Chapter IV

Sombre Musings

Sharon Pollock's commitment to further the cause of societal wellbeing takes a new dimension in her decisive efforts to highlight faultiness. She is able to bring about a feeling of melancholic apprehension in the reader/audience by mulling over particular imperfections that she has observed around her. However, creating awareness and bringing about a revolution is a Herculean task which cannot be established overnight. People have to be sensitised in order to mobilise their actions towards acting for the common good. Only this will ensure long term benefits because when seeds are sown for betterment, it must be ensured that the receptive soil is befitting to ensure growth. This goes to establish that only if people feel and empathise from the bottom of their hearts, they will be inclined to act towards removing unjust practices and setting the right principles in motion. Pollock perseveres to strike the right balance in injecting an awareness for common good amidst people by placing her plays against real-life situations and focusing the issues that affect the day-to-day activities of the common man.

Pollock is able to achieve her ends by concentrating her thoughts on relevant aspects and most importantly by steering clear from offering random advice to readers and audience. Her ability to involve the reader/audience in the plot development and subtly enthuse them to consider the concepts projected with seriousness and involvement, lists her as a playwright motivated by a passion for rectification. The plays, however, do not read as mere documentaries. This is because of the care that she takes to infuse an entertainment element in them. The proportionate mixtures of both these elements bring about a quality that is at once as interesting as it is disturbing to the reader/audience.

This chapter deals with two plays—One Tiger to a Hill and Whiskey Six Cadenza—both of which have sobriety etched on them. The first can be slotted as a prison
play given the hostage-taking prison drama it involves, while the latter is an indictment of
the drudgery of life in the dark collieries of Blairmore. The normal realities that make up
life are weighed against newspaper accounts of incidents and Pollock's purport to make
the reader/audience understand the import of critical situations is not entirely lost. Her
plays always carry a message for the common man and although she has herself doubted
the efficacy of her purpose, she has nevertheless taken the same path in these two plays as
well. In an interview published in *The Work: Conversations With English-Canadian
Playwrights*, Pollock has elaborated to Robert Wallace thus:

> Hopefully it [OT] personalises events that were just facts before. My hope
> is that the next time the audience reads about a hostage-taking event, I'll
> have given them a touch of Chalmers. . . . In *One Tiger To A Hill*, I want the
> audience to come away having been touched by that theatre incident so
> that the next time they read the paper, it isn't just the headlines. . . But I
don't think they are going to be moved to action. (122)

John Ripley's statement with reference to Pollock seconds the general opinion that
her works constitute "studies of individuals in conflict with social and political forces
which exact a price for their defiance but fail to bankrupt their moral resources" (221).
Pollock's passion for arousing consciousness works its way into *WSC* as well. Here, she
reverts to history and makes it her concern to depict the faultiness of the thriving crimes
in the Blairmore of the early 20th century. The indeterminacy of human character is laced
into the text along with her primary concern of stimulating the revolutionary senses of
people for public concern.

Each play taken for study in this chapter, has the foreboding mist of bleakness
shrouding them. The common feature rests on the philosophical content addressed by
Chalmers in *OTH* and by John Farley in *WSC*. The well-meaning Chalmers and the
matured Johnny speak of different things at different places but both point towards the need for a change in human mentality. These plays are placed together in this chapter, as along with this shared feature is the sombre setting that is again common to both plays.

*OTH* (1980) is a hostage-taking-prison-drama. The main character, Everett Chalmers, is a lawyer who is called in to mediate between prison officials and the prisoners with their hostages. Chalmers' strong social responsibility compels him to get involved but the whole endeavour is in vain as in the end nothing productive emerges from the hostage drama. However, Pollock is clear in her objective which is to sensitise the audience to come away having been touched by that theatre incident so that they may, thereafter, not remain indifferent to such incidents when reported in newspapers. Pollock has dealt with a contemporary issue and the play's idealistic commitment is to social justice.

*WSC* (1983) is a rendering of the realities of the 1920's, where Pollock inquires into life in the dark collieries of Blairmore, Alberta. The play throws light on the pressures that the inhabitants are forced to endure in order to eke out a livelihood. Pollock examines individual lives —the Farley's who are coal miners and the family of Mr. Big, Proprietor of Alberta Hotel— to expose the drudgeries and the paradoxes that constitute life. Her focus in depicting the times establishes that moral values are prone to take a setback when existential issues become a concern. Pollock's stake is that conscientiousness of the people should be stirred in order to curb the retrogradation in society. Creating awareness about the things that were, she believes, would alleviate apathy and make the essential human connection that is essential for an incumbent life.

In *OTH*, Tommy Paul, a Métis prisoner and Gillie Mac Dermott, his prison mate, plan a hostage-taking drama so as to effect changes in the functioning of the maximum security prison and also to secure their much desired freedom. Accordingly, they take
Dede Walker and Frank Soholuk (both rehabilitation officers) as their hostages. The higher officials of the prison do not relent. As the play unfolds, the devious motivations of the officials, the cunning of the prisoners and the futility of the entire operation concur to depict that reconciliation becomes impossible in the absence of sanity. Where conscientiousness is absent, peace is destroyed.

In WSC, Johnny Farley, unable to find a job away from the colliery, returns home much to the consternation of Mrs. Farley. Mrs. Farley, concerned about her son's well-being, does not want him to fall victim to the dangers of the mines (she had already lost two of her sons to the mines). However, Mr. Big’s self-serving motives become evident—apart from standing outside the normal constraints of rum-running, he is also guilty of victimising Leah, his 'chosen' daughter to his passions. Sergeant William Windsor called 'Bill the Brit' endeavours to track Mr. Big but the task is nearly always toughened as he manages to escape in his legendary car, the Whiskey Six of the play's title. In the end, Mr. Big is drawn to a position where he has to take responsibility for his actions. In a fit of frenzy, he shoots Leah to death. The play closes on Johnny's note to the audience where he expresses his comments on the current status of things. He is unable, though, to deny Mr. Big's rhetoric. His words "It may all have been lies, but still it doesn't mean it weren't true" (WSC 247) make the audience ponder over the perspectives of what is morally right or what is essentially wrong in a society which by its very nature promotes malignancy.

This chapter looks into the themes of freedom, atrocity, complication, concept analysis and responsibility. The purpose of this selection is to stress that the analysis of these concepts promote the involvement of people in the activities that surround them. It also hints that the core of human values lies in man's evolvement. In order to establish common good, man has to understand the necessity to change. His decision to take responsibility for the actions and activities of fellow human beings would be the first step
towards embracing the commonly elusive solace. A concern for peers and progeny is likely to smother the imperfections in society and create an environment smoothened by the richness of goodwill.

Each play taken for study in this chapter has sombre settings. The dreary and depressive conditions of the times hint at the setting of the retrogressive mode. In an effort to stall this mode, Pollock ascertains that creating awareness would usher in an element of moral seriousness. Although, as stated by her, she recognises that the objectives of the plays could well be defeated, she casts her vote hoping that the audience would be moved to consider their options before taking decisions in future. Herein lies her commitment to fellow human beings and thereafter to social issues.

Freedom—this is essentially the feature that man enjoys the most. It therefore becomes established that confinement and restriction are the highest forms of punishment that could ever be inflicted on man. It surpasses even the penalty of death which brings an ultimatum to suffering by putting an end to life whereas endurance of restrictions prolongs periods of difficulty. As long as man enjoys freedom of thought and movement, he is sure to be at peace with himself. The restriction of these will not only curb his growth and evolvement but also deter him from seeking out his aspirations.

