Chapter VI
Inge's difficult period began with the production of *A Loss of Roses*. Starting with that play his two other Broadway productions also ended in a failure—both critical and financial. Inge was at first hurt deeply by the rejection of these plays and felt that it was more due to the contribution of a man, who was exercising the prerogatives of a "fast-rising young drama critic" but admitted latter, from Hollywood, that he was:

"going through a Metamorphosis—just what kind I don't know. But I know I've got to change. I don't know if I'll ever go back to East to live. And if I do, it won't be in New York city. I just have the claustrophobia in New York, out here there's the weather, and an open feeling". ¹

William Inge, was one of the three prominent figures of American playwriting of the 1950's, and he with Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams shared the glory of being the Big three of Broadway. Inge who seemed to have reached the zenith with his four smash-hits in a row and never tasted the anger of critics faced his first failure with *A Loss of Roses* which went down after 25 performances. The reviews were regretful, but Inge reacted as though he had been clubbed. So far Inge had been taking success for granted and the first failure made him to think where he went wrong, but with the failure of
"Natural Affection" Inge made his decision and moved to Hollywood. Several factors contributed to the failure of these plays, and in this chapter an analysis of his three Broadway failures is attempted.

**A LOSS OF ROSES**

*A Loss of Roses* was first presented on November 28, 1959 at New York. It is a play still in the old mode with a Midwestern setting. Here Inge deals with the problem of Helen Baird, a mother raising her son alone, and her unhealthy passivity and dependence in her twenty-one year old son Kenny. Helen works as a nurse. But her main endeavor in life is to encourage her son to grow up emotionally, marry, leave home, be on his own. She is conscious of the fact that there is an underlying tension in their relationship. Inge concerns himself in this play with how this tension is eventually resolved and how the Oedipal bond between the widow, Helen Baird, and her twenty-one-year old son, Kenny is untangled.

We are informed that Helen's husband Kenneth died in his attempt to save Kenny from drowning. Helen, though, she had the opportunity to remarry did not do so because of Kenny's dislike. Thus Kenny has made Helen suffer twice in love and marriage. This fact also comes to the fore in Helen's resentment of Kenny though it is usually present indirectly. In fact it is Kenny who is more dependent and more possessive. He objects to her marriage and wants her to wait on him constantly and bake him homemade pies every day. Nevertheless Mrs. Baird,
realizing that it is not healthy for either of them to continue being dependent on each other, tries her best to untame her son.

Added to the problem of her son's greater dependence on her Helen has to contend with another problem when Lila, a former neighbor who had helped Helen care for Kenny when he was small enters their house for a brief stay. Lila is down on her luck and is in a pitiable condition. She has no familial ties and is in fact relieved after the death of her mother. She says "I guess Mama wondered about a lotta things in my life. I'm kinda relieved she's dead now. I don't feel I have to account to anyone any more".\(^2\) Though she is a free agent she doesn't really wish to remain like that but craves to settle down in life.

Inge depicts Helen as being very careful in her relationship with her son. Quite early in the play we are told that Helen withdraws from Kenny like "a shy maiden" when he tries to kiss her and says "You're too old to still be making love to me like you did when you were a baby".\(^3\) Even though it is painful she rejects the gift - a watch - brought by Kenny lest her acceptance be misconstrued as spousal rather than motherly. She tells that "I've still got the watch he (Kenneth) gave me for our fifth anniversary". We come to know that this watch, quite old now, is not working and Helen wishes to get it repaired. But at this juncture Kenny buys a costly watch for her anniversary and wants her to accept it. Helen refuses to receive it. Inge presents an interesting conversation regarding this issue between Helen and Lila:
HELEN: I can't let him do the things his father did, Lila.

LILA: But every boy wants to be like his father.

HELEN: There are some ways he can't be allowed.

LILA: But a present . . . that he wanted to give you.

HELEN: I couldn't take it.

LILA: You can be hard, Helen.

HELEN: Yes. When I have to be.

LILA: I could never be hard that way.

HELEN: We pay for our weaknesses.

LILA: Yes. You have to be hard to be good, don't you?

