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A GENERAL STUDY OF GEORGE F. WALKER'S STYLE AND MORAL VISION

Elaine Torda

**A thesis in the Department of English
Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of a Master of Arts at Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada**

April 1994

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ISBN 0-315-97685-3

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ABSTRACT

A General Study of George F. Walker's Style and Moral Vision

Elaine Torda

Prior to the late 1960's, plays produced in Canada often were productions imported from the United States and Europe. Beginning in 1965, a major change occurred in the world of contemporary Canadian drama. Several theatres in Toronto and Vancouver led what is now referred to as Canada's alternative theatre movement. Each theatre found its own niche in the theatrical world, with a common goal of supporting Canadian plays and playwrights. One of the Canadian playwrights to emerge from this atmosphere was George F. Walker.

Some twenty years and twenty plays later, George Walker has become one of the more prominent English-speaking playwrights in Canada. In looking closely at both his evolving, yet distinctive style and his sense of morality, it is possible to discover how Walker and his plays have positively affected contemporary Canadian drama. A thorough examination of Walker's play structures, themes and characters helps define both his style and moral vision. Through his contributions to theatre, Walker's plays, and Canadian drama, in general, have been pushed into international prominence.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations are utilized eithin the text when referring to many of Walker's plays. They are as follows:

<u>Art</u>	<u>The Art of War</u>
<u>Beautiful</u>	<u>Beautiful City</u>
<u>Criminals</u>	<u>Criminals In Love</u>
<u>Escape</u>	<u>Escape From Happiness</u>
<u>Living</u>	<u>Better Living</u>
<u>Love</u>	<u>Love and Anger</u>
<u>Nothing</u>	<u>Nothing Sacred</u>
<u>Rich</u>	<u>Filthy Rich</u>
<u>Science</u>	<u>Science</u>

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The alternative theatre rushes [in] where the commercial theatre fears to tread. The alternative theatre continues a ceaseless flirtation with chaos and ruin. The alternative theatre carries hope for the future.¹

The late 1960's saw the commencement of a major change in Canadian drama. Between 1965 and 1975, five new theatres and the plays they produced led what is now seen as Canada's alternative theatre movement. These same theatres (or parts of them) still produce some of Canada's best plays. Their goals were to present and encourage drama, from both a viewing and writing standpoint, as a way of developing and expanding Canadian culture. Their development had a profound effect on what is now known as contemporary Canadian drama; as Chris Johnson, in his 1980 article "B Movies Beyond the Absurd" states:

The new movement also created a new cohesion, a sense of drama in the fullest meaning of the word, not the isolated worth of individual playwrights but a body of works linked by emulation, rivalry and a sense of a shared audience.²

The first of these, Theatre Passe Muraille, was founded in 1968 by Jim Gerrard. His goal was to attract the non-habitual theatregoers; this goal soon broadened into a

search for new content and form. The founding members took an actor-centered co-operative approach to playwriting that is now called "collective creation."³ These collective creations featured non-linear structures, presentational styles, little plot and direct audience address (Johnston, 107). A nationalistic theme dominated Theatre Passe Muraille's productions, though not all plays produced were Canadian. The founders sought to produce new Canadian works and illustrate Canadian themes through the depiction of Canada's many regions and sub-cultures. Characters often were Canadian historical heroes or normal people who were meant to epitomize Canadian regionalism (Johnston, 109). Collective creations became "the most recognizable style of indigenous Canadian theatre . . . the "fountainhead of a new style of Canadian performance" (Johnston, 138).

Hrant Alianak was one of the playwrights to emerge from Theatre Passe Muraille. In fact, several of his early short plays initially were staged at this theatre, including Western (1972), The Violinist and the Flower Girl (1972), Brandy (1973), Christmas (1973) and Tantrums (1972). Though he never received the popular or critical acclaim at Passe Muraille that the theatre's directors had hoped, he was part of the alternative theatre movement. His early plays, like Walker's, made use of 'B' grade movie imagery and devices.

Carol Bolt was also produced in the early years of Passe Muraille. While Buffalo Jump did not premier at this theatre,

a very favorably reviewed production did appear there. She also acted as the playwright for Pauline, a stage biography/collective about Canadian Indian poet Pauline Johnson, premiering in the 1972-1973 season. Some of Rick Salutin's later plays also were done here. Determining playwrights who actually began at Passe Muraille is rather difficult as many of the plays done in the early and middle 1970's were artistic collaborations; scripts were non-existent or secondary to the actual material. The collaborative style, though, did well for Passe Muraille for a period of time.

While the founders of Passe Muraille focused on Canadian plays and content, Ken Gass decided to concentrate on something a bit different. Believing that normal Canadians, given the chance, could produce interesting plays, Ken Gass, in 1970, founded the Factory Theatre Lab. While many Canadian theatres concentrated on the production of a few selected plays in a season, Gass emphasized numerous scripts and more productions. This theatre became the home of the Canadian playwright, allowing Canadians (even those with little or no formal training) the chance to enter the mainstream of theatrical production. His theatre developed a number of interesting new playwrights. Some of Bryan Wade's early work, including Underground in 1975, opened at Factory Theatre Lab. Steve Petch, Larry Fineberg (Stonehenge Trilogy, 1971) and Herschel Hardin (Esker Mike and His Wife, Agiluk, 1971) also were developed there. Michael Hollingsworth began his career

at Factory Theatre Lab with plays such as Strawberry Fields. Ken Gass, himself a playwright, saw several of his works' first stagings, including Light in 1970 and Hurray for Johnny Canuk in 1974, at the Factory Lab. The latter play featured cartoon-like designs by Eric Steiner, who began his directing career at the Factory Lab. David Freeman's Creeps also opened at Factory Theatre Lab in 1971.

The Factory Theatre Lab was the first of Toronto's theatres to decide to produce only Canadian playwrights. Ken Gass' original idea was to start a group of his own with no set goals. He quickly realized that the company needed a programming policy and to do this, he needed to find and fill an individual niche. He decided that while nationalism was a fine goal for Passe Muraille, he would rather limit his theatre to the exclusive production of Canadian playwrights. This sole criterion left playwrights room to experiment with everything from setting and subject matter to style and theme. Gass' Factory Theatre Lab became known as "the home of the Canadian playwright" (Johnston, 109).

While the atmosphere during the early years at the Factory Theatre Lab might best be described as chaotic, Gass and his ever-evolving theatre continued; little money, no true directional goals, inexperienced personnel and hurried productions often resulted in plays that were not quite ready for the public. In spite of the long hours, the pitiful, sometimes non-existent pay, and the ever-changing staff, many

people began their careers as directors, administrators and playwrights at the Factory Theatre Lab. Because he allowed people to try any and everything, Gass' reputation as a creator of artistic opportunities for others was unrivaled.

In 1971, Tarragon Theatre was founded by Bill Glassco as a result of what he felt Gass was neglecting. Tarragon developed playwrights by giving their scripts the best possible productions. Feeling that a playwright can not develop without the opportunity to rewrite, see his play produced under the best possible conditions and reap the rewards, Glassco fostered a few playwrights and their scripts every season. Believing in the importance of the audience as a collaborator in a play's development, Tarragon directors made special efforts to find audiences and ensure performances occurred (Johnston, 147).

Tarragon produced the first Canadian translations of Michele Tremblay's plays, including Forever Yours, Marie-Lou (1972), Les Belles Soeurs (1973) and Bonjour, La, Bonjour (1975). James Reany's Donnelly trilogy (Sticks and Stones, The St. Nicholas Hotel, and Handcuffs) and One Man Masque (1974) and David French's Of the Fields, Lately (1973) and One Crack Out (1975) were other important Tarragon offerings. Bryan Wade and David Freeman also had productions at Tarragon.

In 1972, Tom Hendry, Martin Kinch and John Palmer joined forces to start the Toronto Free Theatre. Established on public funds, this collaborative effort emphasized group

leadership. Without the monetary concerns plaguing the other three theatres, they were able to hire a paid staff and permanent acting company. Hendry, Kinch and Palmer's approach was to develop the relationship between the actor, director and playwright. They initially charged no admission for plays, feeling this developed a sense of freedom in the artists with whom they worked, but this practice quickly faded due to financial considerations. Their material tended towards the visceral in both time and content (Johnston, 170-171). The theatre also changed in policy as the artistic directors began to allow the production of plays written by non-Canadian playwrights.

Some of the playwrights to come from the Toronto Free Theatre included the founding members: Hendry's How Are Things With the Walking Wounded opened in 1972 and Gravediggers of 1942 and Byron opened in 1973 and 1975, respectively. Palmer's The End premiered during the 1972 season while Kinch's Me? and April 29, 1975 were produced in the 1973 and 1975 seasons. Hrant Alianak's Passion and Sin (1975) and Carol Bolt's Red Emma (1974) also opened here.

Vancouver also experienced an upsurge of alternative theatres. In particular, the New Play Centre became the Vancouver home for new local playwrights.⁴ Though this theatre did produce some non-Canadian material, the goal was to present a majority of Canadian plays. Initially, the Centre advised on scripts and held Sunday evening play readings, but

when Pam Hawthorne took over in 1972, she added workshops and actual stage productions. The still-active Centre hosts the du Maurier Festival every spring, featuring one-act plays by provincial playwrights (Page, 168). Bryan Wade actually began at the Centre before moving on to Toronto. Other playwrights to begin at the Centre include Leonard Angel, Tom Granger, Margaret Hollingsworth, Sheldon Rosen and Tom Cone.

In 1986, Toronto Free Theatre and CentreStage began a merger into the Canadian Stage Company. The other theatres remain the same.

While the definition of "alternative" Canadian theatre is difficult to provide, it does exist. Normally, London and New York's alternative theatres are so named because they sought to overthrow mainstream professional theatres. Although American and European counter-cultures heavily influenced them, Canada's alternative theatres strove to be different: from the mainstream theatres; from the highly developed bureaucracy of the Stratford Festival; from the respectability of regional theatres. Also, each developed as alternatives to one another. They survived because of each company's abilities to find and proclaim a mandate that was unfulfilled by other theatres. Additionally, these theatres served to create professional opportunities for a new generation of people: well-educated young people who wanted to be accepted as proponents of a new type of theatre.

Ken Gass summed up the rise of alternative theatres in these words:

The validity of the Alternative movement stemmed from its two-fold aims: a) Political--a redistribution of economic resources by giving significant funds to groups and individuals who wanted to work in smaller, independent environments, even if this necessitated dismantling the larger organizations, and b) Artistic--the development of new theatrical experiences, particularly in terms of new Canadian plays, which the regional theatre system had markedly discouraged. (Johnston, 11)

It was from this atmosphere that George Walker emerged.

Born on 23 August 1947 in Toronto's East End, George Walker came from a working class background and began work when he finished high school. Though he reads a tremendous amount, he, like Sam Shepard, considers himself part of the jumbled pop culture of television, film and radio. As with Shepard, aspects of pop culture are integral to his work.

Walker's introduction to writing plays occurred in an unusual way. While driving a taxi cab in Toronto, he saw a call for scripts at the newly created Factory Theatre Lab. He decided to try his hand at writing and came up with the Prince of Naples, a one-act, two character farce about a young, ostensibly liberated teacher challenging the thinking of an older, more conventional man. Produced in the Factory Theatre Lab's second season (1971), this marked the beginning of Walker's association with alternative theatre, in general, and the Factory Theatre Lab specifically.

Walker's theatrical background was not strong; in fact, prior to the opening night of the Prince of Naples, he had

seen only one play, a production of Henry IV. This could be one reason for his unique technical and structural approach to theatre. With no set ideas or preconceptions of what a play should be, he is not bound by theatrical conventions; thus, he is more open to the development of his own distinctive style. Particularly in the beginning, when he was struggling to find his own voice and style, his use of cinematic devices led to unique plays that did not fit into standard theatrical patterns.

While many of his early plays were indifferently received, Walker has become a popular playwright in several countries. In English-speaking Canada, his plays have been produced in regional, alternative and mainstream theatres such as The Vancouver Playhouse and The Manitoba Theatre Center in Winnipeg, and the Factory Theatre Lab and CentreStage in Toronto. In the United States, his plays have been done in theatres such as The American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco, the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles, the Whole Theater in Montclair, New Jersey, The Public Theater in New York City and The Village Theater in Seattle, Washington. In England, theatres such as the Wakefield Tricycle Club and the Bush Theatre, both in London, have run his plays. Nimrod Theatre and the Australian Performing Group in Sydney and La Mama Theatre in Melbourne, Australia have produced Walker's plays as have theatres such as the Court Theatre in Christchurch, New Zealand.

As Walker is part of Toronto's attempt to foster Canadian drama, he makes wonderful study material. His distinctive style, while coming from a Canadian background, appears to have more of an international flavour. He does not use exclusively Canadian settings or themes; rather, his messages and style suggest he strives towards international appeal. Thus, he is part of Canada's alternative theatre, while also representing part of an attempt to carry Canadian drama into international circles.

Walker's plays emphasize the reasons why alternative theatres developed and why someone like Walker might not have emerged in a traditional or even regional theatrical atmosphere. The remainder of this paper will provide a general study of Walker and his plays. While "general" might entail any large number of possible avenues of exploration, I will focus on five specific ideas in an attempt to determine both Walker's developing individual style and his sense of morality.