Freedom of choice becomes the sustaining factor of liveliness in life. Deprivation of the freedom to go about things, strikes man's life spring and makes him recoil. Its dangerous aftermath results in the expression of his accumulated wrath. So, when an opportune moment presents itself, this wrath is likely to manifest itself in the most horrendous of ways. It therefore becomes necessary that the full import of the concept of freedom is acknowledged by people in order that they may shape their thoughts and condition their actions in rightful ways. Pollock plays her part in infusing the importance of freedom to further her cause of creating social awareness. Incidents in both OTH and
WSC unravel that freedom of thought, movement and expression are necessary for the smooth operation of the societies of the world. A friction in this would lead to unpleasantness and deterioration which will finally reflect in the status of peace and harmony. The restrictions posed on the characters in these plays, *OTH* and *WSC*, instigate them to react aggressively. The message conveyed is clear—portrayal of passive realism in works of literature is likely to steadily, even if slowly, move the audience to orient their actions towards promoting social good.

The concept of freedom is more pronounced in *OTH* than in any other play of Pollock because the incidents in the play are directly placed in a maximum security prison. The setting for the play, described thus—“the set conveys the impression of bars and confinement” (*OT* 73) points towards imposition of restrictions. Tommy Paul and Gillie Mac Dermott, as prisoners, are forced to bear the insinuating and provoking remarks of the guard, Carl Hanzuk. They also live in perpetual fear of being cast into the top tier where prisoners suffer solitary confinement. Their long haul with the devastating conditions within the prison reaches a saturation point when they learn of the mysterious death of Desjardins. This incident instigates them to think of escaping. “The play is based on a riot and hostage-taking incident at the New Westminster penitentiary in 1975, during which a classification officer was shot dead by a member of the prison's tactical squad” (Nothof 23). Hanzuk, realising the dangers of racist overtones of the corrupt system (he is a Métis prisoner) is intent on escaping the prison, seeking the freedom which it will procure for him. Therefore, he hatches the hostage-taking idea, planning to threaten the officials with the lives of the rehabilitation workers, Dede Walker and Frank Soholuk. Accordingly, they soak the inner office with gasoline and demand negotiations for a "flight out," "fifty thousand bucks" and an "inquiry into what happened to Guy Desjardins in solitary" (*OT* 94).
Paul's remark, "Inside I got no chance"(*OT* 92), made to his Counsellor, Dede, gives a pathetic insight into the desperate state of prisoners. Although he has responded well to the counseling, internal politics avert his chances of release. So, he is forced to change as he feels this is the only way in which he can devise a method of escape. Imprisonment and curtailment of freedom have brought out the worst in him. He finds it increasingly difficult to maintain his sanity within the prison. Even Dede’s reassurance that real changes could be brought about in the prison’s functioning, does not deter his resolution—"Yeah, but you go home at night"(*OT* 99) he snarls at her. This drives home the point that freedom to pursue one’s own interests makes a whole lot of difference. It changes the audience's outlook on him for they get to realise what imprisonment does to people. When people are outside the enclosures of the prison, little do they understand the implications of the restrictions forced on the inmates. Walker's remark sounds off-hand to Paul, who feels that the job of a rehabilitation officer is far removed from the actuality of having to stay locked up day after day.

Paul's comments on Walker's views on the freedom of choice are strong and come at a time which one could have thought to be a vulnerable one for him. But he is steadfast in his operation. Dede Walker claims that the inmates of the prison kill themselves only to kill the madness of loneliness and to prove that they are alive and have "got the freedom of choice"(*OT* 125). Paul ridicules this assumption— “is choosing between life and death a choice at all? Well, I got other choices!” (*OT* 125) he remarks, looking forward to their flight out. "Wherever we’re going, it's gonna be home"(*OT* 130) he proclaims. However Walker has the premonition that the officials have other things planned for them. She is able to sense the danger that Paul's plan will never be executed as conceived. She can see where the entire drama would lead them — “It’s almost all over " (*OT* 131) she says, and sadly this is what happens in the end, when they are both made a prey to Hanzuk's gun.
Her wisdom is lost out on Paul, who in all immaturity had believed in his victorious escape. Freedom thus eludes him and in his example, one is able to live through his experiences and realise that life becomes meaningless when individual choices are placed in jeopardy. Paul epitomises the independent streak that is present in all human beings and in that he crystallises man's inherent need to stay unfettered.

Everett Chalmers, described a “decent man, a constitutional lawyer and mediator” (5) by Zimmerman in “Sharon Pollock: Anatomising the Question,” attempts to negotiate between the prisoners and the authorities. Ironically, his goodwill is wasted at a time when he desperately wants to establish some changes for the prisoners and seek justice for their cause. He explains that although he had lived in the vicinity of the prison for nine years, he had never felt inclined to delve into particulars about its functioning. However, occasionally, he had, while driving past the massive grey stone walls, wondered what it would be like to be locked up inside those walls. But beyond this it had never occurred to him that he could or rather should have contributed his mite, showing his concern for fellow human beings who lived and walked the surface of his earth during his times. It is only later, when he becomes involved, (that too, accidentally) in becoming mediator does he understand the full import of the concepts of freedom, suffering and empathy. As Pollock indicated in her program note, “. . . its an attempt to understand, to see past the walls, to get a picture of people serving time inside, both those who leave at the end of the shift, and those who don't”(Nothof 23).

Pollock thus uses the narrator-mediator Chalmers to serve a double purpose—on the one hand beckoning the spectators to relate and liken themselves to the lawyer and on the other hand to compel them to sit up and take notice of the happenings around them. The functional version of the actual 1975 hostage-taking incident is acted upon with a view to declaring that history ”is not over. . . . They [the history plays] revisit the past
from the particular angle of a contemporary sensibility" (Zimmerman, “Anatomising” 5). Chalmers’ experiences, within the prison, open avenues for the spectator/reader. They feel inclined to take up social causes and devote them to channelize their energies in useful ways as in the upliftment of the prisoners. The prison inmates' lives create an awareness that life is not a bed of roses for all and makes one understand that refraining from committing crimes is the only way to protect oneself from escaping the highest form of punishment (i.e.) imprisonment. Practical knowledge of the functioning of the maximum security prison will definitely encourage people not to entertain activities that would lead them to the pen.

Zimmerman, crisply states that "In Whiskey Six Cadenza the central issue is free choice" (“The Making” 82). Freedom, here, means the right to choose at free will and to make decisions solely based on one's own convictions without having to compromise to family situations or government interventions. Johnny Farley takes the liberty to embrace freedom by not following the family tradition of joining the bandwagon of coal miners. In deciding to leave Blairmore seeking better job opportunities, he had hoped to avoid the encumbrance and drudgery of coal mining, which provided the primary source of income in his home town. However, Farley's dreams of survival outside the mines are short lived because Toronto had not offered anything "steady" (WSC 171) for him. He says “... I give up. That's what I done. I give up. Ain't got no choice. I had to come back” (WSC 172). One sees that he has become a victim of circumstances; lack of plush job opportunities robs him of his freedom to choose his career. His dejection in having been forced to return home to take up the colliery work makes him instantly accept the job offered by Mr. Big at the Alberta Hotel in return for a good deed that he had done for the proprietor. So he is able to escape the extremity of having to endure working in a hateful
environment. However, his choice does remain restricted as he has to play his part as an accomplice to rum running much to the consternation of his evangelical mother.

Mrs. Farley, a staunch supporter of the church, fervently dissuades Johnny from accepting the job offered by one whom she feels is a criminal. Mr. Big sells liquor, which according, to her intoxicates people, deterring them from keeping up their duties and robbing them of their senses. Mrs. Farley, in all simplicity, advocates a life of Prohibition and simple piety as solutions to social ills (Zimmerman, “The Making” 82). Moreover, she considers it morally repugnant that Mr. Big “is keepin' a whore” (WSC 197). Although Mr. Big is guilty of victimising his "chosen daughter" (WSC 208) Leah, to his passions, Johnny chooses not to believe this. Mrs. Farley’s view on alcoholism turns out presumably true because it becomes evident that Will's death in the mines occurred due to the hangover that he suffered from excessive consumption of alcohol the previous night. Bill the Brit's words pierce—“Rotten timber didn't kill William. The whiskey killed William”(WSC 231). The booze had stalled his involuntary action to quickly move from the impending danger. The injury sustained from the falling timber had proved fatal.