Inge here shows Helen to be conscious, even if vaguely, of the existence of the Oedipus problem in her family. It also serves the dramatist to inform the audience about Lila's surrender to Kenny once she takes on the role of a mother substitute. Even in this dialogue we note Lila commenting *I could never be hard that way*. In one of her early speeches Lila tells Kenny:

I bet you don't remember me much, do you? Your Aunt Lila? . . . I used to look after you when you were a baby. I fed you your bottle and changed your didies, and bounced you on my
knee to keep from crying. I was kind of substitute mother for you, Kenny. But I loved you like you were my own.\footnote{5}

But before this conversation takes place Lila who has made her entrance a few moments previously remarks to Helen that when she first saw him [Kenny] standing there, she thought for a moment he was big Kenneth. She feels that they look so much alike. We have to relate these comments of Lila, to her confession to Helen at a later stage in the progress of the play, how she had the wildest crush for Kenny’s father. But she tries to laugh it away as something which “a silly, young girl could possibly have”. We realize soon that Lila’s passion is going to be changed to Kenny and Helen’s apprehensions of Kenny’s relationship with Lila are implanted from here on.

As a widow who brought up her son with all the tenderness she could muster Helen continues to suffer the effect of raising her son alone: “You got too used to my affection when you were little, Kenny. After your father died, and you were all I had. It’s not the same now, Kenny”.\footnote{6}

Lila is presented as a woman quite attractive and alluring. Though she is older than Kenny, Inge convincingly presents her as charming, still having the ability to attract men. “She is an extraordinarily beautiful woman . . .blond and voluptuous. One feels immediately a sincerity about her and a generosity of spirit”.\footnote{7} The continuous arguments of Helen and Kenny pave the way for his leaning towards Lila. Lila
gradually takes on the role of the surrogate mother and begins cooking him elaborate meals and even washing his socks. Inge gradually builds this image of Lila in the play and at one stage Helen says to Lila: "You’re just what he’s been waiting for. Another mother to pamper him."

By the time Helen arrives home for her anniversary dinner she finds Lila and Kenny playing house just like two children. They even dance together to the radio music. Lila pretends that they are young lovers, but she does this in a naive manner. But Kenny starts kissing her with passion and Helen who comes home becomes tense and suspects that something is wrong. She finds that her son and Lila had been drinking and though she feels restive about it she contains her feelings well. It is here that she refuses to accept the gift from her son, the costly watch, and piqued Kenny goes out leaving the dinner Lila cooked untouched. Lila who has been projected as an approving accomplice of Kenny, as one who has been keeping his secrets, yields to his advances after this event of rejection. Kenny after he has made love to Lila gives her the watch. This shows the affection of Kenny is transferred to the surrogate mother. He has found an outlet for his feelings of hurt. Inge is very cautious here and shows that Kenny’s leaning toward Lila takes place only as the painful consequence in failing to get closer to his mother. And in his physical association with Lila he finds a comfort to his wounded psyche. But some critics felt that this solution
seems to be incredible, pat and too suddenly arrived at to believe that Kenny has grown out of his adolescence.

In the end Helen and Kenny, the play suggests, will work things out well (Kenny at the end plans to take off for Wichita). But Lila ends in the play once again going back to Ricky, a man who beats her and plans to put her into pornographic movies. Lila is forced to give up her wish to “crawl inside a man’s big roomy chest and just live there, warm and protected”. “No one’s gonna proteck me” she realizes sadly as the curtain falls. Society as depicted here is neither matriarchal nor patriarchal, but unfriendly and exploitative.

Lila is from the beginning of the play a lonely character. She is left behind by her associates who are much more sophisticated than the Baird’s where she is to stay. Madame Olga, Ronny, and Ricky serve Inge to establish the sense of loneliness in Lila’s life which is perhaps inherent in her character. Her loneliness is something psychological in nature and her personal isolation is something that she has prepared to live with. We are not given any indication if she had at all tried to establish any type of association with other people. It is this loneliness which is one of the strong reasons for her affair with Kenny. Further, Lila is depicted as one without control on herself or her destiny. When Ricky tries to abuse her physically Kenny intercedes and sends him off. But her union with Kenny and her half-hearted suicide attempt leave her with no option except to move towards the only solution Ricky
proposed. She leaves with him in the end to Kansas City to a distasteful and vague future.