In reading Walker's plays, I feel a very strong sense of morality; right and wrong are often played off one another as are good and evil. This morality evidences itself in several ways, all of which connect to his very distinctive style. Since he began writing in the early 1970's, his individuality has grown. Both his distinctive style and moral vision have contributed to this.

While Walker's plays have been produced in many theatres and in numerous countries, he still is relatively unknown. When his plays are produced, reactions are varied. His first five plays were not well received, most people indicating that they were inaccessible. His later plays, perhaps more easily comprehended by contemporary audiences, have received more acceptance. Still, the reviews are often mixed. Though Walker began his writing career in 1971, has written approximately twenty plays since then (see play list), and has been produced in several countries, his reputation has been slow in coming, but not entirely without accolades. He spent from 1971 to 1976 as the Playwright in Residence at the Factory Theatre Lab, held the same position in 1981 at Joseph Papp's New York Shakespeare Festival and served as the Playwright in Residence at the National Theatre School from 1990 until 1991. His awards include:

Dora Award 1982 for Theatre of Film Noir
Floyd S. Chalmers Award 1985 for Best New Play of
1984: Criminals In Love
Governor General Literary Award 1986 for English
Language Drama: Criminals In Love
Dora Mavor Moore Award 1988 for Best Play of 1988:
Nothing Sacred
Floyd S. Chalmers Award 1988: Nothing Sacred
Governor General Literary Award 1989 for English
Language Drama: Nothing Sacred

Regardless of how individuals look at Walker's plays, he is slowly gaining a reputation internationally. He appeals

to an eclectic group of people. Walker feels this eclecticism comes from his pop art culture:

Like so many of my generation, my mind is a sort of media garbage bag sometimes. We're all so heavily influenced by television and movies and you don't have to be very perceptive to see it coming out in new plays. The dilemma for me was not to rebel against the problem--it is, after all, a fairly central reality--but to assimilate it and make something of it. (Johnson, 93)

In his "Introduction" to Love and Anger, Robert Wallace states that he feels Walker's newer plays, beginning with Nothing Sacred, have succeeded in pushing Walker into theatrical prominence. He says:

By the time Love and Anger opened, Walker had firmly established himself as one of Canada's most important creative assets. The previous year, his seventeenth play has been his biggest hit: Nothing Sacred, an irreverent reworking of Turgenev's Fathers and Sons, won a Governor General's Literary Award in Canada, where it received numerous productions across the country; in the United States its production at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles turned up on Time magazine's list of the year's 10-best shows.

I have chosen Walker and his plays as thesis material for several reasons. While his plays have been produced in many countries and have received several awards, Walker still is relatively unknown. Though one of Canada's most prolific English-speaking writers, even in Canada, surprisingly few people have heard of him, much less read or seen his plays. He has much to offer both theatregoers and literature students. While ideas of morality and power struggles may not be new material, his presentation of them--his style--certainly is.

Gina Mallet, in her review of The Art of War, makes a good general statement about Walker's intentions:

Walker's mastery of verbal collage has never seemed so sure, nor his use of the perception that we do not live original lives but ones borrowed from TV and the movies. We are a regurgitated culture one way or another, and we speak in platitudes because that is all we hear, That is why there is no defense against the Hackmans of the land. We believe, as they believe, that power is what comes out of a barrel of a gun, not from imagination.

He makes his points with a light but deadly sting, and he has also produced a play that in its laconic acceptance of the absurd projects an authentically Canadian sense of self-mockery.⁶

Boyd Neil, reviewing the same play, makes another interesting general comment about Walker:

George Walker admitted two things important to understanding his plays: "I don't have any wisdom" and "sometimes I replace what is a normal dramatic conflict with conflict between two obsessions." The first saves those of us who agree with the embarrassment of resorting to ad hominem arguments in reviews; the second gets to the heart of what's so disturbing about his work...⁷

Tied into his relative obscurity is the fact that very little critical material of any significance has been written to date. While I do not mean to suggest that what I write will be the last word on his plays, it may prompt others to rectify the lack of criticism. I feel that Walker and his plays merit comprehensive study.

Also, Walker does not come from a theatrical background. He is part of Toronto's attempt to foster Canadian drama. His different approaches to theatre, more than likely, result from this.

Looking to put Walker in a theatrical framework or perspective, perhaps hoping for clues as to his purpose, many people have attempted to make comparisons between his work and that of other, more well-known (accepted), playwrights. This proves an interesting exercise, though not a particularly fruitful one.

Some have tried a comparison between him and Tom Stoppard, the popular contemporary British playwright. Having studied Stoppard for an undergraduate thesis, I feel this comparison is good only to a certain point. Both men make use of humour and both have a unique ability to play with the English language. In this latter respect, both are masterful wits. Stoppard, like Walker, borrows ideas and themes from other genres, such as his parody of a murder mystery (which also mocks drama critics) in Real Inspector Hound (1968) or his take-off on Shakespeare's Hamlet in Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead (1966). Travesties (1974) borrows elements of Oscar Wilde's The Importance of Being Earnest. Jumpers (1972) might be the closest in style to Walker as Stoppard utilized atypical theatrical conventions, such as gymnasts, a pop singer and upbeat songs, all within the setting of a murder mystery. This is rather rare for him and does not indicate a true affinity for nor utilization of pop culture. With the exception of verbal mastery (and perhaps Jumpers), I feel the two playwrights differ tremendously.

Sam Shepard, the well-known American playwright and actor, is, perhaps, a slightly more accurate person with whom to compare Walker. Both make use of concepts and conventions from "pop" culture and both admit to writing plays that are heavily influenced by television and movies. Shepard, particularly in his later plays, often used western settings and characters and the themes he commonly developed include alienation from family and society, excesses of society, reunification of the family, and breakdowns of communication. More specifically, Shepard's play Buried Child develops a theme of hidden family secrets that is similar to the lesser theme of Better Living. Walker's Beyond Mozambique and Bagdad Saloon have stylistic similarities to Shepard's Mad Dog Blues.

When looking to Canadian contemporaries of Walker for comparable playwrights, the choices are rather limited. No one does quite what Walker does, though some playwrights occasionally show some similarities. For example, Ken Gass' Hurray for Johnny Canuk uses film and comic book imagery.

Hrant Alianak does share some stylistic traits, though his overall style is distinctively different from Walker's. Admitting that he is more interested in movies and cartoons than theatre because he feels that theatre is too "severe,"⁸ his plays take on several film and cartoon characteristics. The Violinist and the Flower Girl, The Blues and Western share B-movie imagery and settings. Alianak, like Walker, came from

the alternative theatre environs (Passe Muraille) and has been slow to gain popular appeal.

Sky Gilbert is another interesting Canadian who shares common aspects with Walker. His plays, which often develop homosexual themes, also incorporate elements of cinema. He is one of the few Canadians to borrow from the film world. He also sprang from the alternative theatre world and continues to work within it. As the artistic director of Buddies in Bad Times, he explores the relationships between "theatre and the printed word and sees theatre moving towards a 'poet-playwright.'"⁹

In spite of similarities, there is no one playwright who does exactly what Walker does in precisely the same way. Through the course of this thesis, I will explore Walker's evolving dramaturgy, looking at his style, characters, themes and moral vision as they have developed over a span of some twenty plays and the same number of years. My hope is that by the end of this paper, readers will have a better sense of Walker, his plays and the ways in which both have contributed to the development of Canadian theatre.

CHAPTER TWO

MULTI-LEVELS OF STRUCTURE AND MEANING

George Walker displays a particular fondness for the use of multi-level structures and their inter-related themes. He possesses a unique ability to create one level of theatrical style, with its corresponding theme and then, often through the deliberate use of incongruous and "misplaced" phrases or elements, he gradually turns a play into something completely different. Initially creating one framework with its set of audience expectations, he then destroys both, building an entirely new play structure with its corresponding expectations. This may be done once, twice or even three times, completely surprising the unsuspecting viewers, while simultaneously building a structurally and thematically complicated play.

Walker may begin with a family play with reunification of the family unit as the governing theme. He sets the correct stage, allowing viewers to feel familiar in and comfortable with their belief that they know what to expect. Gradually though, a sense of wrongness builds. The dialogue does not sound right. A character behaves strangely. Often, there is no concrete indicator of the turning point, but

gradually, viewers find themselves involved in a play featuring totalitarian government and a struggle for power as the governing themes. These intrinsically linked changes or turns in style and meaning are an elemental part of the Walker trademark. Their purposes are not only to keep viewers' attention and thoughts focused on the play, but also to make a connection with an audience that allows him to talk about serious issues, such as morality and power struggles, in a framework that viewers find acceptable.

The East End Plays, as the group of three plays is sometimes called, clearly exemplify the multiple levels of structure and meaning. To my mind, each represents a type of split level house of meaning. Criminals In Love and Better Living fit nicely into my metaphor. Each play begins as one type of play and then evolves into another. It is in the second level where Walker's real meaning becomes evident.

Criminals In Love, at first glance, is a play about petty crime. Junior, in a guilty attempt to protect his imprisoned father from being murdered, is convinced to help his criminal uncle and aunt. In the beginning, he and his girlfriend, Gail, hide stolen property, but then, his aunt Wineva convinces them to move into more serious crimes: robbing a Salvation Army headquarters and bombing buildings. By Scene Eight, the big transformation is undeniable. The play about petty criminals becomes a play about terrorism. By carrying

this play into a new arena, Walker is able to make statements about more global issues such as power and manipulation.

Wineva leads the others into her crazy plan for revolution. Because there is no real political cause for Junior, Gail and their friends, the result is senseless terror. They try but never completely understand Wineva's motivation. They only know that she manipulates their actions by preying on their emotions: their boredom, their fear, their selfishness, their need for self-importance, their desire to belong, and their inability to break free from anything, including Wineva's tyrannical hold.

Terrorism, in this play, is used to make a statement about power. Wineva seeks power through terror. She scares Junior's dad who, in turn, uses guilt to maneuver Junior into joining Wineva. Gail, ruled by her emotions, chooses to be with Junior even though she feels criminal behavior is wrong. Wineva coerces Junior and Gail into carrying out her escalating plans. They, in turn, frighten people in the city with their thievery and bombs. Ultimately, everyone is betrayed by Junior's father when he is pressured by the police for information. Power through manipulation becomes all important. The more people whom a character is capable of manipulating, the more powerful she is. Complete control is the primary goal. Wineva wants everyone to experience the chaos that is in her own mind; in doing so, she assumes control. If fear is the only way to do this, then so be it.

Terror becomes a means to an end. Wineva's end is watching her revolutionary plans fail. For everyone, jail is the ultimate end. In this play, Walker suggests that power, in the hands of a manipulative, greedy person, leads to hurt, confusion and chaos.

Similarly, Better Living, at the onset, appears to be a normal family play. Beginning with a familiar Sam Shepard theme, the long lost father returning to his family, Tom comes home to "fix" things: to put everything right. Not only will he "fix" the broken screen and the uneven floor, but he will also "fix" his wife and daughters' problems. While the idea of reintegrating the family is a popular idea in Canadian literature of the twentieth century,¹⁰ Walker follows a more Shepardian style, disrupting the happy reunion in several ways.

At first, everything looks fine. Tom experiences some difficulties, but after ten years and a myriad of emotions, this is expected. The family has survived without him and appears not to want him around. He refuses to be put off, which, to some viewers, might seem a positive example of his earnest desire to become part of his family. There are hints of previous problems, but all families experience problems. Walker's family of characters is not atypical. The hints of brutality, emotional upheaval, even attempted murder, however, suggest something deeper than normal emotional scars left from a family break up. Why does Nora persist in saying that Tom

is dead? Why does the uncle feel guilty? Why does Elizabeth try to shoot Tom, if he is her long-lost father?

In Scene Five, the reunification of the family turns into something far worse; the theme re-focuses on political power, specifically totalitarian government. Tom's character changes from a slightly unwelcome father-figure to a ruling body. Everything becomes very military-like with Tom as the commanding officer. Not only does Tom bring his physical presence into their lives, he also brings with him his rather bleak view of the world. Both have a dramatic effect on a family who has survived, thus far, without him or his views.

Junior, Gail's boyfriend, moves in permanently. He desires to be ruled as it gives him a sense of worth and belonging. For him, there is no question about who he is and what he should do; Tom tells him. Mary Ann stuffs envelopes because the task provides her with a productive physical existence without requiring her to use her mind: she can concentrate on her own problems or on nothing at all. Nora allows Tom to assume control of her basement project as it saves arguing. She says, "he has a certain kind of knowledge of the world"¹¹ and "I've decided I'll do anything to protect my family and create a higher standard of living" (Living, 171), even if this means accepting his presence, his rules and his paranoid views of society in general.

With the exception of Tom, the totalitarian dictator, no one has to think. He relieves them of this duty. For a family that is tired of coping with problems, there is a momentary sense of relief. A moment, however, is quite short. Rather than continuing to deal with a typically Canadian theme of integration,¹² Walker moves beyond the family play structure to one that again allows him to make a statement about power--more specifically totalitarian power--a more cosmopolitan concern. The play changes from one that might be considered Canadian in nature to a play that is not only comprehensible to viewers in many other countries, but is also something to which they might relate. Walker's changes of meaning and style help to move this play and others into more political realms.