Engaged in a vociferously illegal trade, Mr. Big fails to note the disservice it does to the people of his town. “The champion of free choice, the embodiment of the frontier values of individualism and entrepreneurial daring, Mr. Big is volubly opposed to Prohibition and to laws which restrict personal freedom” (Zimmerman, “The Making” 82). Although his commendation of freedom of choice is noteworthy it demands that the choice to select at will, be seasoned with moral overtones. In the absence of morality negations are prone to occur. Likewise, one is able to decipher his apathy when he proclaims:

Mr. BIG . . . Men are most like animals and least like gods when they relinquish choice. (WSC 235)
Mr. BIG. For Governments remove choice. It's only when individuals choose and suffer the consequences of their actions that humanity can progress (WSC 236).

Mama George, his wife seconds his opinion by stating that “Hell is doing what other people tell you to!” (WSC 235). To this extent both husband and wife emerge as fanatics. Her reference to Lucifer's fall from grace as procuring for mankind the quality called choice is a case in point. Mr. Big and Mama George are to be set as examples for depicting the importance of lacing the freedom to enjoy choice with a concern for others' well-being. Devoid of this concern for morality and goaded with self-serving motives, the quality can bring about more harm than good. Just as is the case with all else, exercise of limitations becomes increasingly important.

Zimmerman sums up that both Mr. Big and Mrs. Farley are advocates of a moral simplicity which cannot address complex problems while in Leah's case complexity is more pronounced (“The Making” 82). Of course, choice is least available for an orphan, that too a girl child barely eleven years of age, who had been beaten and ill-treated in the William D. Purdy Home for Orphans. Therefore, it had come as relief to her when Mr. Big rescued her and had given her a shelter all those years ago. She does not understand that she might have to pay back the benefits enjoyed by surrendering herself to Mr. Big's untoward advancements. Still she has no choice; she has to accept the consequences. In Leah's case, she does it willingly as a form of obligatory repayment. Her situation is exploited and the dignity of her existence is ousted. The freedom that might have been hers when she escaped the wrath of the orphanage is usurped by the promiscuity of Mr. Big, in whom she had reposed complete trust.
Leah's predicament becomes more pathetic with the realisation of her love for Johnny Farley. Then, she is torn between her dedication for Mr. Big and her loyalty towards her new-found love, Farley. It becomes increasingly difficult for her to balance, especially when she finds the necessity to satisfy her conscience too. Towards the end, she breaks down completely. She realises that she cannot bury the past and continue, “How can I live like that?” (WSC 245) she cries. Almost as if at a dead end, she is pushed towards taking a decision. Given her standing, she does not know which course to adopt. But she only falters for a second—“you can still make it right,” she tells Mr. Big and hands him the gun which will soon feed on her. Mr. Big is quick to react. He fires, killing her and relieving her at the same time. Leah's freedom of choice is the space that is accorded to her at the end, to choose to end her life. Although, when alive, this freedom had been given to her in measured doses, in opting to die, she has exercised its maximum impact.

Freedom is a commodity which is best when used with caution and forethought. Injudiciousness in its exercise will, in all probability, lead to precarious aftermaths. An individual's clarity and opinion that mark his superiority over others will secure for him its benefits and through him, these benefits will reach society at large. An inhabitant who is at peace with himself is less likely to bring turmoil to society. Social wellbeing therefore rests heavily on the extent of an individual’s exercise of freedom.

Surpassing the subtle means of expressing concern over the prevailing social ills is the direct depiction and attack on the atrocities of the times. When light is thrown on the malevolent practices of a specific period of time, there are more chances for reform. Works of art that focus on realism are likely to tune people to conform to accepted norms of ethical living. Moreover, a direct approach has the added advantage of making the concerned issue comprehensible to the common man, thereby easing his endeavour to
draw his own inferences. Having stated the problem or citing the unfairness of a situation, the playwright is able to satisfy his or her inner urge to bring about a commendable change in the outlook and mannerisms of the masses. When theatre-goers are illuminated of the atrocities thriving around them, there is a good chance that they might feel compelled to relate to those issues and react in a befitting manner.

Just as a responsible writer must write with a purposive message, a just reader must acknowledge his or her duty to respond and act accordingly. Sharon Pollock has this objective when she gives shape to her ideas. Each play taken for discussion in this chapter draws from real-life incidents and portray the irregularities predominant in their days. Individual lives are dissected; divested of their sophistication, blatant truths are glaringly projected. One is able to witness the terrible facets in life—Johnny Farley's repugnance to the collieries, Everett Chalmer's disillusionment in learning about the exploitative nature of the officials, Dede Walker's dejection in not being able to establish change within the prison, Tommy Paul's frustration in accepting the corrupt functioning of the prison—all of which relate to the atrocities prevalent of the times. Illuminating this facet in order to eliminate obnoxiousness in society becomes for Pollock a prime concern.

*OTH* gives a gripping account of the atrocities that happen inside a prison. In her own words, "it's an attempt to understand, to see past the walls, to get a picture of people serving time inside, both those who leave at the end of the shift, and those who don't"(Nothof, “Ironic Images” 23). Nothof describes that the setting for the 1990 production of the play at Avon Theatre included chairs on either side of the stage to seat a few members of audience in the scene. This was to suggest, she says “that the spectators of this prison drama were complacent in the tragedy, rather than passive spectators”(Nothof, “Ironic Images” 23). This explicitly documents her concern for the afflicted. Tommy Paul as a Metis prisoner suffers on two accounts. He has to brave the
mordacious barbs of the officials apart from enduring the restrictions posed by his imprisonment. Hanzuk, makes Paul re-do the already washed area repeatedly. His insinuatingly provocative remarks incite Paul. These, coupled with the bitterness of having been relegated to the solitary confinement imposed on him for selfish reasons, accumulate in him and find a vent in his vengeful act of hostage taking.

The case of Desjardins' death is another issue that forces the officials to keep Hanzuk under check. They fear that Hanzuk, as a close associate of Desjardins, might enquire into the nature of his death under mysterious conditions in solitary prison. They want to hush up the incident so that the citizens' committee would overlook the issue. They devise a plan whereby internal charges would be pinned onto Paul, which would secure solitary confinement for Paul, rendering him, incapable of defending his case. In their endeavour to protect the guard responsible for Desjardins' death and protect the interests of the union which backs the guard, they disregard the moral functioning of the prison. Even Dede Walker's enquiry into the matter is ridiculed—"Bury him. Forget him" (OT 77) advises George McGowen, the Head of Security. Where is justice here?

Although the Warden Richard Wallace's conscience pricks, he is curbed from expressing his concern. The plight of Desjardins in the solitary prison is heart-rendering. The forlorn attempt to maintain his sanity finds expression in his screaming. Gillie, a prisonmate recalls how, in desperation, Desjardins' would say scream. Gillie says,“there was somethin' inside his head, somethin' drivin' him nuts” (OT 115). The penitentiary had driven him crazy. The prisoners feel a compelling need to escape the atrocities of the prison, if they wished to live.