In the last scene, just before Lila leaves, Inge introduces Mrs. Mulvaney, with whom Helen wanted Lila to make friends by calling on her. But Lila rejects this suggestion saying that she is awfully shy about meeting new people. Sandra Mulvaney who is about to go to the first day of school reminds Lila of her own first day in school. She recalls that she took roses to her teacher on the first day but ended up by receiving the scolding and slapping from the teacher. It is here that Inge introduces the title of the play, where the loss of innocence is equated with the loss of roses. He further suggests that there is great depression in the human condition and that there is little means of ameliorating it.

Facing adverse reaction from the critics, Inge realized that the play lacked a satisfactory solution, so in the Foreword to the published version of the play he tries to account for the failure and admits that he felt his most serious mistake was to permit the play to end with the parting scene between mother and son, instead of concluding with Lila's departure, as he originally conceived it. He admits that it is really Lila's play, and herein do we find his greatness in the admission of his own mistake. But Kenny in the end is a greatly changed man and he cannot be branded as a flat character. His maturity is witnessed in his realization that marriage with Lila would not work. He is also
conscious that any further emotional interdependency between himself and his mother is impossible and is destructive to both and therefore he has to leave his home. Thus Inge successfully resolves the antagonism between the mother and son, which is a result of unconscious overattachment.

**NATURAL AFFECTION**

Natural Affection was presented on 31 January, 1963 at New York. In this play Inge accurately portrays the brutality of the world towards the individual, who is not protected by family or community. The title of the play is a reference to the affection which a mother feels for her child and which the child expects readily. Here Inge is concerned with a world far removed from the rural or suburban world. Sue Barker, the mother of Donnie, is an attractive, successful businesswoman, a buyer for a department store. She was quite poor when she gave birth to Donnie, out of wedlock and the man ran away leaving Sue to fend for herself. Sue was then only nineteen. She had to raise the boy on her own. She found her own life in the life of her child. She says:

> It was like we were in a little world all of our own, the only world he knew. And I was his life to him and fed him outa my own body, and he loved me because he couldn’t live without me. I was everything to the child, everything. And I don’t think I ever felt so happy."
But in spite of her devotion to him Sue had to leave Donnie in an orphanage, for she had to work hard to make ends meet. Sue used to meet Donnie in the orphanage and he used to look forward to her visits eagerly and cuddle up to her lovingly when she went there. Once she succeeds in life and becomes financially sound Sue gets back Donnie but he soon gets into trouble and has to be sent to a work farm, a sort of reform school. Even at the reform school Donnie is said to have had his problems. The boy who had to receive the love and affection from the mother is given a severe beating from a sadistic guard and his back is scarred. Donnie says that this sadistic "guard was a psycho who got his charge from beating guys. That's the way he got his kicks".12

Initially Donnie had to go to the work farm because he stole a car with some boys. Then he was also accused of beating up a woman in Lincoln Park. These are the manifestations of the need of a boy for love and when he is unable to get it he becomes violent. From the beginning of the play Inge gives us an insight into the wild behaviour of Donnie and we have to understand that given the love that he desires Donnie is a tamed boy, and when he is denied love he becomes uncontrollable. In his case it is just the question of love. Sue tells Bernie how Donnie was "shacking up with some old whore down on Division Street. She was buying him clothes. My Donnie! When he was fourteen years old. It just made me sick."13

Thus at the beginning of the play, we see Sue Barker, who lives with her boyfriend in a comfortable Chicago
apartment which she pays for, looking forward to the return of her son from reform school but apparently ill at ease because she is not sure how her son and her lover Bernie will get along. 

Like Sue, Bernie is also uneasy at Donnie’s homecoming. Bernie is a Cadillac Salesman and is placed at a lower level than Sue, by Inge, financially. He is sincerely in love with Sue but he doesn’t want to marry her. But at the same time he has his own romance with others like Claire Brinkman, their beautiful neighbor. Bernie realizes that Sue’s son Donnie is a threat to their relationship. It is at this stage that the play opens. Sue rises from the bed which she shares with Bernie, looks out of the window and when inquired what she is looking at, she says I am “standin’ here, lookin’ out at the world. God, it looks ugly at times”. We can understand that what is ugly for her is her future once her son comes home to live with them. The play has this overall bleakness about it and Inge prepares the audience well in advance to this feeling.