The end of the play, while understated on stage, creates a sense of horror. When it appears that the family has revolted and rid itself of its totalitarian dictator, Tom appears at the screen door, holding an old television. He has been driven out, but he has not been defeated. Tom's return suggests that the whole cycle will begin again. This cyclical ending also is seen in Zastrozzi and Science and Madness.

The Power Plays (a term used to refer to the three plays featuring Tyrone Power as the main character) were written and performed before the East End Plays, but with regards to meaning and structure, the former are more obtuse. The East End Plays switch stylistically and thematically at specific

points. The change is very evident. In Better Living, the change occurs in Scene Five while Criminals In Love switches at Scene Eight. Clear lines of demarcation exist between the original type of play and the second one. This line disappears in the Power Plays. These plays are less direct and more complicated. Zastrozzi and Science and Madness are even less direct and more complicated. Apparently, Walker proceeded from indirectness to directness as time went on, moving from the very difficult to comprehend to less difficult to comprehend.

In the Power Plays, the switches from "Level A" to "Level B" do occur, but it is difficult to say where this occurs. In fact, rather than providing a clear line of demarcation, Walker uses a more subtle means of switching forms; he incorporates incongruous elements to break down the first set of conventions and build up the second. As with the other plays, Walker uses the switches to move viewers from a fairly common, comprehensible mystery to a format that allows him to make more global statements appealing to a wide variety of audiences. Again, he moves into discussions of power and morality.

The Power Plays utilize conventions from film noir--the black and white, Philip Marlowe-type detective movies from the 1940's.¹³ The conventions are easily recognizable.¹⁴ The main character in the Power Plays is a lonely, slightly dangerous, terse character named Tyrone Power.¹⁵ While initially not a

detective, he assumes the role, though rather reluctantly. People push him to solve problems in which he, himself, has no interest. In fact, ambiguity in both the case and his approach towards it might be a more exact description, and more in line with the idea of borrowing from film noir. Initially, the mystery seems simple, but the underlying problems that result from the investigation are neither simple nor narrowly focused.

The Power Plays offer a new way of moving from one type of play to another. Into the standard conventions of film noir, Walker injects language and incidents that would never be part of the 1940's movie type. These intrusions from the present day serve several purposes. They move the play into more contemporary times by making the problems of a previous era applicable to more modern audiences. They also reveal second levels of meaning, containing the more important issues with which Walker is concerned.

Gossip introduces Tyrone Power as a journalist who is forced to turn detective in order to keep his job. The play has many conventions of film noir, including a basic plot structure similar to that of Polanski's Chinatown (1974). The Philip Marlowe-type character, Power, is told to do something that is quite distasteful to him: discover the killer of Bitch Nelson, a rich socialite. When he discovers the murderer's identity, he gathers the suspects together to reveal his news. On the surface, this is a simple 1940's

murder mystery, but the intrusions from other times and genres indicate that something simmers beneath the surface.

In Scene Two, Power tells his boss, Baxter, that his father would have been better off buying a hockey team and letting him be the puck than buying him a paper to run.¹⁶ This intrusion forces viewers to think about the setting. While the play initially might be considered strictly Canadian in nature, hockey has world-wide appeal. By mentioning this popular sport, Walker hints that his play is not for Canadians alone.

Walker injects another interesting speech into Power's conversation in Scene Five. Power is talking with Margaret about her obsession with her brother:

Margaret: You talk about him as much as I do.
Power : But for different reasons. Everything he does is so meaningless. So much money. So much power. And nothing but gestures. It's like performing Shakespeare in a desert. Shakespeare. What the hell am I talking about Shakespeare for? My mind is rotting away. (Gossip, 31)

The analogy to performing a Shakespearean play in the desert merits discussion for several reasons. Normally, a film noir detective would not be interested in creating literary metaphor; it is out of character. Second, Power recognizes that his unrequited love for Margaret intrudes upon his deductive activities. Third, there is an ironic suggestion that Power recognizes himself in his comparison. He says that everything Paul does is meaningless gesture. The same might be said of his own life: his love for Margaret is

meaningless to her and he is attempting to solve a crime in which he has no interest. At the end of the play, his resolution of the crime is purposeless. No one wants to know who killed Bitch Nelson. Solving the crime is Power's gesture in futility.

Scene Six also provides an example of intrusions from other types of theatre and cinema. Norman and Sam, the nefarious sibling lawyers, make Power uncomfortable with their sexual practices and their habit of finishing one another's sentences. Their intentions are to confuse him and also make themselves look ridiculous, thereby diverting his attentions from their activities. After Power leaves, their dialogue disintegrates:

Norman: You were just nervous.
Sam : Why do you say that?
Norman: You looked nervous. You looked nervous.
Sam : Don't tell me I looked nervous. You looked nervous. Very, very nervous.
Norman: Oh shut up.
Sam : You shut up.
Norman: I mean it.
Sam : I mean it myself.
Both : Shut up! [They grab each other by the throat. Blackout in this area.]
(Gossip, 42)

This intrusion of a comedic routine, reminiscent of the Three Stooges, momentarily suspends the film noir conventions. The scene, however brief, adds an additional touch of humour.

In Scene Eight, Susan mentions Pedro Puchinsky who was "planning to paint the expressway orange" (Gossip, 53). Referring to Christo, an artist whose artistic endeavors began in 1971 and included cellophane-wrapped cars, islands, bridges

and buildings, this intrusion, while seemingly insignificant, serves multiple purposes. Not only does it thrust the play into another time dimension, it also allows people more familiar with Christo's work to recognize a similarity to Walker as playwright. Both use different forms of visual art to make statements about society and the world around them.¹⁷

Scene Nine also is uncharacteristic of a Marlowe film. Power invites all of the characters to a formal dinner party for the purpose of unmasking the killer. Peter Bellum foreshadows the entire scene when he says, "It's a theatre. People are coming here to perform" (Gossip, 55). These lines also remind viewers that they are watching a play--something removed from reality--that still comments on real life issues. The whole scene is different from a typical Marlowe denunciation; it is more reminiscent of the end of an Earl Stanley Gardner or Agatha Christie novel in which the detective gathers all of the suspects for the final revelation. Film directors also use this technique as a dramatic way to end mystery movies.

What viewers expect with this denunciation is not what they receive. Simplicity does not exist. In fact, everyone is guilty of something horrible, mainly corruption and greed, but none of the guests killed Bitch Nelson. That murder became secondary to all of the other crimes, scandals and gossip. Only after the room clears does the murderer himself bring up the original task. Power has not forgotten the

original murder; the answer though, is of little importance to anyone. The play ends with Power drinking alone, trying to drown his sorrow over his dog's death as well as over all of the other problems he has just witnessed.

The change in conventions, the different language, the hints, and the out-of-time references serve as a battering ram to the conventions of film noir. They push the play into another level. Walker has not written a 1940's murder mystery; what he has to say is much deeper than that. He wants to comment on today's society. Accumulated changes and intrusions replace the delineation lines of the East End Plays, achieving the same purpose, but doing so in a more subtle way. Gradually viewers move from a 1940's mystery into a contemporary play about power and corruption. This play talks about cover-ups by the wealthy, sleeping around, and gaining control with no regard to the cost. Power is the heart of Walker's meaning and is also a pun in several ways.

Filthy Rich is similar in this regard. Also written within the conventions of cinema noir, Tyrone Power reappears, but his journalistic career has deteriorated. This play begins with a mystery--who is killing off Power's friends and relatives--that is not resolved at the end of the play. In between, viewers find a complicated plot centered around the disappearance of a famous politician. Two sisters, each of whom has a different reason for wanting the man found, ask Power to solve the case. Power must determine which sister

is good and which is bad, as well as find the politician. He is leaned on by the police and beaten up by a tough mafioso--all normal events in film noir. As with Gossip, intrusions occur, indicating something else is afoot.

In Scene One, viewers notice the first intrusion. Power is at his typewriter, working on "A new literary form. The invisible novel."¹⁸ This is indicative of literature from the 1970's when writers such as Beckett worked with the idea that all literature had been exhausted, leaving only minimalistic forms with which to work.¹⁹ A film noir detective would not follow this internal thought. Despite this fact, the expression of modern man's undefined sense of guilt, the feelings of hopelessness and anguish resulting from a lack of identity, as portrayed by Beckett in plays such as Waiting for Godot, are similar to those expressed by Power (and several other Walker characters).

Shortly thereafter, Power talks about queuing for European films. As these did not become popular until the 1950's, he would not have seen them in the 1940's. In Scene Two (Rich, 80) he talks about invading Central America for the love of a woman. It is difficult to imagine a Marlowe-type character invading any country for love. Also, this intrusion reminds viewers that the play has more modern aspirations.

In Scene Three, Stackhouse speaks of experiencing an energy crisis, something that would not occur until the 1970's. A running motif throughout the play, expressed by

Power and his new partner, Jamie,²⁰ is that of living in troubled times. Again, this was not a major concern until the 1950's and recurred in the 1970's.

Scene Three has another intrusion, though less idiomatic and more stylistic. Stackhouse and Power have a conversation that does not proceed along expected conventions. The policeman and the detective suddenly engage in what may only be termed as a Marx Brothers' slap-stick dialogue. It is short and quick, almost too quick to be noticed:

Stackhouse: ... Or maybe you're just being cute.

Power : Really. Do you think I'm cute?

Stackhouse: Very cute.

Power : Thanks. You know I think you're kinda cute yourself. But we better be careful how far we take this because this is only our first date.

Stackhouse: That's right. And I don't like getting screwed on a first date. (Rich, 86)

Power talks about metaphysical angst, existential nausea and personal limitation in Scene Four. At the end of Scene Eight, he says Duvall exhibits "Typical quasi-sexual aggressiveness" (Rich, 123). Philip Marlowe would not know these words, much less utter them. They are philosophical and literary terms that became "popular" in the 1960's and 1970's.

Scene Eight provides another departure from the typical film noir conventions. The entire conversation between Duvall and Power sounds more like a spoof on film noir that deteriorates almost to the point of burlesque:

Duvall: You talk a lot.

Power : Only when I'm tense. This kind of thing makes me tense. I'm sorry. I can't help it. Look at me Duvall. I'm tense. Very tense.

(Rich, 121)

It is inconceivable that Philip Marlowe would have uttered similar lines and certainly not in the same playful tone.

Again, these lines and slip ups intrude upon the conventions of film noir until, imperceptibly, the level of meaning changes from a missing person case (and perhaps the question of which sister is good) to a statement about power and corruptibility. The missing politician, Harrison, who is running for mayor to fight crime and corruption in the city, committed a crime when young and is susceptible to blackmail. Harrison's flawed character shows that he is not above using money to keep his skeletons hidden in a closet. While running on a ticket opposed to crime and corruption, he proves to be guilty of both and will win the election because his supporters will do anything to obtain it for him, even bribe Power. A political campaign against corruption is built on corruption. No one is exempt. Voters will choose a lesser of two mayoral evils. This is an interesting shift from black-and-white 1940's issues to a more colorized comment on modern society.

This brings us to Zastrozzi and Science and Madness, arguably two of Walker's more complicated plays. Unlike the plays previously discussed, these plays are not set in

twentieth century North America. Zastrozzi takes place in Europe, probably Italy, in 1893. Science and Madness is set on the Scottish moors in 1900. On the surface, both are simple melodramas. Each has seemingly good and evil characters. Both plays make statements about good and evil. As usual with Walker, nothing is as simple as it appears.

John Bemrose, reviewing Zastrozzi in 1987 said:

On its most literal level it is a grand entertainment, a swashbuckling 19th century style melodrama with a clean story line featuring lots of sword fights and acid torrage reparte. But the play is also a penetrating study of the mysterious relationship between good and evil.²¹

This may be true as far as it goes, but it does not tell the whole story. Whereas the previous plays have double levels of meaning, both Zastrozzi and Science and Madness have multiple levels of meaning and style. More specifically, each has three levels. In order for these levels to replace one another, it is necessary to look at character development and Walker's views on morality. As these ideas are discussed in detail in a subsequent chapter, it would be extraneous to detail them now.

All of these plays represent Walker's creation of multi-levels of structure and meaning, but are, by no means, the only ones that do. Looking at any Walker play will prove an excellent exercise in finding multiple levels of meaning and structure.

Why he utilizes this structure and meaning is as important as the style itself. The explanation though is far

easier to provide than was describing the style. By creating numerous layers of meaning, Walker can build thematically as well. He may begin with a family play or mystery and before the end, elevate the discussion into issues with global appeal. In this way, he has managed to move his plays and his comments on society beyond Canada and into the rest of the literary world.

CHAPTER THREE
CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT: THE BLURRED DISTINCTION BETWEEN GOOD
AND EVIL

Walker's main characters present an interesting study in dichotomy. In fact, his protagonists can be seen as nothing less than baffling. A closer look reveals why and how this happens.