Later, when Paul accomplishes his hostage-taking and negotiations are underway McGowen addresses the ministers, the government entities as “Ottawa bastards” to establish that the higher officials always prefer non-interference in institutional matters.
However dire, the circumstances might be, the authorities were reluctant to contribute towards rectification. John Ferguson, in the 1990 production of the play at Avon Theatre, had reflected on this aspect in his costume designing. Nothof explains this in "Ironic Images: Sharon Pollock's Stratford Productions," thus:

The suits worn by the authorities suggested their conservative political alignment—disguising ruthlessness with respectability: the "cool dark brown" suit on a "stripe weave" of the Head of the Security George McGowen; a "subtle blue pinstripe in a dark grey suit worn by the warden, Richard Wallace. (23)

Everett Chalmers is called to negotiate terms of the ransom. Paul has listed his requirements in two parts, the first asking for personal favours to facilitate their escape from prison. The second part lists that the prison should henceforth function legally. He demands that the shower time, recreation time and job training should be given to the inmates, "all the things they say they are doin' and they don't" (OT 94). The solitary top tier cruel punishment should be lifted in accordance with the court ruling, he states. Walker calls them "liars" (OT 109) because they say renovations are underway when, in reality, nothing is altered except the colour of the paint on the walls. It thus becomes clear that there is a yawning gap between the court rulings, the judge's verdict and the actual execution of these in practical everyday situations.

Frank Soholuk, the rehabilitation officer is able to comprehend that nobody really cares for the non-entities who people the prison. He makes a point when he states that although the hostage-taking incident might find a caption in the newspapers, it wouldn't be useful in bringing in the necessary changes. His words "everybody's cryin' out for peace—none of them is cryin' out for Justice," (OT 118) conveys the crux effectively. Is not the capitalisation of the letter 'j' in justice, appropriate here? Paul's elaboration on this
account needs to be considered at this juncture as this would help validate the atrocities that had abounded in prison:

PAUL. Lemme tell you somethin’ . . . in the last four years I spent over eight hundred days in the hole, solitary, top tier, concrete vault where they bury you. Eleven by six foot coffin. Four solid walls. Six inch window in a steel door. Light in the ceilin' they never turn off. I shower—wearing steel shackles and cuffs. If I'm lucky I shave twice a week in cold water. My toilet bowl is my sink. That's right I gotta wash in the crapper. I gotta sleep with my head a foot from the crapper. They send me back to the hole, I'm dead . . . I'm crazy . . . Or dead. (OT 125)

Life in the dark collieries of the Blairmore of the 1920's, is inquired into, by examining individual lives in WSC. The Farley family whose livelihood is predominantly coal mining reverberates with the perils of disease and death. Mrs. Fairley is most wary as she has suffered the loss of three of her sons. Perhaps this becomes the reason for her religious fanaticism:

MRS. FARLEY.

*In darkness sings.*

...  

Somebody's boy may be your boy,  
His eyes just the same shade of blue,  
Someday your tears may be falling—  
The breweries don't care they do.  
'Tis theirs to ruin and trample,  
To crush out all hope and all joy. (WSC 143)
A mother's instinctive love and concern is exemplified in his strong verse. It is but natural that she does not want her only surviving son, Johnny, to fall a prey to the mines. Mrs. Farley's dialogues, throughout the play, are interspersed with the dangers of the occupation of coal mining—the serious health hazards it poses as well as the risks involved in going underground. Cec Farley, her husband, is always "coughin' and spittin' and dyin'—but still workin' " (WSC 145) she muses. She has a premonition that William, her son, would die because of working the shifts. Unfortunately for her, this becomes a reality. She is to reel under its impact for a long time.

The lack of employment opportunities pose a threat to Johnny. So fearing that Johnny too would be forced to take to the mines, she pleads, wishing him to stay away from the mines. In order to validate her reasoning, she states the plight of Cec, who had literally become “a thing, a utensil belonging to the Dominion Colliery”, with the blackness of the coal having “worked right through the skin, the blood and the heart and the lungs and the brain!” (WSC 146) Cec's response states the blatant reality of his times—“Ain't no escapin' the mines,” (WSC 148) he says and its weightage is experienced by the reader/audience when they witness that the black from the mines blackens the lives of the miners. Ironically, the mines that provide a means of livelihood assume responsibility for causing disease and death. Diane Bessai in "Sharon Pollock's Women" opines that the play depicts "the conflicting "multiple realities" that fatefully dominate the lives of the characters”(60). "The ugliest of these, she says, "are the shocking working conditions of the mines”(60).

Will's fateful death beneath a crashing timber causes her no sudden grief because she had braced herself to accept this moment, as she had anticipated this a long time back. Her trust lies in God with whom she says she has bargained to spare one of her sons. The "deep yawnin’ hole" in her breast through which "rushes a torrent of tears" (WSC 199)
pierces through the sensitivities of the reader/audience, who indefinitely would feel the urge to wipe away the atrocities and pave the way for peace and happiness.

Mr. Big's bootlegging and illegal lifting of the Prohibition of the regulation of two percent alcoholic content in liquor throw light on yet another atrocity which directly affected the life of the commoner. Will's is a case in point. It comes to be proved that his death had not been due to a mishap that had occurred in the mines but because of his intoxicated state which had curtailed his senses from reacting voluntarily in the emergency. The efforts of Bill Windsor of the Alberta prohibition police are hindered by Mr. Big's escape in his six-cylinder MacLaughlin car, the “Whiskey Six” of the play's title. Apart from inflicting harm on the town's inhabitants by his rum running, Mr. Big is involved in another nefarious activity:

Mr. Big had rescued Leah from the street when she was eleven, and apparently seduced her soon after. Still when he or Leah recall that event they describe it in heightened messianic language . . . But his wife Mama George, sees it much more pragmatically: "You picked her off the street, you gave her everything, and in return she ..."Paid" (p.236). Mr. Big denies what Johnny suspects, but Leah says she can no longer "pretend" (p.245). She insists Mr. Big "make it right" her way. She hands him the gun. (Zimmerman, “The Making” 81-82).

The extremity of Mr. Big's self-serving ends is on display in Act Two, when his magnanimity and grandiloquence suffer a setback with his rationalisation of the abuse of Leah. He is smitten and besotted with Leah—"...If I could choose one image to carry with me through all eternity, it would be that of Leah... (WSC 203). The absurdity of this relationship transcends the limits of decency. Mr. Big is unable to acknowledge and accept the truth that Leah has fallen in love with Johnny. Although he does realise that he
has to accept responsibility for his vice and that he cannot “legitimize . . . an on-going affair . . . with a child” \((WSC \ 242)\) his possessiveness blinds him. He has to get rid of Leah, who will otherwise escape with Johnny. So, he accepts the gun she extends and uses it to break the love triangle and free himself from jealousy.

Pollock has highlighted a few facets of some atrocities that threaten the smooth functioning of society. The device of discussing individual lives brings in the perspective of self-analysis. One is made to look within oneself, check for discrepancies and arrive at conclusions with clarity and focus. The incidents, portrayed without a documentary protocol, divest unnaturalness and ingest a fellow-feeling which is purposive of fostering human-centred activities.

Thus one sees, how, in both plays, \(OTH\) and \(WSC\), injustices are perpetrated to serve ulterior motives. Tommy Paul and Johnny champion the cause of the afflicted, whereas their powerful associates—the officials and Mr. Big post immovable obstacles in the path to moral evaluations. In highlighting incidents which are widely prevalent one is made to perceive that there is a way, although perhaps a roundabout one, to reach the target of living an honourable life and that this is the path that is best chosen by respectable citizens.

Human nature is susceptible to cultivating complications when dealing with people and within relationships. It is seldom possible to steer clear of conflicts when the world is peopled with heterogeneity. The motley group of inhabitants has varied objectives that dissipilate simplicity and tend to help develop knottiness. Communal living is threatened due to this complexity; harmony is disturbed as an aftermath and the resultant chaos, challenges the best of efforts to ingest solidarity.

When the causes of these complications are inquired into, it will be acknowledged that lack of empathy for fellow human-beings lie at their root. Egotism furthers this cause,
feeding in man, fostering notions that propel condescension. In such a scenario, affability and congeniality assume great importance. These need to be generated if solutions are sought to combat the complications that govern man's life on earth.