When Donnie actually appears, no one is there to receive him. He comes with Gil, who is a colleague of his at the work farm. The purpose of introducing Gil is to reveal through their conversation about the problems of Donnie at the work farm and to show how he detests the idea of returning there and wishes to remain with his mother forever. But the stumbling block in his union with his mother is Bernie. Similarly Bernie views Donnie as the fly in his stew. The play is based on the resolution of this triangular conflict.
Sue who has won her supposed liberation at great price, is unable to decide till the end whether to give up her son or her lover. She did enough injustice to her son leaving him exposed to delinquents and the sadistic guards at the work farm. Understandably Donny has a very violent, an unhealthy affection for his mother — mixed with hatred of her because she could not keep him with her in the same way in which she used to do in the past. Sue admits that her time with Donnie when he was an infant was the best time in her whole life. "Even though I couldn't buy him diapers, I was happy with him. And I felt proud". Her feelings toward Donnie are so strong that she feels insecure because of them.

Inge portrays the Oedipal tendencies soon as Donnie enters the apartment. He is shown as fondling his mother's clothing. Later when Bernie is not at home and when he is alone with Sue he tells her that they can have a happy life together. His need for motherly affection comes out when he says:

I still love ya, Mom. Just as much as when I was a kid back in the orphanage. I still believed in God 'n' everything, and I used to pray we could be together. I thought you were the most wonderful woman in the world, and I wanted us to be together forever 'n' ever. . . . You got me, Mom. I can be just as much company as Bernie. (He tries to kiss her).  

But Sue after all these years of separation from her son is a virtual stranger to him and she is greatly dependent
on Bernie for physical pleasure and is unable to make a satisfactory choice in the matter.

If Donny's desires for and hatred of his mother are unnatural, then Sue's affection for Bernie who is unfaithful to her seems to be equally unnatural. She has a job and unlike the other women in the previous plays of Inge is independent. But she too, like Inge's earlier women, hungers for love above everything else. It doesn't matter how unworthy her object of love is or how much it would cost her and to her son's emotional equilibrium. She is perhaps Inge's answer to Brustein's criticism that the women in the plays of Inge are men-tamers. She is the one in the play who is thoroughly tamed, taking verbal abuse from her man and loving him in spite of it.

Bernie frankly tells Sue that he has no intention of marrying her because "I'm not gonna marry a broad who can brag she makes more money'n I do." He is fond of elegant clothes, about which he talks constantly. He is a city boy, and we are told about his elegant wardrobe: oriental dressing gown, silk tuxedo, Italian shirt, cashmere jacket, gold chain, vicuna shirt. Sue, describes him to her son as "a fine-feathered rooster" and as a woman chaser. He is younger than Sue, and she is more or less keeping him, since his salary from his job as a Cadillac salesman is not very large. Claire is attracted to him on an animal level, obviously, and his union with Sue also is basically carnal. Bernie is strange, in his behavior and finds it natural to accept presents from
another man, Vince, while Sue finds this suspicious. He wears perfume, and uses the *Cuir de Russie* Vince gives him. With his fastidiousness, his material dependence, his insecurity when deprived of a big car to drive around in, his delicate stomach — Bernie feels threatened of his peaceful and lavish existence upon Donnie’s arrival.

Inge portrays in *Natural Affection* the mysteries Bernie’s relationship with Vince Brinkman. Vince is impotent and an alcoholic, and both Bernie and Sue are aware of this fact. He is about fifty years old, and as soon as he hears that Bernie has been in an automobile accident, he arrives with a gift for him. Sue finds it unusual that a man should be so thoughtful of another man. Bernie says, “Vince gives me a present, so he’s queer.” Vince, the older of the two, dreams of giving in to the younger man’s attraction, as shown by his falling into Bernie’s arms while they are drinking together.

Furthermore, from the beginning of the play Inge creates a homosexual atmosphere which develops the basic theme of the estrangement of a mother and son by means of allusions that counterpoint the dialogue. In the second scene of Act I, we learn that Sue’s son had difficulties with a homosexual guard at reform school, and that Gil, a young delinquent, had advised him to turn to “wealthy queers” in order to earn some pocket money. But whatever may be the manner in which he has conducted himself in the past Donnie clearly shows a desire to reform. He tells Gil, “I don’t wanna do anything to get sent back to the cage”. Donnie doesn’t merely speak
these words, he really means them. Inge here presents a touching scene in which Donnie presents Sue with a Christmas gift which he had personally made - a wooden hors d'oeuvres tray. He has never given a present to anyone before and as he explains it to her his emotions are too deep for his words and his voice trails off. He says then, thrusting the gift toward her, "Well, here". Much to his surprise and disbelief, Sue is delighted by the gift and he is nearly in tears which he hides from her by leaving the apartment in a hurry. Donnie is not basically a violent person but once he is deprived of the love of Sue, which he feels is his birth right, he goes to the extreme.