On one level, a main character appears loathsome, even evil; he criticizes everything, accepting only those who agree with his vociferous philosophy of tearing down existing social structures. By the end of the play, something happens that hints that he might be more trustworthy than originally thought. Sometimes a character begins as someone who is not necessarily evil, but misunderstood or even boring. In the end, he becomes more meaningful and interesting.

On a deeper level, there are reasons for this inconsistency. Through the course of the play, the protagonist makes a journey of moral proportions. In the face of social problems, he moves from a sense of nothingness--of nihilism--all talk but little constructive action, to true commitment, many times even tangible action. This changes him from a character exhibiting inhuman thoughts and barbarous,

though few, actions, to a more human, less diabolical person whom viewers actually accept, relate to, and like. The development of the character is not necessarily one of seemingly evil to good; in these cases, the growth is from lack of effort to tangible response in the face of social necessity. This movement of his protagonists along a road of moral development is part of Walker's style and, perhaps, a manifestation of moral sensibilities.

Robert Wallace spoke to Walker about this very idea in January of 1988; he was speaking specifically about Bazarov, the main character in Nothing Sacred, but the idea holds true for the protagonists in most of Walker's plays:

Wallace: If you look at your characters ... they describe a sort of arc which moves from nothingness--which you might want to talk about as nihilism--to a type of commitment, even action, in the face of social problems.

Walker: I think that is very accurate. You begin with anger and energy; but then you face things--the details of life--and you meet the emptiness that you are afraid of.²²

Walker's protagonists, initially, appear larger than life or different. They profess (or others profess for them) to have lofty purposes: simply living is not enough. Zastrozzi says, "I am disturbing social patterns and upsetting established cultures."²³ Maxwell, in Love and Anger insists, "I want to undermine the entire institutional bias of our culture...I'm one of the few revolutionaries in Western civilization. A hidden force."²⁴ In Nothing Sacred, Arkady describes Bazarov as "A primal force."²⁵ These men have a

goal: to break down existing social structures for their own individual purposes. Unfortunately, they must come to terms with themselves before they can effect positive changes around them. As the plays proceed, viewers come to understand that these are normal men who are fighting against social injustices. As the plays progress, so do the protagonists themselves. Rather than remaining strictly destructive or inert forces, these characters evolve into productive, forceful agents. How this is done provides interesting material for study.

Tyrone Power, in the trilogy of plays loosely referred to as the Power Plays, provides a prime example of a character who develops positively through the time elapsed in a stage production. While Power's journey is not as noticeable in the confines of any one play, it becomes obvious when following his development through the course of all three plays.

When first introduced in Gossip, Power is a bitter man whose occupation is to write newspaper columns about the social injustices he observes. Baxter, his boss, says:

Bad news. That's all we ever get from you. I think you've become a nihilist... In the last two weeks you've used the word cataclysm eighteen times, anathema eleven times and, get this, Armageddon twenty-six times. In short, you are writing about the end of the world.
(Gossip, 18-19)

Power admits to writing scathing attacks on accepted institutions, both political and social. Aside from his articles, he takes no concrete action; rather, he hides behind his journalistic pen and by-line. Baxter forces him out into

the public to search for a murderer but, in the end, though he succeeds in finding Bitch Nelson's killer, he retreats into a private reverie spurred on by alcohol and disillusion.

Filthy Rich begins where Gossip ends, with Power drinking at his desk. This time, he is no longer a political journalist, but a writer struggling to complete a novel. His hatred of society and mankind has deepened into self-hatred. His novel always is mentioned within a connotation of being about society and the troubled times as seen by Power. Again, the action commences when he is asked to solve a mystery, a request that he refuses. He is a lonely, drunk, disillusioned man. The mystery chases him relentlessly as does Jamie, a young man who wants to become a detective. Both force him to take action he might have avoided otherwise.

Initially, he searches for a missing politician, Michael Harrison, but the plot runs deeper. Jamie and Power find themselves dragged into a political campaign that is built on corruption and power-hungry people. By the end of the play, Power finds the missing politician and tries to do more than just talk about his beliefs regarding politics, corruption, money and power. At the end of Scene Nine, he throws away the money he has been given and screams "Don't vote for Michael Harrison!" from his window (Filthy, 130). This is his attempt to be rid of potentially corrupting currency and to tell people about corrupt politicians. Power is almost, but not

quite, taking positive action. The play ends on a lighter note than it started, with Power joking with Jamie.

In The Art of War, Power again denies that he is a detective, preferring to call himself "a concerned citizen."²⁶ In this play, however, Power begins with action: spying on a man named Hackman. Having discovered someone whom he feels personifies evil, Power is drawn to Hackman like a moth to a flame. Ostensibly, Power seeks to prove that Hackman killed an old reporter friend. On a deeper level, Hackman exemplifies everything Power dislikes, so he must destroy him. Hackman forces Power to take positive action, in effect, to go to war, fighting for that in which he believes. The conversation occurring during their final conflict explains the different levels on which they are at war:

Hackman: ...I'm someone who just wants to rid the world of chaos, get the economy moving again, and restore order.

Power : General, I've been waiting all my life to say this to someone like you. [Stands] Any asshole can get the trains running on time!! Any asshole can do that, but it takes something more to get the people on the trains for any reason other than the fact that they're scared shitless of the asshole who got them running on time. And another thing. It's too bad you didn't get a chance to infect me with your contrived ideas on culture because I was ready for that too.

Hackman: Strangely enough my ideas on culture are quite sincere.

Power : Oh I bet they are. All concerned with harmony and beauty and the glorious heart within. That piece of schlock that accompanied your musical ride into dinner was a good example.

Hackman: You would have preferred an earthy folk song no doubt.

Power : That's it. That's the point! I wouldn't have preferred. I don't dictate. If you'll pardon the pun. Culture is like everything else. Just is. It evolves out of just being. Like everything else. Like society. A changing society. An evolving society...

(Art, 171-172)

On one level, Power and Hackman are at odds over differing cultural views. On another level, they are at war over life and the way it should be lived. Hackman wants to control while Power believes in a natural progression or evolution. Hackman supports uncontrollable revolutionary leaders while Power prefers to leave other countries to develop on their own.

These arguments are important because Power finally finds the strength to confront Hackman physically and fight for that in which he believes. This is a considerable difference from the man seen in Gossip. While Power does not succeed in bringing Hackman to justice for the death of his friend or for his views on world domination, he ends the play with the idea that he will continue to fight for his beliefs: "And I promise next time I go to war I'll win...Or at least try to break even. I'm tired of losing. It's so...depressing" (Art, 184). He has progressed from a man who hates humanity and himself but refuses to do anything except wallow in alcohol and write dismal articles, to someone who wants people to be free and is willing to fight to protect that freedom.

Nothing Sacred, called an adaptation on Turgenev's novel Fathers and Sons, is very different from many of Walker's

plays. The tone and form are quite different. In spite of this, the play also has an interesting character who merits study with regard to character development. Bazarov, the protagonist, is confusing. His friend, Arkady, calls him a nihilist, a man who recognizes nothing, including authority: a man "who looks at everything critically. Takes no principles for granted" (Nothing, 32). Initially, the characters around him indicate that he is a brilliant scholar who is unhappy with the way Russian society operates in 1859. He criticizes the huge dichotomy existing between the Russian peasants and the upper echelons of society (an historical fact). Similar to other Walker characters, Bazarov decides revolutionary changes are needed.

Nothing Sacred opens with a bailiff viciously beating a peasant. When Bazarov and Arkady chance upon the scene as they travel home from University, Bazarov feels compelled to stop the beating when, to his eyes, it turns from legitimate punishment into personal pleasure. After saving Gregor, Bazarov cannot talk with him. Rather than accept his thanks and tell him personally how to deal with his wounds, he passes his words through Arkady. For some reason, though he has saved the man's life, he refuses to become part of that life. There may be two reasons for this: either he has set himself completely apart from the rest of humanity or he cannot look a peasant in the face until that peasant is capable of helping himself rise above his servitude.

Pavel, Arkady's uncle, provides opposition to Bazarov; he believes in principles and traditions and does not wish to see cultural changes (equality). While this alone would set him against Bazarov, his relentless and unwelcome pursuit of Anna, Bazarov's lover, increases the tension. His presence does incite a change in Bazarov:

Pavel : But...but I would... Please humour an
old...older man. I would simply like to know
what you are planning to do after you have
torn everything down.
Bazarov : Seriously?
Pavel : Of course!
Bazarov : Nothing.
Pavel : What? [Bazarov goes to Pavel.]
Bazarov : I'll do nothing. The tearing down is
sufficient. In fact an entire life's work.
The next generation can do the building.
(Nothing, 33)

Pavel is frustrated by Bazarov's words and intentions. He tries to make a connection with him by saying that he could understand the complaints of bribery and lack of roads and trade. He fails to understand that this is not Bazarov's point. Pavel and Bazarov are at odds because Pavel believes in the values of tradition (for tradition's sake) and the continued existence of rigid social classes, no matter what the costs to humanity. Bazarov wants to live in a country where neither tradition nor classes exist.

When Pavel points out that Bazarov has decided to do nothing, he strikes home. Bazarov has just delivered a speech extolling the virtues of taking action rather than simply speaking, but Pavel's words show that Bazarov is, in some ways, similar to those whom he has just criticized. Bazarov

stiffens, then smiles. He covers himself, denying the accusation by saying he does "...nothing I could describe to you. Or nothing you could understand" (Nothing, 34), but he is bothered by what Pavel shows him about himself. I believe this is the point at which Bazarov starts his journey from a vociferous though immobile person to someone much more profound and comprehensible. To this point, viewers see that while he can stop a peasant from being beaten, he cannot talk to the peasant. He professes an incredible amount of revolutionary rhetoric, but appears to have done nothing concrete. Indeed, Arkady constantly asks him to describe his course of action. He puts off the question with trite remarks or by turning the conversation in other directions.

Bazarov, as with many of Walker's characters, states that science and reason, rather than art or emotion, will change society. His behavior and words indicate otherwise. At one point, he reprimands Arkady for needing to rationalize the irrational, emotion-filled actions of his family, but almost immediately, he attempts to be a bit poetic for him and gives him a hug. Bazarov's poetic words indicate that he has begun to realize that there might be more than reason alone.

The hug, a physical expression of emotion, reinforces this idea, but also brings to mind several questions. Is he comforting Arkady or himself? Is he expressing friendship, even brotherly love, for Arkady or acknowledging Arkady's feelings? Or is it a bit of both? The answers are unclear.

In Scene Four, Gregor, the peasant saved earlier, attempts to rob the men. Bazarov decides that Gregor will be his first experiment in educating peasants to take their places in society. He says, "Your future is secure. [He looks up.] One down. One hundred million to go" (Nothing, 57). To whom or what are those words directed? There is no clear answer.

Bazarov's professed reason for helping this peasant is that he loves Gregor. Love makes the difference in helping someone assume a position (or equality) in society. This love is not that of a man for a woman. It appears to be a love of mankind or of men needing help. Again, this is a strange idea for a purported nihilist. Bazarov continues his change.

Bazarov's reaction to Anna, his mistress, is interesting. Both Anna and Arkady (and perhaps Bazarov) believe that he is beyond the normal feelings men experience, but this idea is not reinforced. Bazarov wants to protect Anna from Pavel's unwelcome attentions and does confront Pavel. When he finally tells Pavel that if his obsessive behavior does not stop, he "will be forced to take action" (Nothing, 67), Pavel is delighted that he is forcing Bazarov to take him seriously:

Pavel : ... We are enemies.

Bazarov: You are no threat to me, I'm sorry. There is only the matter of your obsessive behavior toward my friend Anna Odinstov.

Pavel : And other than that, no threat? I don't believe it.

Bazarov: Believe it. (Nothing, 68)

This exchange is foreshadowing, if nothing else. At the end of the conversation, Bazarov is upset enough to hug Gregor and apologize for hurting him. As Gregor remained silently on-stage for the entire conversation, completely invisible to Pavel, it might be assumed that Bazarov apologized for allowing Pavel to continue treating Gregor as a non-entity without making any attempts to change the behavior: apologizing for his inaction. The hug suggests that he needs some sort of physical comfort from Gregor or an affirmation that Gregor is still with him. Needing someone is different and difficult for him.

In Scene Six, Bazarov does something that appears negative though he has good intentions. Arkady's father, Kirsanov, loves Fenichka and they have an illegitimate son. Kirsanov wants to marry her, but because she is both younger than he and of a different social class, he struggles with his conflicting views. Feeling that Kirsanov will never resolve his muddle, Bazarov proposes to Fenichka, hoping to spur Kirsanov into doing the same. Arkady is irate until Bazarov explains himself. Arkady relents, but his reaction demonstrates that he, and others, still perceive Bazarov as inhuman, unable to feel or love. Despite the fact that his intentions were good, Arkady assumed the worst: that Bazarov was playing a game with humans as the game pieces.

When Bazarov tells Anna that he loves her (Scene Seven), she is skeptical. Obviously, he never expressed love for her

previously. When she realizes that he is telling the truth, she offers, "If it's important to you, we could talk about it sometime." His reply is, "Anna. I said I loved you. I never said it was important" (Nothing, 82). Already he has retreated inside himself where emotions are protected. He admits his love, but then moves on to other things.