A genuine concern for the human predicament is noticeable in Literature, for this can actively delineate an individual's actions. It has the mite to accomplish what myriad classes on moral issues might fail to inspire. Pollock's contribution to this end is far from negligible. She has the innate drive to deliver what she considers important to be brought to the forefront. She talks about contemporary concepts, drawing liberally from yesteryear issues. Perhaps this accounts for her oeuvre and influence. Kirsty Johnston in “Theatre Research in Canada” formulates that Pollock's “work and art have been the subject of much academic study and public discourse.” This reiterates Pollock's popularity and reach. If kindling the conscience of people was her intention, then she should be credited of having succeeded in her efforts, since these are definitely not lost on the audience or the reader.

In *OTH*, Lena Benz, a social activist, is called to assist Ev Chalmers in negotiating with the prisoners to release the hostages. Lena Benz's entry brings in more complications than relief, for she is unable to bring about a compromise between the prison authorities and the hostage-takers. Although Benz's intentions are well meant, her method of delineation emerges impractical. A bound copy of a paper on penal reform which includes interesting phrases as "autocratic administrative structure—well-established resistance to significant change—bureaucratic norms that promote men with no professional qualifications in penology—" *(OT* 104), is far removed from operational practices of these in a prison, which houses an excessive forty percent more than its maximum capacity. She is forcibly removed from proceeding with the negotiation because of her ineffectiveness. It is her view that reforms cannot be reinforced and so she concludes that
the best help one can render is to “put a torch to the place” (*OT* 107). She does not exert charm because she has given up. Pollock has endorsed the same in her interview with Wallace—“I also feel she compromises herself, . . . That's why she doesn't create more of a fuss when she leaves. She'll go to the press and she'll make hay out of it. But she's given up. *Tiger* is, in this respect more despairing, perhaps. I don't think of it as despair exactly, I think of it as complexity” (122). Benz is a quitter who relents to the pressures which surround her. Her exit off stage even before the end of Act I projects that resolving complexities needs, more than an in-depth knowledge of the issue, a definitive attitude towards accomplishing the task at hand.

The hostage-taking incident brings together a group of people and this becomes a breeding ground for controversies. First, there is a difference of opinion between the rehabilitation officers—Dede Walker and Frank Soholuk. Soholuk opposes Walker's principles. His matter-of-fact opinion states that reform is not possible within the prison but Walker's stance is that one has to keep struggling till the end is achieved.

Another complication is embellished in the relationship between Walker and Tommy Paul. The prisoner's supposed sexual relationship with Walker compounds the issue. Bessai in "Sharon Pollock's Women" remarks:

…the ambiguity in her [Walker's] own expression of feelings for Tommy Paul, points to a problem in the play, certainly as far as it's multiple points of view are concerned . . . Soholuk's angry accusation that she is "a lamb looking for a slaughter," is a reasonable challenge to her unrealistic notion that Paul might do some good in his negotiations for the reforms she taught him to value. He is justified since innocent lives, his own included, are at stake . . . (51-52).
However, her job is not an easy one considering Paul's statement. He states that he is proud of all "the good things, the bad things" that he had done. Walker is bewildered when he continues, saying—"Respected by people I know" (OTH 113). Complications ensue because dealing with people requires skill and a knack that if not inborn, has to be cultivated.

Pollock explains to Sherill Grace in "How Passionate Are You?: An Interview with Sharon Pollock" that:

She [Walker] believes this man needs intimacy and contact and somebody caring for him. This will take him psychologically to where he has to go to keep himself out of solitary and to be a model prisoner. It's therapy, not love, and a betrayal of Paul, setting in motion events that lead to both their deaths (114).

On the other side, the government officials within the prison walls are motivated by their subjective views on the happenings. Their disunity in matters of operation trigger off complications. As indicated earlier, Walker and McGowen have opposing views on execution. Whereas the former prioritises the rescue of the hostages, the latter lists the guards classified as marksmen, obviously to shoot them down if the situation got out of hand. "I know the priority" (OTH 91) he says, hinting at the discrepancy in their thoughts.

Analysing the workings of the human mind becomes a formidable task as impulsiveness is a predominant trait in humans. Carl Hanzuk, the guard who eventually shoots Dede Walker, is shaped by the circumstance he is placed in. His view of life in the prison, although not as a prisoner, is that it is eventually cumbersome. He has a story behind every scar on his body—a result of the wrath of the prisoners. In addition, he has to live a secluded life because, he says, when a prisoner gets released "you don't know what's in his head, what's in people's heads, what they're thinkin' inside" (OTH 130). The
spectator is in awe as to whether his act of shooting Dede Walker is an impulsive one or if it had been premeditated, because towards the end of the play (for the first time since the opening), he is seen wearing a holster and a gun over his uniform (OTH 129).

In *Whiskey Six Cadenza*, Mr. Big manipulates and takes advantage of the vulnerable position of the orphan, Leah, whom he chances upon on the streets of Blairmore. “I could discern,” he asserts to Leah, “your potential to love, and to be loved, to be honest, to be loyal, to trust, to be worthy of trust . . .” (WSC 156), to the astonished Leah who ponders how that would have been possible because she had barely been eleven years of age at that time. The complications that ensue are predictably in favour of Mr. Big. However, the climax scene shows a reversal of situations. Leah decides to forestall continuation of her divided loyalties and resorts to allow Mr. Big to take away her life. She realises that she would not be able to strike a balance between her newfound love for Johnny and her obligatory love for Mr. Big. She equates him to a Godhead for having taken her within his fold. She feels that she should exhibit her gratitude in every way possible. Leah repeatedly cognises that but for Mr. Big and Mama, she would not have had anyone. It can thus be conjectured that her preoccupation with her current position brinks on the border of an obsession. Therein rests her compulsion to compromise—she must give herself in totality to the man who had given her "everything" (WSC 209).

Leah would have remained without any cause for complaint had it not been for the surprising turn of events which had brought Johnny into her life. The young girl feels a natural attraction to Johnny who displays his love in an alluring, romantic way and captures her heart. Thereafter Mr. Big, bitten by the jealousy bug, finds it difficult to accept that Leah has grown up now. Mama George's unconditional love for him makes her explain, with a view to helping him acknowledge his changing status in regard to his relationship with Leah. But, predictably acknowledging his involvement, Mr. Big
complicates matters further by stubbornly refuting her sagacity. Leah “paid” (WSC 236) for Mr. Big's generosity, she elaborates. “Mama George permits the transgression because her greater love is for her husband” (Zimmerman, “The Making” 82). Mama George and Mr. Big” are controlling parents who put their own narcissistic needs first. They do more damage in the name of love than either the booze or the mines” (Zimmerman, “The Making” 82). Mr. Big vehemently denies his illicit relationship with Leah. In his reluctance to accept that Johnny has usurped his place in Leah's life, he turns overtly possessive. This expresses itself in aggressiveness—he is able to show his irrationality by taking the drastic measure of shooting down Leah. He feels he is justified because she had rejected "her rightful position" to be by his side (WSC 240). Complications thus multiply thwarting efforts to rectify complexities.

Johnny's predicament can be equated to Leah's experience, especially in the light of the dualism that they both suffer. Johnny too is torn between his gratitude for Mr. Big and his love for Leah, as the two are interlinked. Would he not be ungrateful if he were to confess his love for Leah and take her away from Mr. Big? At the same time, how could he ignore his swelling love for Leah? Could he be justified for allowing Mr. Big to get away with incest? Complicated overtones are thus deciphered.