In his appeals to his mother, and in his distorted accounts of Bernie and his pathetic attempts to come closer to Sue Donnie is quite appealing to the audience. Inge successfully shows how desperate Donnie is in his need for love from his mother. We are informed that Donnie is capable of crime but it is something we are told about and that it happened in the remote past. He is now a reformed character with a desire to live peacefully. But Sue cannot leave Bernie so easily for her son who was never closer to her except for the few moments of his infancy. She is only thirty six, still young and beautiful and still in need of physical love, and cannot strain her relationship with her lover Bernie who lives with her. Inge resolves the triangular conflict by making Sue take the choice of having Bernie rather than Donnie. She cries out at Donnie: "I'm not going to give up the rest of my life to keep a worthless kid I never
wanted in the first place. Quit hanging on me, Donnie!" The pressures of living in such a situation have their toll and Sue feels regret for having spoken thus and tries to retract her words but the damage is done and Donnie loses control over himself.

As Sue leaves the stage Claire in a drunken state wanders in to look for Bernie and not finding him tries to shower her attentions on Donnie. Without any hesitation and remorse Donnie reaches for a carving knife and stabs her to death. We may wonder how Donnie could have committed such a crime and why Inge allowed the play to end on a note of violence. Donnie's act is quite believable, and in real life we come across such incidents and the newspapers are full of reports of such things happening. But what is shocking is the effect of this violent act on the audience. They have all the while been identifying themselves with him, showing him their sympathy and accepting his demand for maternal love but are left desolate with this shocking end. Inge must have thought that the ending was artistically tenable, which it was, but dramatically and even commercially it was a disaster. Richard Watts Jr. commented that the murder "Instead of seeming an integral part of his work, it appears to be clumsily imposed, and, in the process of trying it, his splendid capacity for compassion and human understanding slowly disappear, and a kind of extravagant foolishness and ineptness is substituted."  

Inge's own bafflement about the ending of the play is given expression in his Preface to the Random House
edition of *Natural Affection*. He says here that his play stemmed from "the tension I felt living in the late fifties and early sixties, when the newspapers were so full of violence that the morning headlines were an assault upon one’s breakfast digestion." He felt that the times seemed to be different from the early days of his dramatic career and added that they had become desperate and irrational causing people to feel rejected, unimportant, and consequently vulnerable to rage that can end in violence. "I wanted to expose some of the atmosphere in our lives that creates violence". In conclusion he wished that "he could have written a comedy, but I couldn’t at the time".20

Robert Brustein whose animosity for Inge is common knowledge lashed at him in the *New Republic* saying:

William Inge, formerly the sweetheart of the old ladies in the mezzanine, has climaxed his story of adultery, homosexuality, alcoholism, incest, nymphomania, and juvenile delinquency with a scene in which a boy stabs a woman he believes to be his mother, has intercourse with the corpse, and then drinks a carton of milk.21

Brustein’s comments strike us more violent than the violent ending of the play for no where in the text do we find any proof of Donnie having intercourse with the corpse. Such criticism is, as Inge has already commented, aimed at giving offense and not contributing anything constructive to the cause of drama or for the development of the dramatist and dramatic art. It made
Inge complain more bitterly than usual about New York and its merciless critics.

Inge presents a strong sub-plot in the relationship of Vince Brinkman and his beautiful and young wife Claire. They live in the apartment next to Sue and Bernie. Bernie, as we had seen earlier and as Donnie had tried to convince his mother, had an affair with Claire. Inge presents Vince in one drunk scene in the play with his dialogue flowing freely about sexual matters and it is said that the audience felt a marked degree of relief when he finally passed out. The vulgarity of his dialogue may be a common feature in society but in a work of art, people felt, it lacks refinement and taste. Claire has no love for Vince and is trapped in the institution of marriage for she lacks financial security. She doesn’t get money from Vince but receives costly presents from him which seems to be a habit with him. He even lavishes gifts on Sue and Bernie. Claire is not matured emotionally and Inge presents the lonely female in her portrait.