By Scene Eight, motivated to protect the honour of his brother and demonstrate that his belief in traditions is more than mere decoration, Pavel challenges Bazarov to a duel. Bazarov resists, feeling that there might be another way to satisfy Pavel's honour. When pushed, he reluctantly acquiesces. Pavel insists, "We have to do it right. I have to do something right, don't you see." Bazarov, in his irritation, returns, "God you're pathetic! [and he turns, gesturing] Can't you see I've just been trying--" (Nothing, 92). Before he has the opportunity to explain himself, Pavel shoots him. With characteristic spirit, he later says, "Well, I am glad I was finally able to enter into the spirit of the thing" (Nothing, 92). He gave Pavel what he needed (self-respect), but in doing so, forfeited his life.

Before dying, Bazarov talks to everyone, tying up the loose ends and reconciling differences. Everything is straightforward until he asks to see Gregor, the Bailiff and two other peasants:

Gregor : Is there something we can do.

Bazarov: Just stand there. Let me look at you all.

[They look at one another.] Yes, I was

right. You are the... [He closes his eyes. Dies]
Piotr : He's dead.
Sergei : We are the what. He didn't finish. We are the what.
Gregor : The future.
Bailiff: The dirt under his shoes.
Gregor : No the future. (Nothing, 98)

They fight about his intentions as the stage turns black. Quiet descends, to be broken by Anna's laugh. A dazzling flash of light appears. Bazarov's body disappears and everyone watches as Gregor silently explains Bazarov's words to Sergei. Even in his death, people are unsure as to who Bazarov was and what he meant. There is hope that, through Gregor, some of Bazarov's changes will continue. The love he professed for Gregor, his friendship with Arkady and his efforts on Kirsanov's behalf should provide the basis of good for these people.

Bazarov developed tremendously through the course of the play. From the way people initially reacted to him, he obviously exhibited an uncaring and clinical nature. He wanted the world to change and thought that the destruction of existing social structures was the path to change. To others, he appeared callous and unemotional. As Bazarov progresses, this changed. He experienced emotion, though he laughed it off as unimportant when it concerned him personally.

After being confronted with Pavel, a representation of all he disliked, Bazarov is forced to realize that he was no better than those he criticized. By voicing complaints but

taking no tangible action, he was as wrong as those around him. His decision to take action and effect changes began his positive development. He tried to help Arkady's father resolve his class conflicts. He attempted to change the thoughts and positions of the peasants he met. He even tried to help Arkady become a better person, a comfortable combination of old and new beliefs. This is extraordinary behavior from a nihilist. Even in death, there is a sense that he began something remarkable.

Walker ends the play with a Christ-like image. Was he trying to create a god-like character or was he hinting that even the most misunderstood people can have a positive effect on the world around them? Or, was he simply trying to make people laugh by using an image that people will find familiar (and comprehensible) while also understanding that Bazarov could never be a second Christ? There is no clear answer. Walker leaves this to the audience's interpretation.

The next two plays demonstrate distinct developments in characters, but do so in a slightly different way. Until this point in his career, Walker tended to end his plays ambiguously, leaving viewers to answer the moral questions he posed. Both Beautiful City and Love and Anger present clear moral problems, but also provide hints for possible answers.

In Beautiful City, the third of the East End Plays, Walker's protagonist becomes physically ill when he fails to take action. This is a new step for Walker, a very obvious

statement about the need for positive action as a means to combat moral dilemmas.

The play opens with Paul Gallagher, a celebrated architect, talking to Tony Raft, a Mafioso-type figure who has provided employment for him for over ten years. Paul is very ill and as the conversation progresses, he becomes worse to the point of hospitalization. Once there, the doctors appear baffled by his pain and hemorrhaging. Out of desperation, he goes to see Gina Mae, a proclaimed witch and social healer whose claim is that she helps people determine their individual ugly truths.

Prior to the start of the play, Paul's life was his work. He had nothing other than his work, no hobbies, goals or family. He later describes it in this way:

My early work was pure self expression. I took risks. Some of them paid off. But I didn't always make a connection with the public. Later I made an effort to be more accessible. More useful. That was satisfying for a time. Then it wasn't satisfying at all. Now it's...Well my work was my life. And I've come to hate my work. I've come to hate all the people who derive any use out of my work.²⁷

Gina Mae's daughter puts her mother's diagnosis into words that Paul understands. She explains that he has "lost touch with the genuinely complex nature of reality" and, for him, "the simple...ugly...truth...There's life right here on earth and you're not part of it" (Beautiful, 266-267).

Gina Mae's prescription is that Paul participate in the world around him and to get him started, she involves him in her attempt to make sweeping social changes in the poor

section of the city. She forces him to watch her pick through garbage. She shows him prostitutes and thieves. Finally, she involves him in her confrontation with Mary Raft, who is Tony's mother and a Mafia headpin. To his surprise, his pain and bleeding lessen. The more actively he participates in Gina Mae's plan and in life, the better he feels. He is useful and productive. Through Gina Mae, he also has a chance to make moral amends for his work with mobsters. All in all, Gina Mae's effect on his life is positive.

In many respects, Paul becomes ancillary to the play at this point as the focus switches to the confrontation between Gina Mae and Mary. When everything is over and Mary has been forced to bankroll Gina Mae's renovation project, Gina Mae tells Paul to go back to his own life. He protests, "I feel something not being completed here" (Beautiful, 325), but to no avail; she sends him away.

Two weeks later, Paul returns, having finally realized what he has been missing in his life. After some false starts and pleas for help, he eventually asks her to marry him. For him, as much as he needs involvement with the community, he also needs love. With Gina Mae, he finds personal love as well as a way to contribute to society. His sickness ends with his acceptance of personal emotion and his interest in others.

As well as being the first play to make an obvious statement about the need for action to resolve problems,

Beautiful City is also the first of Walker's plays to conclude with an distinct message of personal love. Walker adeptly helps viewers understand that actions are necessary to effect change in the world, but until Nothing Sacred, he avoids mention of love for one's fellow humans. In Beautiful City, he continues the idea, adding an almost romantic touch that is hardly realistic (or, no more realistic than the whole concept of a man becoming physically ill from his contact with evil). Walker withdraws from that hint of romanticism through the last stage directions:

Paul smiles weakly. Gina Mae shifts from one foot to the other.

Lights are fading.

They look at each other. Look away. Gina Mae shrugs.

Paul shrugs.

Blackout.

(Beautiful, 330)

For both the characters and Walker, a marriage proposal is a difficult and uncomfortable way for the play to conclude. In film, this unrealistic ending would be perfectly appropriate: a happy, romantic Hollywood ending. Again, Walker borrows a cinematic motif. Again, he uses an obvious vehicle to make a statement about the need for personal love to make life complete. Perhaps Walker is attempting, as Paul Gallagher did, to make his work more accessible to the public. Many of his critics complained that his plays were difficult

and unsettling. By making his themes more easily understood, Walker might be trying to create a medium more acceptable to the public.

In Love and Anger (1989), Walker continues the concepts and tools he began in Beautiful City, but takes them a bit farther. Again, the viewers find a man who becomes ill when dealing with criminals and his own increasing sense of worthlessness. Again, the male character derives help and comfort from women.

Love and Anger emerges from a premise made before the play begins. Petie Maxwell, formerly a financially successful, influential lawyer whose main goal was to win cases regardless of the guilt involved, has already decided to make a change in his life. Describing his work as "part of a systematic oppressive machine which inspires to deprive people of the options and knowledge which are their fundamental rights" (Love, 25), he decides to give away all of his assets, leave his firm and make a career out of saving the masses. This decision to change his former life based on greed, power and corruption, to one more positive, productive and morally pleasing, came as a result of a serious stroke. The case on which the play centers, involves helping Gail free her husband from jail. While he did commit crimes, both Gail and Maxwell feel he was a victim of more powerful, corrupt people. In effect, he was ruled by stronger criminals in the guise of well-respected businessmen.

Maxwell uses this case to further his own aims, telling

Gail:

We have two situations here. Yours of course is the most urgent one. But mine is the more persistent. You want your husband out of prison. I want to undermine the entire institutional bias of our culture. Now I believe it's possible we have a serendipitous union of intention here but you'll have to allow me to proceed in my own way. (Love, 14)

In his attempt to save Gail's husband and carry out his own plans for reforming society, Maxwell takes on his former partner, Harris, who aspires to politics, and his client, Connor, the owner of the city newspaper. Maxwell believes Connor to be an embodiment of evil as well as a professional criminal.

Throughout the play, Maxwell continues to deteriorate physically. Despite this, he struggles on with his crusade. Realizing that he can neither complete his mission nor help his client without reverting to criminal behavior, he coerces Connor into freeing Gail's husband. Then, he kidnaps Connor and puts him on trial in his office with his secretary's schizophrenic sister, Sarah, as judge. Finally, he calls Harris to act as Connor's lawyer. When Harris asks if Connor is on trial for organizing break-ins, he is told:

Maxwell: No no. That's small potatoes. We can live with our earlier resolution to that injustice [freeing Gail's husband was that resolution]. This is bigger. More...more

Sarah : Cosmic. In an urban sense.

Maxwell: Yes. And more satisfying. He is going to stand trial for his newspaper, for his public stands on all the major issues of the day, on his contributions to making this city a place which is only satisfying to baseball fans and

real estate agents! For his endless
manipulative use of the lowest common
denominator and his lack of respect for the
essential mysteries of life!
Sarah : The official charge is: Being...
Consciously... Evil. (Love, 69)

Later, Maxwell clarifies his charges against Connor to
Harris:

This guy, this buddy of yours is an enemy of the
human race. So what I'm getting at, what upsets me
about his newspaper is that it promotes the theory of
the survival of the fittest. The law of the jungle.
And the problem with that is actually very simple to
understand. This is not a jungle. It's civilization.
(Love, 74)

The trial continues with Maxwell pressing his suit
against Connor and Connor defending his actions by citing all
of the wonderful things he does, such as donating to charities
and promoting sports events. He even appeals to God, asking
why he fails to find support for "being a good citizen" (Love,
78). Evidently, he expects that his good deeds will
overshadow any transgressions. To him, the so-called
transgressions are simply means to an end, the end being his
accumulation of power and wealth. Finally, Connor, himself,
responds to the charges Maxwell brings against him:

Fuck the people living on the street. I've heard
enough about the fucking people on the street. I mean
you'd think there were thousands of them, the kind of
press they get. I mean Jesus man this has got to be
a place for winners. We've got to keep the momentum
going. Let the slower people pick up the jet stream.
This is our only choice. We've got to get richer. The
only alternative is to get poorer. (Love, 81)

Harris falls right in with Connor's words and beliefs,
proclaiming his adoration for Connor and proving that he is

no better than his client. Sarah finds them both guilty and sentences them to death by drowning--in the toilet, thereby making an unspoken connection between Connor, Harris and the sewer. When she moves to carry out the sentence, Maxwell stops her, saying " Get them out of my sight. They won. I lost my fire. I'm sorry, okay! I think I'm dying" (Love, 81). He realizes something that is evidenced by the title of the play. Compassion, or love, must be included if anger is to be used to forge positive changes. If Maxwell combats Connor and his evil with anger alone, his changes would last only as long as he could continue to fight. Anger is too consuming and negative an emotion to produce positive results.

Sarah concedes the victory, but when Connor and Harris begin to celebrate, Gail brandishes a gun, saying:

...Mr. Maxwell didn't lose his fire. He's just a gentle man at heart. Or maybe he's just forgetful. Anyway he left something out of the argument. And this is it. The gun. See it? If you cross me or my husband again, I'll use it. If you make me mad again I'll find you and put it against your head and pull the trigger. Maybe because I think you're wrong about all the things you talked about. Maybe for...some other reasons. We'll never know for sure why I use it. I'll never know because I'll be too busy getting on with my own life to ask myself questions like that. And you'll never know because you'll be dead... (Love, 83)

Recognizing Maxwell's compassion for what it was, Gail allows them to leave, having made points that they probably do not understand. Maxwell taught her well. She was correct in saying that he had left something out of the argument; he did not consider the feelings and actions of the people whom

he inspired. She will not be pushed around by others again and she will continue the work Maxwell started. He tells Eleanor and Sarah, "She is your leader. Follow her to the ... promised..." (Love, 83). Maxwell dies, knowing that he began changes that will be carried on by Gail, Sarah, Eleanor and others they instruct.

Though both Bazarov and Maxwell die before completing their words, viewers can fill in the blanks rather easily. Neither character finishes his sentence, but there is a sense of continuation in the ellipses. In both cases, the characters who speak thereafter express a sense of continued action by those left behind. Something good will result from what they began. Their development from inert to mobile characters did influence others. Is Walker suggesting that social changes cannot come from one person alone, but that one person might start a chain reaction of responsible, active people? Possibly; Ghandi and Martin Luther King did so.

As with the end of Nothing Sacred, a religious element intrudes. Maxwell's words, "follow her to the promised ..." are reminiscent of the white light engulfing Bazarov's body. Walker might be attempting to make a connection between correct moral decisions followed by decisive actions and religion. These characters might represent Christ, sacrificing himself for the betterment of his fellow humans. I think this is rather unlikely. Walker could be using accepted and widely understood religious vehicles to express

his themes. Or, he might be using these elements as a means of delivering his serious moral questions in a way that he knows people will find so obvious that they laugh. Personally, I choose the latter argument.