Johnny, literally worships Mr. Big. He is overwhelmed with thankfulness for the man's benevolence. After all, it is solely due to Mr. Big that he is able to eke out a livelihood and to escape the rigour of the mines. He is highly appreciative of the adventurous spirit latent in the old bootlegger. Johnny's spirited boss enthrals him with his charisma. The youth is keenly indulgent of his master's hyperbolic eccentricities but this cannot deter his pragmatic outlook. Just as he is confined to his mentor, he has to be bound to his commitment to Leah. He cannot tolerate Mama's acceptance of Mr. Big's wayward behaviour. He proclaims, convincingly that "a person can't be givin' people to
people! He [Mr. Big] don't own her— nor me— and if her [Leah] and me . . . It'd be our own business, have nothin' to do with him" (WSC 209). Mama is ultimately forced to accept the truth that underlies this statement.

Mrs. Farley's maternal instincts suffer a setback when Johnny accepts Mr. Big's offer of a job. Her temperance zeal dissuades her from allowing her son to work for Mr. Big whose bootlegging is a crime. Apart from this, he is also guilty of exploiting the vulnerable Leah. Although, she had not wanted Johnny to take to the mines, she is not happy with his job at Alberta Hotel. She complicates her love for Johnny in her efforts to make him accept her terms. Compulsions lead to complications!

Complications thus evolve and there seems to be no single route to resolve the differences of opinion. Mr. Big is possessive of Leah, Leah is forced to decline her love for Johnny, Johnny's encumbrance disposes his affinity with his own mother and with Mr. Big, Mr. Big recoils from his conjugal duties to Mama, Mama 's selfishness feeds Mr. Big's notoriety. The wheel that is destined to rotate is brought to a grinding halt with Leah's death. This is widely indicative that complications are hardly ever disentangled without dramatic or bizarre decisive actions. On the other hand, it becomes evident that atleast a partial relief can be expected if people acknowledge the causative factors that feed these complications. In effect, society at large is benefitted, for it is these petty concerns that ignite the more serious issues.

Analysing concepts projected in literature works towards reforming society. In literature, writing about human impulses and motivations propagates social ideas. Analysing concepts helps man in two ways. Firstly he is able to delve deep into his own actions and reflect on his thoughts and feelings. Secondly, by directing this potential on others, he is able to weigh the morality of the issue in question. He can bring about a
social change by either or both of these. Analysis is an important process in human thinking, the end result of which could combat social evils.

In his article "Writers must serve a social purpose" Markandey Katju endorses that "literature should serve the people, and help them in their struggle for a better life, by arousing emotions against oppression and injustice (11). Analysis brings this active realism to the fore as it opposes passivity and inspires people to fight evils. The writer further elaborates:

. . . active realism is optimistic, characterised by solicitude and concern for the people. It inspires them to strive against their plight and improve their conditions. . . .'Art for social purpose' may be expressed not always in a direct way, but also in indirect, roundabout or obscure ways . . . (11)

Sharon Pollock has been instinctively inclined towards depicting the ills prevailing in society. Her intentions are born out of a genuine sympathy for human conditions. In One Tiger To A Hill, her prison writing depicts the formative influence of incarcerations. Concepts of rebellion and justice form the core of the play, whereas in Whiskey Six Cadenza, various forms of social resistance are touched upon. In this play, social concepts of bootlegging and coal mining form the focus.

One Tiger to a Hill has contributed to "Pollock's reputation as a social/political/historical playwright" (Rasporich 889). This play highlights the defective administration of maximum security prisons of the 19th century. The events of the play that cover forty-eight hours assail the nuances of the working of a prison. The prison officials wish to keep off the interference of Lena Benz, and prevent her from inquiring into the death of a prisoner in solitary. So, they devise alternate methods to get a court order to stall her entry into the premises. Moreover, rehabilitation which is mandatory for the prisoner's wellbeing is treated with contemptuous disregard by the officials."Rehab's a
pain in the ass” McGowen scoffs (OT 80). The officials are reluctant to accept the recommendations of the rehabilitation officers, Walker and Soholuk, although there are "new points" (OT 80) included. However effectiveness of the counselling is ridiculed by the rehab officers themselves. Soholuk's view is that in a maximum pen, re-hab cannot establish much. This appears predictably true with the hostage-taking incident gaining momentum. Then, the officials are forced to consider negotiations as they have three people in captivity. So, against their deliberations, they are forced to seek the help of Ev Chalmers.

Ev Chalmers' entry brings in recommendations endorsing Paul's demands. He says that the government backs his demands but this is ridiculed and rejected by Mc Gowen on the grounds of practicality. The Head of Security's outrage, "What's real is your parliamentary paper is just that, nothin' but paper! Bleedin' hearts and M.P.s don't run a maximum security pen, we do... (OT 105) marks that the officials who work inside the prison are actually "servin' time" (OT 105). McGowen talks about the futility of negotiating and making deals with prisoners as dangerous as Gillie MacDermott, accused of shooting a Chinese grocer four times in front of his kids and Tommy Paul, who had blown a girl's head off and had then left to have a drink.

On the other side, Gillie's version that he had not meant to hurt the Chinaman and that all he had wanted was the Chinaman's money, marks his capriciousness. Paul yearns for a normal life outside the prison. This can be discerned in his pining—"I know there's a life out there different from mine," (OT 135) he tells Chalmers. The dualities presented in these situations calls for analysis, so also does the concept of the incongruity of prison-functioning.

Lena Benz's statement: "I operate just like the government. I make it my business to know what's none of my business" (OT 103) is an interesting one which lends itself to
multiple interpretations. While it hints at the sardonic operations of prisons, it also affirms that people should be conscious of the happenings in and around their places. Her argument that politicians kill more men than the inmates of the pen might have ever killed sets in another process. The marked difference in the treatment meted out to similar crimes defies justice.

Frustration for the unaccomplished desires of the heart seems to trigger the motivations of the prisoners. They commit crimes in frustration and when in custody, frustration for independence drives them to commit further crimes. How else could one explain Gillie's outcry, "Sometimes I just want to hit somethin'" (OT 111). When the root of the problem is considered, solutions may emerge. In the absence of a dissection results cannot be expected.

Ev Chalmers, the narrator of One Tiger To A Hill is a conscientious lawyer who resolutely wants to negotiate the deal, rescue the hostages and secure for Paul, his "reasonable demands" (OT 105). However, his disillusionment becomes complete with the denial of these demands and with the outrageous killing of Paul and Walker by Hanzuk. Unable to understand the import of these happenings, he speaks to the audience at the close of the play:

CHALMERS. I remember I stood there . . . looking down . . . And I thought . . . if he doesn't move the blood from his jaw will run into her hair . . . but he didn't move and neither did she . . . What were the lies? . . . Is everything lies? . . . tomorrow . . . I said . . . I will have breakfast . . . drop . . . The kids off at school . . . on Friday . . . I'll go to the Y . . . he weeps .

(OT 137)

This monologue delivered before the final blackout forms the gist. Should not people feel responsible for the sufferings of others? There being no justification for these
deaths, Chalmers feels a deep sense of resentment; resentment for not having been able to accomplish the task at hand, satisfactorily. He is helpless and wishes that he would continue living his routine regardless of these happenings. In the due course, the audience too comes to experience the sense of betrayal that he suffers when he learns of the perfidious dealings of the pen. He feels a dismal sense of disappointment that he has been called to serve such an institution.

In *Whiskey Six Cadenza*, Pollock examines a "controversial era from the Canadian past, . . . prohibition as it affects the small Crowsnest Pass mining town of Blairmore in 1919 and 1920" (Bessai 59). Her focus is on an incident that had happened fifty years ago deliberates that the past is always alive in its relativity to the present. The concept is embodied in Dolly Danielle's (Will's girlfriend's) outlook on life:

> In Act Two of *Whiskey Six Cadenza* there is a scene in which Will's ghost appears, to court and dance with Dolly. This is followed by an argument between Dolly and Leah about the past. Leah says "You gotta start fresh," but Dolly disagrees. Dolly says that the past lives on "inside" and even though Leah wants "to leave everything behind, pretend things never happened," "Nobody can" (p. 224). Leah's subsequent choice of suicide confirms the convincing nature of Dolly's words—the past simply cannot be buried. (Zimmerman, “The Making” 83)

Will had used the strong solution, lye, on his calluses to soften the skin and lighten the black colour of the coal that had stained his hands, from continual mining. Analysing Dolly's sensitivity to the “thought of the men crawlin' thro' seamy little spaces in the bowels a the earth” and her “particular hatred for coal,”(WSC 150) it is obvious that Will had used the lye for Dolly's sake. Although the chemical had stung him, had eaten away
and reddened his skin, his abundant love for her had made him do it. Therefore, she is unable to bury her thoughts of him, long after his untimely death in the colliery.