WHERE'S DADDY

Inge moved his setting to New York City in Where’s Daddy? Here Inge deviates from the violence of Natural Affection, and treats the struggle of the sexes in a comic vein. Brustein’s vehement denunciation of this play misses entirely its comic tone. When asked if Where’s Daddy?, is also rooted in some experience or feeling of his boyhood Inge replied:
No, Where’s Daddy? is the first play that I’ve ever been able to write with a New York setting, and strangely enough I was never able to write about New York until I moved away from New York. I live in California now, and while I was living here I guess I was too close to New York life to see it clearly, to have any reflections about it and it wasn’t until I had moved to California that the life I had in New York began to distill itself, so to speak, and that I could reflect about it. And so I’ve written my first New York play; this play is set in New York, and it’s about New York people, and for the first time I’ve been able to write of New York as part of my own life and experience, out of my own life as an experience.

In Where’s Daddy? Inge portrays the 1960’s as a period of licentiousness. He found it to be a world where repudiation of the values of their parents was the canon of the young. The fad of the young was to take direction from their analysts and from “the highest principles of contemporary thinking and philosophy” as Inge depicts Tom and Teena in this play. But Inge very clearly indicates, that, such liberation has not greatly altered the terms of the male-female relationship. The common chores of cooking, cleaning and even craving for marriage are still in the realm of women. Here Inge points out how men, like Tom, who set the limits of relationships, strive to retain for themselves the liberty to come and go as they please trying always to find an individual distinctiveness.
Tom, the protagonist of the play, was rescued from a disreputable bar by Pinky. Tom was then only fifteen and, as Pinky recalls, willing to peddle anything he had for a warm meal and a place to sleep. Tom, like Hal, Bo Decker, and many of Tennessee Williams’s characters, has no family. But just as Virgil adopted Bo, in *Bus Stop* when he was six, Tom is taken home by Pinky as his ward.

Through Tom’s mother-in-law, Mrs. Bigelow, who recalls seeing him in television commercials we know that “he’s very good looking.” Teena, his wife, concurs. Razz, his black friend, informs us that Tom is a blond. Further Inge makes Tom speak about himself when he says that his agent considers him to be “the perfect American boy type.” Tom doesn’t hide the fact that he has had “quite a few girls.” Teena acknowledges his sexual prowess and admits that he is good at love-making. When Tom suddenly begins to suspect if he might not have homosexual tendencies, Teena “serenely” reassures him. “I’ve never had reason to think so.” But, Tom, is not serious in posing that question about himself. Like Bo, Hal, Rubin and such other strong looking heroes in his plays Tom also is riddled with doubts about himself. His own self-esteem gets a boost by the reassurance offered by Teena. In the plays of Inge, however virile the heroes might be they always look to solace and confidence from their life partners or girl friends and Tom is no exception. But this in no way lessens the strength in their character but makes them more realistic and human. Thus Tom has to obtain the agreement of his wife Teena, however grudgingly for their divorce. The reason Tom
offers is that they are not yet "mature" enough for the child Teena is expecting. Although macho in his appearance he is basically diffident and prefers to run from responsibility. Inge makes Pinky point this trait in Tom when Pinky opposes the rationalizations of Tom and says:

PINKY: (Bluntly) Why are you leaving your wife and child?

TOM: Because I'm not prepared to play the role of father.

PINKY: Why not?

TOM: I'm just not emotionally mature enough.

PINKY: Such nonsense.

TOM: I know it's hard for you to understand, Pinky. But after all, there's a generation or two between us, and . . .

PINKY: I think I understand perfectly.

TOM: You do?

PINKY: You're scared shitless.25

Nevertheless, Teena consents to the suggestion of Tom that the child should be turned over to adoptive parents. Another reason Tom cites for this decision is that his marriage is not good for his acting career. He fears that it has become a threat in his case and has taken away his masculine freedom. In Tom, Inge was apparently trying to represent a young man of the new generation, unable to
accept the onus of being an adult. But in the end Inge makes Tom return home and make an effort to adapt to his new role. For most men, the outburst against the bonds of marriage and fatherhood is but a temporary phase, as Inge indicates through Tom’s character in this play. Tom is depicted in a more interesting light in his relationship with Pinky. The middle-aged man, the father substitute is a common character and appears in most of Inge’s work from Picnic onwards.