Petie Maxwell, Paul Gallagher and Bazarov all find that love, in one sense or another, can be used to overcome their personal isolation and produce the societal changes they envision. Bazarov's love for Gregor allows him to commence Gregor's evolution from a hopeless peasant to a man who will take his place in society. Paul's love for Gina Mae helps him become a productive part of the city around him. Maxwell's love, tied into his need for vengeance, allows him to save Gail's husband and positively influence the three women.

All of the characters discussed in this chapter developed in positive ways. If one takes Walker's words seriously in his interview with Robert Wallace in the "Preface" to Nothing Sacred, then Walker, like these characters, has developed in his attitude towards people and social changes. Initially providing only moral questions with no answers and little hope for positive changes, Walker's plays now show that love or compassion, when combined with anger, can overcome individual isolation and fear to become a vehicle for good. In that "Preface," Walker says:

Unless you reconcile the roots of nihilism with the ways in which your actions affect people, you really are a person out of your time, perhaps out of your planet. If you forget that your work, and all your indignation and anger, comes from the way people are

treated--the so-called victims--then you can't talk to the victims, and your feeling for them is useless.
(Wallace, 7)

I think that the development of Walker's characters is indicative of his own change in beliefs. He has come to realize that simply writing for and about people who need to change is not enough. It is solely a means to express anger without actively participating in society. By accepting his own emotions, facing the "emptiness" of which he is afraid and making a connection with "the so-called victims," he becomes a viable, contributing part of society, not just a playwright writing angrily about social problems.

CHAPTER FOUR
CHARACTERS' OPPOSING VISIONS AND THE RELATED THEME OF
STRIVING FOR POWER

In every play Walker has written, his characters present two opposing visions of life. These conflicting points of view, manifested by two of the main characters, exemplify Walker's central theme of striving for power. This theme, representing part of his moral vision, is particular to his dramaturgy.

These oppositions are not developed the same way in any two plays nor do they occur on the same structural levels. Ordinarily, one half of the vision is negative and pessimistic while the other half is more positive and hopeful. The views are manifested in characters vying for supremacy; they may be poet and scientist, as in Science and Madness, Renaissance man and modern man, as in Zastrozzi, Mafia headpin and urban reformer, as in Beautiful City, or realist and traditionalist as in Nothing Sacred. Each character has his or her own vision of the world and each lives his or her life according to that vision.

Many characters are motivated by an all-consuming need for power--the ability to run everything from people to

businesses to governments, regardless of the costs. Others try to prevent these power-seekers from attaining their goals. Ultimately, conflicts result from the clashing of contradictory beliefs and characters. This theme of striving for power is inherent to Walker's plays. When two people or forces meet, the resulting confrontation determines who is the more powerful. People with less power are used or hurt. One of the combatants must lose. For Walker, this may mean death, jail or insanity. The eventual winner or power-wielder is the stronger combatant.

This struggle between two opposing forces to determine who is the most powerful is also, in my opinion, a statement about morality. As good and evil cannot coexist peacefully, one of the two must overcome the other. This idea seems very straightforward and simple. In stories with happy endings, good triumphs. In stories with sad or horrible endings, evil is the victor. Walker does not allow such simplicity. He muddles intents and characters to the point where viewers are not sure which character is good and which is bad. They initially may think that one character is evil, but before Walker is done, that character is shown to possess some redeeming qualities. He is not all bad. A seemingly good character becomes less admirable as the play unfolds. Walker's characters, for me, represent normal, every day people who are neither all good nor all bad. Instead, they have aspects of both and, depending upon circumstances and

opportunities, might move toward either end of the spectrum. I feel that this muddling of characters and their intents is part of Walker's style and, as such, represents his moral sensibilities.

Walker's characters also represent another aspect of reality: power is not always given to the "good" people. Sometimes, the most powerful people are not good. In a perfect world, corrupt, money-grabbing people who use others would never win. Reasonable, honest people who want to help their fellow men would win. Obviously, this is neither reality nor the way in which Walker portrays it. Perhaps this more accurate portrayal exemplifies both Walker's philosophy of life and his moral principles.

Zastrozzi, on the surface, appears to be a simple melodrama. The required characters, some representing good and others representing evil, move in and out of scenes. The play makes a statement about good and evil, but Walker does not end here.

The main problem lies with the main characters. While Matilda and Bernardo represent evil and Julia plays the young innocent, they are stock characters who remain constant through the course of the play. They never develop into more rounded characters. The problems are Zastrozzi, Verezzi and Victor. Zastrozzi himself is not simply evil. In reality, he has some very admirable qualities. He speaks several languages, travels extensively and is a master swordsman. He

is the model romantic figure representing the decline of the nineteenth century. He is a charismatic aristocratic German with an Italian name.

Zastrozzi, whom Walker himself labels "the master of discipline" (Zastrozzi, title page), takes it upon himself to supply a moral and ethical standard against which everyone else is compared and found lacking. Feeling that every man, woman and child must answer for his or her actions, he performs the role of judge and executioner for people's accountability. Ironically, Zastrozzi, having never personally experienced a moral dilemma, provides the standards against which everyone else is measured.

Zastrozzi is also an atheist who intensely dislikes disorder. It is this almost-manic fear of disorder that helps to shape his behavior. He sees the world falling into disarray with the coming of both a new century and a new social class. He fights against the rise of the middle class and the crumbling of the old aristocratic order. Exemplifying the old order, he refuses to become part of the past. He feels too alive to allow that to happen.

Verezzi, at first, gains viewers' sympathies, simply because he represents the chased man, the object of Zastrozzi's revenge. As his character develops, he becomes less likeable. He and his father committed atrocities on Zastrozzi's mother, thereby starting the whole vengeful chase. He is not the simple victim he initially appears to be. He

paints, thereby representing the artistic view of life, but his view is flawed. He does not see the need for truth in art, nor for truth in life. Victor, who does not believe in the distortion of truth to achieve beauty, chastises Verezzi for painting a Germany that does not exist. Verezzi feels that art need not illustrate the truth as long as it either is pretty or representative of the truth as he thinks it should exist. This belief that lying, in art, is acceptable might provide Zastrozzi another reason for hunting him down. His artistry is neither superb nor enlightened; rather, it is mediocre and Zastrozzi cannot accept mediocrity.

Unable to face the truth in art or life, Verezzi withdraws from both. He is blissfully unaware that Zastrozzi threatens his life. Basically, Verezzi is an idiot. He has retreated into a life in which he evolves from an artist and messenger of God, to a visionary, to a saint, to a messiah. Without Victor to care for the ordinary aspects of life and to protect him from Zastrozzi, Verezzi would be a hopeless lunatic and probably dead.

Victor is an idealistic "ordinary" man, personifying the aspects of a new century against which Zastrozzi is rebelling. He is a middle class priest-turned-tutor who has become his own master as well as the master of his former employer's son. He has experienced the moral dilemma that Zastrozzi has missed; he had promised to protect Verezzi, but he considers him an absolute idiot. He does not want to renege on this

promise as it is the only vow he has ever kept, but he finds it progressively more difficult to protect someone for whom he does not care. Victor is decent, resourceful, pragmatic and confused, much like any normal person. He needs balance and moderation in his life, but this ultimately causes his death.

Both men see different aspects of the world in which they live, but while Zastrozzi sees a dark vision of the world, Victor's vision is lighter: it has hope. Where Zastrozzi judges people, Victor has a heart and forgives. In the final confrontation, when the two men duel, Victor tells Zastrozzi that he does not have to defeat him: he has only to stay alive. He succeeds in this only as long as he defends himself and his beliefs. When he decides to act as God's "emissary of goodness in the battle between good and evil" (Zastrozzi, 67), he assumes an offensive posture and attacks Zastrozzi. He tries to go beyond the ordinary, attempting to judge Zastrozzi and hold him accountable for his actions. Victor fails and dies, thus proving Zastrozzi's belief that each person must know his or her limitations. Victor does not possess the ability to judge a person who is neither wholly good nor wholly evil; he is incapable of making moral judgements. At this point, the play becomes something different.

The play does have its melodramatic aspects. It is about good and evil, but it does not end with the romantic triumph

of virtue. Viewers are in a dilemma and end up as confused as Victor. Zastrozzi should be disliked, but he is too compelling and charismatic.²⁸ Besides, he has many of the best lines. There is an instinctive need to like or feel sorry for Verezzi, but again, Walker does not allow that simplicity. Verezzi is not all good. He is an egocentric prig who turned to religious fanaticism to overcome his emotional instability. Viewers cannot relate to him on any level. He is not humorous and his lines are rather the poorest of the lot. This leaves viewers looking to Victor to provide answers and accessibility. He dies, depriving them of someone to whom to relate. Clear-cut melodramatic heroes and villains do not exist.

As stated, the play reverses itself several times. At first, Zastrozzi appears bad, then Verezzi does. Finally, viewers realize that all three are combinations of both good and bad. Surprisingly, when Zastrozzi finally has Verezzi at his mercy, he releases him. Before doing so, he forces Verezzi to come to terms with himself, to face his own humanity. He no longer can hide from himself and the world by imagining he is God. Verezzi experiences fear (emotion) and regains his sanity, thereby rejoining the rest of the world. He recognizes Zastrozzi for what he is, a man who will kill him should they meet again. Verezzi now has purposes in life: to live a sane life and outwit Zastrozzi. With Victor gone, Verezzi must accept responsibility for himself, his

life, his well-being and his actions. While Zastrozzi committed many atrocities, he did, in some ways, by judging Verezzi and insisting on accountability and responsibility, save another human being. This play does not reaffirm good and evil; rather, it confuses the two. In this way, Walker supersedes the form of melodrama, moving into a realm that is entirely his own, in which he makes a statement about morals and society. His message in Zastrozzi is that there are no clear-cut heroes. Normal people have capacities for both good and evil. As long as they are honest with themselves and their motivations, they will succeed. If they cannot accept responsibility for their own actions, then something or someone must hold them accountable. Walker does not indicate how this will be done as characters like Zastrozzi obviously do not exist. Perhaps he is saying that without individual accountability, societal problems will result. This is an important statement that applies as much to society today as it did to these characters at the turn of the century.

Science and Madness contains several examples of opposing visions and more than one conflict for control. Like Zastrozzi, its basis derives from the forms of gothic science/horror films and melodrama, but this is only the beginning. From this starting point, Walker moves on.

Viewers initially expect that Medeiros, the scientist pushing Heywood to perform scientific experiments, is the typical villain. When Lillianne states that Heywood works

"for the Prince of Darkness,"²⁹ she refers to Medeiros. He is the obvious choice, but obvious is too easy for a Walker play.

Medeiros comments, "all poets are wasted human beings . . . many can do harm because of all the idle time they have" (Science, 7). In Scene Four, he suggests that Lillianne purge herself of her emotions by writing a poem. With this, he implies that poets are emotional and poetry is excess emotion. Lillianne, being just the type of poet he describes, takes offense, but finally admits that she is falling out of fashion because she is ruled by her heart. She experiences problems fitting into the reason-driven new century. This is reminiscent of Verezzi in Zastrozzi. As most people are thinking with their heads, an anti-emotional, logical society develops. This, for Lillianne, is problematic as it indicates that she is too emotional and romantic to exist.

Lillianne's speech at the close of Scene Four provides a good example of this. She attempts to compose a letter to her brother, telling him her fears and warning him about the dangers of science. As an emotional poet struggling to find a language he will understand, she fails to communicate effectively in the more rational world of her brother. She tries to be reasonable, but continually regresses into sentimentality and cliché. She even throws in religion, but as an atheist, her belief is weak. Chaos results from her thoughts.

Wishing to save her brother from the fiendish hands of Medeiros, she pits herself against Medeiros in a power struggle. This struggle occurs on several levels, representing conflicts between art and science as well as emotion and reason (and numerous others). When she realizes that she cannot fight him, she offers herself in exchange for Heywood, hoping that God will protect her because her intentions are good. Viewers may follow her line of thought, feeling that Medeiros, the play's representation of evil, must be defeated. Unfortunately, she has very confused notions about religion and evil: she does not believe in God. In the end, she goes insane, partially dissolving the idea of good triumphing over evil. She cannot defeat Medeiros alone.

Lillianne's fall back is Mary. Perhaps recognizing her own weakness, Lillianne brings Mary to the castle, believing that old-fashioned love will save Ben. Mary, an innocent yet powerful girl, holds a romantic, sentimental belief that virtue can overcome all evil. Believing that Medeiros experimented on her brother, Freddy, Mary seeks revenge. She wants to make Medeiros tremble, thereby reducing him to an emotional level. Hoping to instill fear into him, she manifests her emotional desires into a psychic storm. This is part of the chaos Medeiros wishes to avoid.

