooth. Without this reconciliation they would
have found it impossible to “grab” (*Doc* 125) whatever they wanted from life. This goes to state that bruised egos will end up bruising the surge of any society.

Although Zimmerman opines that with *BR* Pollock has shifted her focus from the public event to the domestic one and changed her settings to the private and personal, the family and home, she states that Pollock herself would not agree that the play is less issue-oriented. Zimmerman quotes Pollock's interview in “Towards a Better, Fairer World” thus:

> Within the family I see the same dominant and submissive positions that are acted against or reinforced as people try to preserve power or seize power. People try to choose and things block their choices. Basically I don't see any difference in the outside (public) and the inside (private) plays. In essence they are all about the same things. (73)

Zimmerman acknowledges Pollock's commitment to the socially critical feminist dimension and states that it ignores the astounding savagery of the deed. Lizzie's brutal act (for whatever valid reasons) of axing both her parents is incomprehensible but the concern here seems to be focussed on the issue of feministic interests.

Pollock's desire in recalling this past incident is simply to indicate that everyone is capable of committing murder given the appropriate situation. This goes to prove the importance of fraternity within the family. When this is lacking, then the “crisis of individuals forced to decide whether to obey the authority or their own conscience” (Zimmerman 78) results in accelerating a crisis for society.

Pollock's family plays, discussed in this chapter, are therefore connotative cruxes delineating that family as the basic set up of society is responsible for moulding well-
meaning citizens. Pollock's interest in depicting different perspectives in different people is done to highlight that the moral 'rights' or 'wrongs' is a subjective factor. People are free to form independent opinions and act according to their convictions. Pollock's endeavour is to influence the theatre-goer's intellect so that one may weigh the moral seriousness of a situation and react with a sensitivity that conforms to society's betterment.
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