Once he has decided to leave his wife, Tom wants to return to Pinky. He wishes to go back to the protection which he had as a teenager when he was liberated by Pinky from the disreputable bar. Pinky disapproves. He says that Tom must accept his wife and his child, for that is a responsibility he cannot do away with in life in spite of what an analyst may say. The scene between the two offers an interesting insight into the character of Pinky, who though he is single wants his ward to have proper alliance in life. Inge, here gives Teena the chance to eavesdrop, even as she is busy at the stove. But Inge presents her as fully knowledgeable that she has no part to play in the matter. When Tom tells Pinky that he “needs” him, Pinky replies that he is neither his father nor his mother nor his teacher, “or whatever I was in your life.” “Suddenly, Tom impulsively grabs Pinky and hugs him. He is close to tears.” Through there is a similarity here between the Bo-Virgil relationship and Tom-Pinky relationship Inge presents Virgil as one who exiled himself and is left behind whereas Pinky refusing
to help Tom clarifies that Tom cannot return to his former house. Though critics commented that there was ambiguity of many of the terms and expressions in this scene we have to point out that it only indicates the author’s desire to realistically present the thoughts, words and terrors of the generation. Further Inge uses such language as the vehicle for the expression of the classical psychological disorders prevalent among the young of that decade.

Like Tom, Teena feels that she too is liberated and repeats all the platitudes of her generation. But Inge shows her as a teenybopper with little preparation for any sort of career. Pregnant even before wedlock she is happy padding around the apartment barefoot. Very faithfully she echoes what all her husband says, including that for the good of them all, he must leave her when the baby comes. But when the baby arrives, she drops her jargon, the mother in her dominates and the pseudo-liberated language goes to the winds. She finally admits, "I'm a mother. Helen. I think, now, that's probably all I ever wanted to be, all the time I was taking piano lessons, and painting lessons, and secretarial courses, and going to acting school... all I wanted to be was a mother". Inge may not have produced a financial success in Where's Daddy? But it has to be admitted that his viewpoint about motherhood as the expression of ultimate love and as the best and purest form of relationship, expressed through Teena, cannot be contradicted.
When Teena refuses to accept Tom back on his terms alone, it means that the times have brought in a slight but a much needed transformation in her. She is no more a mere wife or a representative of her times but she is a mother and the feminine quality in her comes to the fore and that may pave the way for a healthy relationship. Her maturity of approach and adjustment to the facts of life are revealed when she tells Helen "I’m a mother... I think, now, that’s probably all I ever wanted to be". When Tom appears with instructions from his analyst to see the baby, stay around for a few days, and "see if I can become adjusted" Teena refuses to let him do so. She says, "Not for a few days, it's got to be for good". Her resolute stand drives Tom away again but it brings him back. Pinky’s lashing at him for trying to rationalize his selfish behavior through the “lot of Freudian mumbo-jumbo” Tom doesn’t even know the meaning of is also greatly responsible for his return. If Teena has softened him, it is also because she did not cling to him fearfully nor dominated him, but gained some independence of her own that he can respect. “The resolutions in Inge are all pat” is the accusation leveled against Inge but the last line of the play spoken by Tom: “Look at us, we’re parents” is something which any sensible individual would wish to say if he were to be given an exact role as Tom’s. Perhaps in this new note of shared responsibilities for parenting, as Inge must have anticipated then, the final solution of the troubles and turmoils would be found and leave the young with the beauties of conventional living. While Brustein disdained the “paean to domestic love” in Inge’s plays,
the only answer we can furnish is that in the world not even the most rigidly traditional institution can resist evolutionary change. If such men like Tom come out of their day dreams of high acting careers and girls like Teena wake up to the realities of being mothers then the change in them is to be welcomed, their march towards rapprochement is to be lauded and the love for parenting and the work of restructuring of life should not be hindered. Though we cannot certainly claim that Where's Daddy? has moved very far towards that restructuring, for Tom and Teena are still just kids who have a lot to learn, we have to admit that at least in the ending of this play Inge’s characters have moved one tiny step forward in this direction.

Pinky “is the most personally revealing character that William Inge ever put on the stage”.