Both Mary and Lillianne feel safe in a world of emotion and are uncomfortable with the lack of emotion they observe in the new century. Mary somehow believes that through

ridding the world of the emotionless, rational Medeiros, the older, superstitious, emotional world with which she is comfortable, will return. The fact that she must create chaos to achieve her goals is not important; defeating Medeiros and all that he represents is. The battle for power between Mary and Medeiros occurs in Scene Twelve. Lillianne has lost her battle. Mary's attempt does not meet with success either. Medeiros is too powerful. His reason overcomes her emotion. The storm subsides, thereby calming the chaos.

Throughout the play, Medeiros states that he is not evil. As the beginning of the final scene, he addresses someone in the audience (or everyone) who believes he is:

I heard that. And you're wrong. I am not the villain. I am not the mad scientist. I am not the killer of rats and chickens. I am not the manipulator of weak men. I am not the seducer of vulnerable women. I am not the devil's right arm. I didn't bring on this chaos. I didn't bring on this storm. (Science, 47)

This direct address to the audience tells viewers, in no uncertain terms, what they might have picked up along the way. Medeiros is not entirely evil. He represents the belief that emotion, untempered by reason, causes chaos. Lillianne and Mary are not representations of good; they represent the chaos that occurs when emotion reigns free. Science and Madness is not a simple gothic horror play with obvious villains and heroes. When Freddy kills Lillianne, the spotlight returns to Medeiros who says, "See? No tricks" (Science, 48). He points out that he had nothing to do with her death. Prior

to her death, Lillianne says that grief over her death will paralyze her brother, thus preventing him from working. Her death is a last romantic attempt to save her brother (in effect, strangling science with emotion). She, like Mary, uses emotion as a weapon. Both want to save Heywood and the world from the clutches of reason.

Medeiros prefers the clarity of reason to the muddle of emotion. He sees Lillianne as a threat to Heywood, not because he is afraid to be considered evil, but because her sentimentality and chaotic emotions distract Heywood from his world of science. Heywood, not as rational as Medeiros, easily succumbs to emotion. At the end of Scene Five, Medeiros communicates with Heywood's mind. Unlike Lillianne's chaotic thoughts, his are rational, clear and concise. He tells Heywood that the turn of the century is a time for rational science to flourish and emotional art to die. He insists that science can and will change the world, as long as emotions and sentimentality are restrained. This argument keeps Heywood working on his experiments.

Science and Madness, like Zastrozzi, toys with the viewers' senses of pure "good" and "evil," turning seemingly simple melodramas and gothic horror plays into a new form of morality play. In both, Walker indicates that neither too much emotion nor too much reason are good. When characters representing the two extremes meet, there is a clash, a struggle for power. Mary, Lillianne and Verezzi represent

emotion and art. Medeiros and Zastrozzi represent reason. Both sides are extreme and eventually must battle for the power to have the world follow their doctrines. While the latter appear to win, at the conclusion of both plays, there is a sense that somehow, something has not been completed. Walker has presented both extremes, yet neither is entirely appropriate. His moral vision, at this point in time, does not show an acceptable middle ground.

While many people found Walker's early plays acceptable on the level of humorous entertainment, they were not well received as comments on society; they proved too obtuse for most audiences to comprehend. At that time, Walker's sense of morality appeared almost black and morose. His plays after these not only met with more popular success, they also changed in tone and style. Walker still utilizes opposing visions to represent struggles for power, but he does so in a more clear, comprehensible way. His own vision has lightened, allowing viewers some hope for the future.³⁰

The Power Plays are straightforward examples of opposing visions. The title of the trilogy, while on one level simply representing the name of the protagonist in all three, covertly hints that the three plays may exemplify struggles for power. Power, as a character, labors with his own sense of self as well as working against those who want to use other people to meet their selfish needs. The Art of War is the most obvious example. As Power becomes more comfortable with

himself and his role, he accepts the responsibility to help others do the same. He learns the art of fighting for himself and that in which he believes.

Beautiful City also exemplifies the idea of opposing views of society in the characters of Gina Mae, cashier and social reformer, and Mary Raft, Mafioso mother. The former looks at society and wants to make sweeping social reforms that benefit everyone. She believes that "human beings want to be good" (Beautiful, 295) because the alternative belief is too ugly.

She says, "I don't believe there are victims. I believe there are just people who haven't learned to defend themselves yet" (Beautiful, 321). I find this interesting as Gina Mae talks about people needing to defend themselves much as Victor needed to do if he desired to defeat Zastrozzi. Gina Mae does not say that everyone should try to change beyond his or her own abilities. She does say that given the opportunity to improve, most people would and the world would be better for the possible changes. Her view of bettering society is based on people's inherent goodness. Her words are echoed by Maxwell in Love and Anger. Mary, on the other hand, sums up her main concerns when she talks to her son, Tony:

You seem to have forgotten the basic intention of our family in this area of . . . our endeavors . . . that is . . . to make money. Very fast . . . with very little resistance and therefore very little publicity. (Beautiful, 246)

Her primary goal is power, by whatever means are necessary.

Mary and Gina Mae's beliefs are at odds with one another; obviously they clash. At the end of the play, Gina Mae appears to be the victor. This might seem an affirmation that good has triumphed, yet there is something unsettling about the triumph. Gina Mae wins her monetary demands by resorting to the same tactics that Mary uses to obtain what she wants. Gina Mae kidnaps Mary's son for a ransom of five million dollars, then tells Mary that this is only the start. She wants Mary and her "family" to fund her social reforms, thereby turning money gained at the expense of others into money that helps the same people used by Mary's family.

To achieve her demands, Gina Mae must depend upon the pressure put on Mary by Dian, a very strange breed of policewoman who has the strength, intelligence and connections to force Mary's hand. She represents a greater power. Mary finally concedes to someone whose power is greater than her own and that someone is never revealed. While Walker allows good to triumph, the victory loses luster in the face of Gina Mae's actions and the knowledge that someone more powerful forced Mary to acquiesce.

This strange unease again occurs in Love and Anger. Maxwell kidnaps Connor, putting him on mock trial for his crimes against the people. He and Connor definitely view the world in very different ways. Maxwell believes that everyone should be given a fair opportunity and no one should profit from the sufferings of others. He does not believe in the

survival of the fittest as does Hackman in The Art of War. Connor, like Hackman and Mary, believes in getting what he wants by using others. Desiring to be the most powerful person in the city, he supports Harris' political bid, knowing that through him, he can control the government. He uses people like Gail's husband to do his dirty work, adding to his monetary base without soiling his own hands. His newspaper proclaims his views: the strongest survives and he who holds the most cards (power) wins.

Maxwell fights him, but like Gina Mae, he resorts to kidnapping to bring the bad guy to justice. In the end, he fails both physically and in his attempt to teach Connor a lesson. His triumph is that Gail, Eleanor and Sarah, the "normal" people, have learned from him and will carry on his fight to end social injustices. Connor leaves, feeling secure that his position of power is stable, but there is a bit of hope that some day, he will step out of line and Gail will be there, waiting. She, like Gina Mae, flashes a gun in order to capture Connor's attention. She, like Dian with Mary, threatens the bad guy with retribution for failure to behave in the future. She, like the others, demands accountability and responsibility from people who prefer to evade both principles.

Many of these same ideas and conflicts occur in Escape From Happiness, first produced at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York in July of 1991. In fact, this play,

that returns to the same family found in the East End Plays, might be described as a series of conflicts that occur on different structural levels. Initially, the difficulties arise between the family and outside threats. Before the end of the play, internal battles also demand attention and resolution. Whereas Better Living began as a play about family reunification and ended with themes of dictatorship and totalitarian government, this play starts with a theme of urban crime and ends with family reunification. A full circle is achieved. The concept of power, as always, is central to the events.

The initial conflict occurs between Dian Black, the very unusual policewoman introduced in Beautiful City and her partner, Mike Dixon, a more traditional cop whose primary interest is to catch criminals, with no regard for his personal gains. Dian believes in the police force above everything and sees herself as a creative genius who "can arrange solutions to difficult problems in non-linear ways."³¹ She believes that through manipulation and threats, she can attain her ultimate goal: power. The battle between Mike and Dian gives way to one of the more important controversies, the one between Dian and Elizabeth.

Elizabeth has threatened Dian's way of life with her media attention on police brutality and corruption. Knowing that Elizabeth's attacks on the police force could seriously damage her power base ("a police force damaged and soiled in

the public's eye is not going to be an effective player in the ongoing societal conflict" [Escape, 117]), Dian sets up Junior and Tom, hoping that jail (or the threat of jail) will force Elizabeth to modify her behavior. She does not take into account the strength of Elizabeth as an individual or of Elizabeth and her family as a unit. She also underestimates her partner who is neither as gullible nor as stupid as she thinks. In the end, Elizabeth threatens, then bribes, Dian's hired petty criminals. She frightens them more than Dian does, so they tell her the truth, thus incriminating Dian.

The end to this conflict has the same unsettling feeling as the previous plays. Elizabeth resorts to threats of physical violence and bribery to protect her family and defeat Dian. Dian does not go to jail, as viewers might expect. In fact, there is no mention of her punishment for inflicting pain on a family or for attempting to incriminate the family members in serious crime. When Mike asks her to resign, she says:

I'm not quitting. I don't care what you say. I've got friends in high places. So why should I quit . . . In fact, I'm asking to be made your permanent partner. We're engaged in something here, Mike! We've got to see it through. It's big this thing we're engaged in! Big and contradictory. It's new and old. Woman and man. Daughter and father. Smart and dumb. Really, really smart. And really, really dumb. (Escape, 119)

As with other Walker plays, there is a sense that though Dian has lost this power struggle, she will not suffer

complete ruination. She will return. And, as good does not always triumph, she may win next time.

Elizabeth forces Mike to promise that he will drop all charges against her family. He agrees, knowing that she will continue her investigation of the police force. While he may not believe in what she is doing, he allows that she has the right to her own opinions. This is much more than Dian would have admitted.

This brings viewers to the final conflict that, in some ways, started long before this play began. In fact, it began before the earlier East End Plays. Elizabeth and her father have very different views on him and his role within the family. When Tom left initially, Elizabeth, as the oldest, the strongest, and the one best equipped to handle the responsibility, assumed the role of the family's strength and protector, normally the role of a father. The remainder of the family members depended upon her to be strong, to resolve their problems, and to help out financially. Even her bisexuality indicates her dual role as the father and eldest daughter.

When Tom returns to the family, Elizabeth's role is threatened, calling into question how well she managed. Despite her attempts at leadership, the family was not perfect. This was not her fault. All families have different problems and various methods for coping with them. When Tom convinces Junior to help him rid the streets of criminals (his

attempt to protect his family), her protective role appears usurped. Their actions also threaten the safety of the family itself. Recognizing his own need to be with his family, Tom feigns sickness so that no one will tell him to leave. Elizabeth sees the sickness as another indication of his weakness and inadequacies as a father, not realizing that he is faking and that he has real reasons for subterfuge.

In the final few minutes of the play, Tom and Elizabeth confront one another. He wants to be part of the family, but he understands that he needs her approval before the others will accept him permanently. She represents his last hurdle.

Gail asks Elizabeth to forgive Tom, reminding her that forgiveness is part of being a family and loving each member. Elizabeth has difficulty with the notion of forgiving someone who tried to burn the house and hurt them both physically and emotionally. She refuses to accept alcoholism as an excuse. There is more to her denial than just fear that Tom will revert to his old ways.

Elizabeth sees him as a threat to the family's emotional stability and to her position. She demands his respect, not realizing that by asking for her consent, he pays her a great compliment, acknowledging that she is the powerful father-figure in the family. She does not realize that while he is seeking love from the women in his family, he also is admitting that he needs them and their love. Without their love and support, he will not survive. He tells her that he

respects her and all she has done. This frightens her. She says:

You're proud! We've survived. We've done better than survive. We're your women and we're chips off the old block . . . Well, I don't need you to be proud of me...You've got to do better than that. A lot better.
(Escape, 125)

As she leaves, there is a sense that she has accepted his plea to stay, but will require more time to define and become comfortable with his role in the family. This ending reminds me of her mother's words at the end of Scene Five. Nora says:

I think we believe we don't deserve to be happy. I know Mary Ann believes it's just fate. But Mary Ann is too distressed to think clearly about these things. My theory is better. We're running away from happiness. We think we need to struggle and suffer, and work really hard before we can just stand still, and let happiness catch up and surround us.
(Escape, 94)

Elizabeth does not like what her mother suggests, but she cannot deny the truth in her words. The ending to her conflict with Tom suggests that she simply cannot accept his presence; she needs to rebel against it. Otherwise, she might fall into the trap of being happy in his company. The threat that he might leave again, just when happiness seems a possibility, always exists.

At the very end of the play, Nora, ever interested in reform, suggests ways to ensure that Tom will not become angry and resentful again, possibly resorting to alcohol. She seeks to prevent another conflict between Elizabeth and Tom, hoping that her family has a chance to be happy together. In effect, she would like to disprove her own words.

The end of this play, like Love and Anger and The Art of War, suggests hope for a better future. The family has been reunited and has overcome great odds (alcoholism, crime, and threats of jail) to achieve a chance for happiness.