It is thus evident, thus that the present grows out of the past and is always in relation with the past; it is impossible to extricate one from the other or to consider either of these in isolation. Actions become meaningful if they are analysed considering activities that belong to the past. Meaningless continuation of past deeds without prudent analysis leads to destruction of peace.

Mrs. Farley’s conception of lawlessness and prohibition is indeed inspiring. Although a commoner who is struggling to make both ends meet, she remains steadfast in her conviction—"liquor's danger to the soul is far worse than the mine's damage to the body. Further, there are nasty rumours about Mr. Big’s ambiguous relationship to his "chosen daughter" Leah" (Bessai 60). So she advises,"You are workin' for that man, Johnny" (WSC 197). He disregards her advice and alienates her. She does not relent even though her love and concern for the only surviving son is enormous.

Mr. Big, who is a pivotal character in the play, flagrantly disregards the law, advocating freedom of choice while covertly reaping huge profits from rum-running. Likewise his concern for his foster daughter, Leah and the pretentious show of attaching an etherealness to her bondage is palpable when the truth of their physical intimacy is finally endorsed. So, one is able to perceive that Mr. Big is hypocritical and that selfishness rules in his life. Although, initially he is able to keep up the facade of a well-wisher for whom society should feel indebtedness, as the play progresses his deception becomes evident. Analysing his thought-process and methods of operation, it becomes clear that his concerns for the people of Blairmore and his own family are indeed dummy. He has the smartness to cheat Bill, the Brit, the police officer on various occasions and escape with his booty. Although Bill knows that Mr. Big is serving drinks with more than
two percent of the legal constitute, he is unable to prove it. He becomes the target of Mr. Big's derisive remarks and is mocked at, for his plebiscite vivaciousness.

The concept of plebiscite—“YES TO PROHIBITION” or “. . .VOTE NO TO PROHIBITION” (WSC 162) sets one delving into the connotations of a “yes” or "no". It sets people's minds on the issue at hand, cajoles them to consider the setbacks or benefits accordingly, and make them conscientious of their actions. Is this not what a work of fiction can best accomplish? Further, his questions to Johnny, " Can you keep a man sober thro' coercion a law? Can a man be made moral by threatenin' punishment?"(WSC 194), set him as well as the audience on a thought-provoking spree. The moral and practical implications of these concepts are indeed worthy of analysis.

On Johnny's side, he is torn apart from the duality projected by Mr. Big. His compulsion to know the exact nature of Mr. Big's relationship with Leah projects that taking advantage of vulnerable persons is commonplace in real life situations. The grain of doubt threatens to destroy the gratitude that he feels for Mr. Big's generosity in taking him as his protege.

Thus, analysing serves to make people ponder over the consequences of their actions. Be it Ev Chalmers, Mr. Big or Mrs. Farley, irrespective of the length of their respective roles in the dissected plays, they serve to sow a grain of conscientiousness in the hearts of the multitudes who read or witness the plays. This grain is likely to grow and spread the cause of goodness when it is nurtured under suitable conditions. Therefore, analysis is the single first step that should be taken if change is necessary for the imminent progress of society.

Professor and Hindi critic, Natwar Singh at the Sahitya Akademi awards function held in Delhi on February, 14th 2012 commented that “Words of writers carry a lot of weight”. Professor Singh, addressing the issues of the times cautioned the writers not to
succumb to pressures threatening their freedom of speech and expression (Staff Reporter 15). Katherine Boo, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service, speaking about her first book *Behind the Beautiful Forevers*, tells that she had always wanted to attack the preconceived notions that people nurture against the underprivileged. "If people don't know these people are, how are they going to care? she says." I want the reader to feel what I feel" (Rajan 2). Boo is credited of having brought results in the form of reforms in the conditions of homes for the mentally impaired. So, her stand that obviously when writers write these issues, it is not just to see one's own "pretty words on the page" (Rajan 2) is justified. These are two instances where the importance of social responsibility in writers is highlighted.

The extent of social responsibility vested in the author of a piece of work is beyond comprehension. The author himself cannot gauge the intensity or reach of a certain concept. In reading a book, an article or witnessing a play, multiple responses are evoked in the readers or spectators. Their interpretations are varied, innovative and novel. Therefore, the author must realise his moral responsibility before producing a work.

When writers fix the context and reach out to the reader/ audience, the impact is tremendous. Just as it has brought about changes in the past, it is likely to bring about dissolution of injustices. Socially responsible writers garner respect and admiration for this quality. In Pollock's case too, this has emerged true. As seen, most of her works are based on politic portrayal of issues that concern people of Canada and that which can be applied to the people of any other nation or group too.

*One Tiger To A Hill* pulsates the cause of social responsibility of people so directly that the intent of the writer cannot fail to achieve its target. The play's theme culled from a real-life happening endorses two aspects—that incidents as those described in the play are not fictitious concoctions but have occurred in the past and that the injustices that govern
the workings of most prisons must, in the interests of humanitarian concerns, be removed. As an advocate of social reforms, Pollock's reliability on her dramatic works is substantial as she remains optimistic about the results to be obtained.

Dede Walker, although marked as a conscientious re-hab officer in the play is cast in doubt by her creator. Soholuk's advice to get a transfer and go someplace where she could make some difference falls on deaf ears. She is consistent in her efforts to counsel Tommy Paul and to establish some order in the workings of the prison. However, Pollock demystifies the concept while questioning—“What responsibility this white-assed liberal, well-intentioned, wilfully politically naive woman, or individuals like her, bear in a struggle for truth and justice”? (Grace 28). Pollock tries to break society's preconceived ideas that support the intentions of white liberalism. Walker's death at the end of the play glorifies her doubt that after all Walker could not establish the reforms that she had advocated throughout the hostage-taking drama.

Lena Benz is another socially inclined activist who closely follows in the footsteps of Walker. Although she has no illusions about what is happening inside the prison—the questions that she directs at Wallace are loaded with concern for the prisoners and the hostages—she fails to impress. This is because she meekly permits herself to be forcibly removed by the officials. She is an example of social activists who are more concerned about making hay at the press than focussing on pertinent issues. Her visit to the prison however fortifies the cause of the prisoners. Her involvement in the matter of the kid who wanted to become a prison guard and her concern where irate cat-lovers protested the inhuman act of killing cats (as acts of revenge) ignoring the pathetic plight of the imprisoned onlookers, expresses that the mentality of the general public needs a makeover and that too a quick one.
Chalmers comes in redeeming the setbacks and standing for the cause he had taken up. He had been non-committal to societal issues all his life but now having driven past the pen for nine years, a resolve had germinated in him. "What if the things you hear, the things you don't want to hear, the things they won't let you hear, what if those things really happen inside?" (OT 76) sets him thinking and embarks him on a mission hitherto unexplored by him.