Pinky is a chubby little man in his fifties, a professor who shows his preference for the purist usage. This soberly dressed professor very strongly defends the institution of marriage. He says to Mrs. Bigelow, Teena’s mother:

“I’m a very old-fashioned man, too, Mrs. Bigelow. I still believe in God and love, and the sanctity of the home, and all those virtues that every one today considers terribly reactionary. To tell the truth, I seldom experience these phenomena, but I believe in them devoutly . . . . I’m a conventional man, in my own way. . . . I have always considered marriage between a man and a woman a divinely beautiful institution. . . . I’ve always been so idealistic about marriage, I’ve never felt I dared to face the reality of it”.
In that speech, we find the ideas of Inge being voiced by Pinky. Further Inge's disillusionment of psychoanalysis is also spoken by Pinky in the following conversation:

TOM: "Analysis has freed me. . . . I'm a bastard, but I'm no longer ashamed of it."

PINKY: "Science is wonderful".31

Pinky is mature enough to suspect that Tom's need to "find" himself, is an outgrowth of studying "method" acting, which appears to be artificial. We once again detect the voice of Inge when Pinky complains "In my day, actors played parts. They didn't play themselves. They didn't want to play themselves."32 Tom rejects Pinky's memories of fine acting and fine plays as irrelevant, then Pinky voices, Inge's attack at the contemporary theater which he felt abandoned him: "I suppose you prefer those plays with people coming out of ash cans and urinating on the floor".33 Critics who see Pinky as a homosexual and nothing else must have missed all the paternal, conventional and moral qualities in him. His concern for society is what makes him all the more honorable and some critics even commented that the play would have become a better play had it been written strictly from the viewpoint of Pinky with whom Inge could most convincingly identify.

In Helen and Razz Inge portrays people with modest ambitions. In fact this is the first instance of Inge introducing black characters in his plays. Like Tom,
Razz wants to be an actor and recites Shakespeare but Helen, a young successful career woman, admits that what she wants most of all is to marry her live-in lover. Razz, the lover resists. Razz feels that it would be impractical. But they are the good neighbors, as Inge shows them to be who assist Teena when she gives birth to the child. Razz's responses to Mrs. Bigelow's offensive speech regarding racial matters are clipped and amusing. But in the end Mrs. Bigelow had to admit that she is feeling comfortable with him. Inge's excellent insight into the upper-middle-class is revealed in his portrait of Razz and Helen.

Where's Daddy was indeed Inge's heartfelt attempt not only to be modern and to affirm values but also to reflect his own bewilderment at what he observed in the world. But to be castigated for honestly presenting what he saw exasperated Inge. The play closed after only twenty-one performances and Inge left for California. He felt that he had to combat a lot of hostility from the critics. He felt that the attack on him was "beginning to take on the nature of a pogrom." Impatient

At this time in his life, when he and his vision as a writer were most vulnerable, Inge left New York and turned his attention to Hollywood, where winning the Academy Award for his Splendor in the Grass screenplay would be his final triumph before the long and painful decline to his death. Except for that last burst of fame, Inge had started to become a luminary of the past. He was unable to regain the approval for his plays which
was the last great support for him as a man. Even the sparkling success of *Splendor in the Grass* was dimmed by adverse commentary. Such criticism scarred Inge because it was so personal and attacked all of his work, the work derived from his most intensely felt and perceived experience. It is a significant part of his tragedy that he was never able to find any inner resources to deflect such criticism. He just could not help but take it utterly to heart. Of course, *Where's Daddy?* was only the last of Inge's Broadway productions, but he kept on trying to regain that celebrity which had been his only personal mark of approval.

REFERENCES AND NOTES


3. Ibid. p.13.

4. Ibid. pp.81-82.

5. Ibid. p.24.

6. Ibid. p.16.

7. Ibid. p.22.

8. Ibid. p.76.

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10. Sue could have had an abortion but she felt that the kid inside her was meant to live.


14. The action of the play takes place during the Christmas holidays and it enables Donnie to come home to spend his vacation with his mother.

15. *Natural Affection*, p.18.


22. Vince is impotent like Morris in "Dark" but unlike Lottie, who doesn't involve herself in any extra marital affair, Claire cannot live if her sensuous desires are not satiated.


25. Ibid. p.35.

26. Ibid. p.83.

27. Ibid. p.83.

28. Ibid. p.100.


30. Where's Daddy, p.90.

31. Ibid. p.48.

32. Ibid. p.38.

33. Ibid. p.39.

34. In Razz, Inge portrayed, one who knows the Mrs. Bigelow's of the world and how to cope with them.