Once inside the prison, negotiation begins but there is no steady progress. Chalmers realises the hollowness of the promises made and that the justness of the prisoners' demands and the truth of the recommendations made by the judge are to no avail. Wallace says that the recommendations are "being implemented" which is hypocritical considering that it's more than a year since the ruling was passed. The picture presented is dull and drab with no solutions evident in the near future. Therefore, his initial exuberance of standing for a cause fades into oblivion. His sympathy comes to rest with the distraught prisoners upon understanding that the opinionated authorities would never allow for the negotiations to bear fruit. The torture cells and physical and mental abuse of prisoners reach out to him; that he is helpless under the circumstances is a pity. He is unable to satisfactorily answer Paul who wants an inquiry into the mysterious death of Desjardins in Solitary. The prisoners' emerge well meaning and responsible whereas the officials' inquiry seems offhand. Thus,

Chalmers comes to appreciate the perspective of the prisoners; he sees the desperation and dehumanising and often sadistic treatment that they endure. More importantly he comes to suspect the intentions of the warden, who has hired him (Zimmerman, “The Making” 71).

The play's closure sees a distraught man whose concern leaves the audience astonished. Life has to go on irrespective of the injustices, the losses and the grief
suffered. His tears are an outcry targeted to reach out to the audience—to make them 'feel' for these downtrodden people, to wake them from their reverie and set them into progressive motion. As Zimmerman says *Whiskey Six Cadenza*

> brings to life the social issue of its day: Prohibition and Temperance . . . .

The play presents the historical commonplaces of prairie life: the grim situation of the Blairmore miners, the solace and escapism provided by both the beer parlour and the church (The Making 81).

Mrs. Farley, Johnny's mother and William Windsor, (a.k.a. Bill the Brit) the Prohibition officer are causative influences in propagating socially inclined objectives. Mrs. Farley as a Temperance zealot wants to help Johnny get out of Mr. Big's influence. She seeks out a "respectable job" (WSC 227) through Bill who is willing to take Johnny as a repository of information, vesting in him the duty of confiding to him the illegal activities of his employer Mr. Big. Johnny's adamance in refusing to accept the job offered and his disrespect of law, ultimately ends in destroying the personal relationship of the mother-son duo. Even Bill's strong argument and enticement does not convince Johnny to change. “A moral man don't need to change,” he advises but Johnny's loyalty to Mr. Big appears unshakeable. Brit aspires to stop the smuggling of liquor but his efforts are invariably thwarted by the duo's escape in Mr. Big's Six cylinder Mc Laughlin car that gives the play its title.

The closure of the play brings in a spirited action in the climax scene, where Johnny successfully negates the trap laid out by the Brit. Although he supports Mr. Big by saving his loot, Johnny's change is imminent. Two incidents are indicators. William's unforeseen death in the mines incites Johnny into seriously considering the after-effects of alcoholism. The incident focuses on the reality of the dangers of intoxication while mining; it brings into his life what had hitherto been mere hearsay. The difference that
experience brings in propels him to change his outlook of life, thus arousing in him a conscientiousness that had so far eluded him. Moreover, the play's conclusion where Johnny looks back from a later time pondering over the dichotomy of the lies and the truth clearly sets in the change. The episode of Leah's death helps him mature into adulthood. His decision to leave the town suggests that he wants to start afresh. In all probability, that new life would be based on humanitarian principles and concerns.

Prohibition was an attempt to forbid by law the sale and consumption of intoxicating beverages. The Canadian government controlled the making and trading of liquor and in March 1918 it stopped . . . . The zenith of prohibitionist success in Canada was reached in the early 1920s where imports from the outside were again cut off by provincial plebiscites . . . . (Hallowell).

A dramatic aspect of the Prohibition era was rum-running . . . .

Liquor legally produced in or imported into Canada was exported legally under Canadian law to its "dry" neighbour. Smuggling often accompanied by violence, erupted in border areas and along the coastlines (Hallowell).

The Temperance movement was a movement to control alcohol consumption which reached its height in Canada in the 1920s (Hallowell).

*Whiskey Six Cadenza's* focus on these movements that form the core of the play formulate Pollock's interest in depicting social responsibilities of the times. Her methodology of drawing people's attention to important phases in history goes to reiterate that the future grows out of the past; it also hints that people should make it their concern to be inclined to society's wellbeing. Man cannot live in isolation; societal care will bring
him multiple benefits in the form of preservation of peace and the free will to answer his innermost callings.

Social responsibility thus forms the core in both *One Tiger To A Hill* and *Whiskey Six Cadenza*. The playwright's strong compulsion to be socially oriented is evidenced in these plays. The focus on past events is to jolt the audience into considering that reflecting on societal issues will always remain trendy and is necessary for the evolvement of the general public.

Robert Wallace's question as to whether a play as complex as *One Tiger To A Hill*, might cause the audience to abdicate their responsibility for social problems is answered with such crispness that it removes any element of doubt lurking in any of the theatre-goers. Pollock disregards the accusation as baseless. She ascertains that it is the converted who actually make the changes and if they are moved to action after seeing the play or if it gives the strength to continue the fight, then there is nothing wrong with that. According to her causing a "tiny human connection" is the most important reaction that can be wrought from the audience. She endorses—"that's as much as I can hope to do" (Wallace 122)

The human connection that Pollock speaks of is applicable to all her plays because each has a common thread of social concern running through its fabric. Pollock leaves no stone unturned to cull out themes for her plays. Historical incidents, crimes reported in newspapers, hostage-taking incidents, illegal practices, unjustifiable government policies are all scrutinised but without any malice. Her pure concern is to help fill the current vacuum of societal disorientation. *One Tiger To A Hill*’s rendezvous with prison life and *Whiskey Six Cadenza*’s coal-mining miseries present a drab picture, perhaps minus the zap and cheerfulness of dramatic entertainment, but infused with the right mixture to help realise her conscious-raising intentions.
Pollock's thematic preoccupations concern moral changes in *One Tiger To A Hill*. The principal proponent of this change is Ev Chalmers who feels propelled to plead the cause of the inmates of the pen. He is sure to find a kin in everyone who confined by daily routines and conventional morality and fails to actively participate in incorporating reforms towards bettering the conditions of fellow human beings. Witnessing the phases of Chalmers' evolvement—from being a passive onlooker to an active negotiator and ultimately towards empathising with the downtrodden— influences the onlookers to analyse incidents and to acclimatise if and when necessary. He is a role model set to instil that its never too late to adapt. The myth that social activities should be relegated to social activists is busted as one sees that ordinary men and women can participate in every day situations to effect changes. All this requires is a commitment towards justice and morality. The play's inquiry into the atrocities of the day infuses awareness of hitherto unknown realities. Pollock's success emanates from the fact that it is not just awareness that is created; the audience is moved towards empathising with the wrongs prevailing in society. Is this not the most important component in bringing about a change for the better?

*Whiskey Six Cadenza,* falls closely in line with the above mentioned play with its concern for Prohibition and Temperance. Once again Pollock has endeavoured to tread dangerous ground because dealing with controversial issues is bound to trigger resistance. Slowly, she advances her intent by interspersing the play with ideal doses of sentiment, facts and opinions so as to elevate it from the grounds of a docu-drama into an appealing entertainer. Whether it is Mr. Big versus Bill the Brit, Johnny versus Mr. Big, Leah versus Dolly, coal mining versus rum-running, controversies abound and opinions flourish but the ultimate result of depicting the relevant themes of the day is accomplished. It also goes to establish that every person in a society should be capable of playing his own
cadenza by nurturing a civic sense that which does not hinder the progress of others and that which protects the interests of all. It is indisputable that the cause of civic sense is furthered through the dramatisation of plays of this genre.

While it is true that the potential audience sensibility is heightened by reality TV and news channels, Pollock's view is that playwrights are society's weathervanes. A play which is enacted is real and is firmly placed in the “now”. She cites the example of the chance of a fire breaking out during a live performance in the theatre. Would not the fire stall the performance? Would not it make people run out of the building? Actors and spectators would make a bid for the exits whereas in the case of a film being screened, only the audience react, while the film continues to play (Grace 32). This goes to prove that only theatre is filled with the potentiality of influencing people and making them react to situations. Pollock works with this objective and this is the quality that makes her unique.
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