All in all, Walker does not allow the out-and-out triumph of good over evil in any of his plays. His "good" characters feel forced to resort to the practices of the not-so-good characters to win their attention. They must attack these people where they feel the most vulnerable--in their need for and possession of positions of power. By putting them in vulnerable situations where they feel weak and out of control (like their victims), characters like Maxwell, Gina Mae and Elizabeth gain their attention as well as some of the social reforms they wish to make. The expense though, seems high. "Good" characters must sacrifice their personal values, in effect, sink to the level of the criminals, to gain reform.

This is an important message for Walker. In today's society, good cannot exist without evil of some sort. Power cannot be shared equally without the initial accumulation of it. A balance that is appropriate and equal for everyone is needed. While Zastrozzi and some of the other earlier plays are pessimistic in their endings, hope exists in his later plays. While still maintaining a sense of realism regarding social reforms, Walker indicates that a balance might be achievable, if enough people make a concerted effort.

I also think that these plays carry on an idea brought up in Zastrozzi (and one that will be briefly mentioned later with regards to Walker's newest play, Tough, though in a slightly different manner): the idea of accountability. As the opposition to the "bad" characters, Gina Mae, Power and Maxwell insist that their opposite numbers account for their actions. They force them to look at their actions and, to one extent or another, atone for their misuse of power and maltreatment of people. I think Walker's sense of morality also requires that people assume responsibility for their behavior, good or bad, and be prepared to make amends for actions that are not acceptable. As Walker's moral vision now allows for changes and hope, so to do those of his characters. The Gina Maes and Maxwells of Walker's plays are a more accepting, and perhaps more forgiving, representation of how accountability will occur in the real world. And yet, they, too, are a bit less than real. Then again, exaggeration is common in comedy.

It seems that his plays are Walker's attempt to spread the ideals of Bazarov and Maxwell. In looking at them collectively, I suggest that Walker has done something that few playwrights have managed: he has created a new type of morality play, something that allows him to discuss aspects of modern society in a framework that is funny and to which audiences can relate.³²

CHAPTER FIVE

USE OF CINEMATIC MOTIFS AND REFERENCES

One of the more striking aspects to examine when looking at Walker's style is two fold: his relationship to film and his use of cinematic motifs. Walker is one of the few Canadian playwrights who has successfully incorporated aspects of film into his stage productions.³³ For Walker, borrowed elements may include anything from characters to dialogues, setting to plot. His use of cinematic devices and references not only indicates a knowledge of and appreciation for movies, but also serves as a distinctive style marker. Why and how he does this merits further investigation.

For Walker, like Sam Shepard in the United States, utilizing pop culture has become an integral part of his style. As he, himself, has stated, he is heavily influenced by movies and television and rather than deny this, he has attempted to use this influence in a positive fashion.

His first two plays, Prince of Naples and Ambush at Tether's End, made use of conventions from the Theatre of the Absurd. While the first play did get his theatrical career started, neither it nor the second play were popularly received. Walker continued his search for a narrative style

and voice that drew upon his interests while also making use of more conventional theatrical modes as frameworks from which to begin. This marked the start of his use of cinematic elements generally borrowed from the world of 'B' grade films.

Bagdad Saloon was his first attempt to sparingly use cinematic devices. As the play's title indicates, elements from 'B' grade Westerns appeared, most specifically, saloon piano music, card games and show girls. Other elements also intrude, including Arabian costumes, sketch pads and character legends. The protagonist, Ahrun, tries to create a home for mythic characters from other countries such as Gertrude Stein, Dolly Stiletto, Doc Halliday and Henry Miller. Hoping to gain fame by associating with other famous people, Ahrun fails to realize that none of them are completely admirable. Bagdad Saloon ends with a disintegration into chaos rather than a definition and affirmation of "proper" culture. For Walker, the play initially was not a popular success.

Walker's next attempt was Beyond Mozambique. In this play, the borrowed cinematic conventions are obvious. Elements from 'B' grade jungle movies present themselves: a lush, slightly threatening jungle setting; natives playing menacing drums; people wearing bush clothing and pith helmets. There are hints of other movie types such as horror movies with Rocco's macabre experiments on humans and World War II movies with the references to his fiendish medical experiments

in Nazi prison camps. Drugs also appear as a means for people to cope with their otherwise unbearable situations.

Ramona and the White Slaves continued this practice. Set in Hong Kong in 1919, the play is episodic and confused, reminiscent of the opium induced nightmares experienced by the lead character, Ramona. This play, also, was indifferently received.

Zastrozzi and Science and Madness both made use of cinematic motifs and elements. The former utilized elements from melodrama and swashbuckling, Eroll Flynn-type movies, while the latter used aspects of gothic science/horror movies. Even the basic plot structure of Science and Madness is borrowed from gothic science/horror films: the mad scientist experimenting on less fortunate people. As both plays are discussed elsewhere, details need not be repeated.

With the exception of Zastrozzi (and to a lesser extent Science and Madness), these early plays were not met with much success. Critics and audiences alike felt confused by the messages and were unable to identify with the characters. Finally, Walker found a 'B' grade movie style that suited both him and his audiences: film noir, the black and white mystery movies of the 1940's that popularized private investigators such as Philip Marlowe.

J. P. Telotte, in his Voices in the Dark: The Narrative Patterns of Film Noir, helps define film noir:

This large body of films, flourishing in America in the period 1941-1958, generally focuses on urban crime

and corruption, and on sudden upwellings of violence in a culture whose fabric seems to be unraveling. Because of these typical concerns, the film noir seems fundamentally about violations: vice, corruption, unrestrained desire, and, most fundamental of all, abrogation of the American dream's most basic promises--of hope, prosperity, and safety from persecution. Taken as a whole, the noir films are noteworthy neither for their subtlety of expression nor their muting of our cultural problems; to the contrary, they deploy the darkest imagery to sketch starkly disconcerting assessments of the human and social condition. In their vision, crime and corruption seem almost a matter of decor, dark trappings of a world suddenly shown in a new and most revealing light. (Telotte, 2)

Raymond Chandler, the creator of one of the most famous film noir characters, describes his detective, Philip Marlowe, as someone who moves through a world with which he is at odds. Through Marlowe, viewers:

become different from, and in many ways stronger than, that world. We perceive its truth, understand its ways, and avoid its pitfalls as no one else . . . can. (Telotte, 6)

Film noir provided the perfect vehicle for Walker's talents. The Power Plays are obvious examples of Walker borrowing from cinematic conventions, more specifically, aspects of film noir. Tyrone Power, the main character who represents the Philip Marlowe-type detective, becomes involved in a confusing series of events that might only be described as ambiguous and complex. His nemeses might have been fashioned after any number of powerful people, intent on achieving their own ends with no regard for costs. The remaining cast members are stock characters, found in any detective movie: beautiful yet devious women, gangsters,

crooked politicians and a series of innocent yet abused people who, in trying to make a living, become pawns in the hands of more powerful players. As discussed, into this familiar film noir setting, Walker injects language and incidents that serve as reminders that these plays are applicable and meaningful to present-day audiences. The Power Plays provided Walker with more popular success than he had experienced previously, while also allowing him to comment on society in a way that was comprehensible yet funny.

Theatre of the Film Noir was Walker's most obvious title using cinematic devices. Though neither as fun nor as light as the Power Plays, it is darkly comedic and did receive the 1982 Dora Award. One of the main reasons why it fits into the category of film noir is its definitive chaotic quality. Viewers are never sure exactly what is occurring nor who the lead character is. The plot is neither linear nor easy to follow. Bernard, the most obvious character in the play, is a person in search of himself. He is at odds with and removed from society in numerous ways, with no means of fitting in. The confusion in his mind over who and what he is represents the ambiguity and chaos around him--society falling apart in the midst of war. In many ways, Theatre of the Film Noir is a prime example of Walker using film noir to comment on societal problems.

Another way in which I feel Walker incorporates aspects of film may be less apparent. Several of the characters

appearing in various plays have names that are either exactly the same as or call to viewers' minds those of famous Hollywood actors and actresses. Of course, these might be figments of my imagination, but the depth of Walker's appreciation for and knowledge of film suggests that he would be attentive to character names. In talking with David Bolt³⁴ about the titles of Walker's plays and his characters' names, he indicated that Walker is very aware of what he is writing and why. His instinct would be that Walker did have Hollywood movies, actors and actresses in mind when he named some of his characters. It would be difficult to believe that some of the character names just happened to be similar, particularly considering Walker's obvious use of other aspects of film.

Tyrone Power, the main character in the Power Plays, is an obvious example. As many film buffs know, Tyrone Power, born on May 5, 1913, was one of 20th Century Fox's biggest box office draws. Considered suitable and versatile enough for any leading role, he appeared in all types of movies including westerns, dramas, comedies, musical dramas and swashbuckling/sea movies. One of his most famous movies was the 1940's version of The Mark of Zorro. Power even played in a murder mystery, Witness for the Prosecution, in 1958. He died the same year of a heart attack while filming a duel for Solomon and Sheba.³⁵

Mary Raft, the mafioso mother in Beautiful City might be a reference to George Raft, one of the Big Four movie

gangsters. Born in 1903, Raft made a name for himself by playing credible gangster characters for several studios including Paramount, United Artists and Warners. His career spanned from 1929 until 1972 and included movies such as Scarface (1932), They Drive By Night (1940), Broadway (1942) and Some Like It Hot (1959). His image as an actor was only enhanced by the hints of actual mob connections in his personal life, hints he did nothing to dispel.

Hackman, in The Art of War, might refer to the present day actor, Gene Hackman. Hackman, born in 1930 and continuing to enjoy a movie career, has had various roles including a number of military-type characters. One of his more famous roles was that of Popeye Doyle, the New York detective in the 1971 version of The French Connection. He has played several "bad" characters including the lead role in Bonnie and Clyde.

For movie enthusiasts who remember the 1948 version of Key Largo, directed by John Huston and starring Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall, another name might seem familiar. The character opposing McCloud (Bogart) and played by Edward G. Robinson was called Johnny Rocco. Rocco was a notorious racketeer who had been deported from the United States and had since returned to attempt to regain his money and power. The name Rocco might bring to mind Rocco, the slightly deranged doctor in Beyond Mozambique.³⁶

While not strictly cinematic in nature, there are a couple of other interesting names. Doc Halliday, Gertrude

Stein and Henry Miller in Bagdad Saloon are names that conjure up images of westerns, the feminist movement and 20th century literature.

I am sure that I failed to mention all of the name connections that might exist. Other viewers or readers may spot additional examples. Of course, the theory that these examples exist is purely speculative on my part, but it provides an interesting addition to the ways in which Walker incorporates cinema into his plays.

Another interesting way in which Walker might have referenced his knowledge of 'B' grade movies is in the title of Nothing Sacred. While the play itself is based on Turgenev's novel Fathers and Sons, the title of the play could come from a completely different source: an old movie. In 1937, William Wellman directed a movie for United Artists entitled Nothing Sacred. The movie is a biting satire of the public's morbid interest in death and disease. While the basic plot (the events befalling a young woman who is misdiagnosed with a fatal disease) has nothing to do with the theatrical events of Walker's play, the idea of borrowing a movie title, particularly one with such a nice sense of irony, might appeal to him. Of course, this, like the character names, might be completely alien to Walker, but I tend to doubt it.³⁷

Having looked briefly at how Walker used film in his plays, it might be appropriate to look at why he might have done so. There are several possibilities.

We have already seen Gina Mallet's statement about Walker's style. She says he is a master at portraying the "perception that we do not live original lives but ones borrowed from TV and movies" because, "we are a regurgitated culture" (Wagner, 300). As cultures, both Canada and the United States are heavily influenced by the media, particularly television and movies. In attempting to relate to audience² comprised of people who spend considerable time watching both, it makes sense that Walker manipulates aspects of media in his plays rather than ignore them and risk alienating potential audiences who might not take the time to understand his intentions. The goal of most playwrights is to put their messages into the minds of their audiences; how better to do this than with plays incorporating elements that are familiar to most viewers?

Chris Johnson gives several conceivable reasons for the use of 'B' movie conventions. He says, "Film is a richer source of theatrical conventions...and provides fuller access to the popular world of understanding" (Johnson, 93). He goes on to say that 'B' movies offer a rich source of images, plot models and a set of recognizable stock characters. He talks about the irony of the movies, which, if I understand him

correctly, manifests itself in the portrayal of a simpler life than that which actually exists (Johnson, 94).

While the reasons Johnson provides for the use of 'B' movie devices are good, I think he misses some obvious ones. A very simple reason for using 'B' film conventions might be that these were popular films; people enjoyed them. It makes sense that Walker would utilize an accepted, well-liked, easily understood format as a foundation from which to build his plays. Overall, the conventions (not just the characters) of these movies are easily recognized. After several minutes, viewers know that they are watching a 1940's detective movie. The conventions are clear and so are the expectations that grow from it. Viewers need not struggle for enjoyment or contact; the material is approachable for everyone. The format, which is both familiar and comfortable, provides a vehicle from which Walker may expand. He may continue to follow the conventions or he may disrupt the expectations. Of course, with Walker, the latter occurs.

From a moral sense, Walker's use of film noir makes even more sense. Telotte's definition of film noir includes a look at psychological and moral aspects of the genre.³⁸ Film noir "seems to mirror both the large cultural forces and the immediate human impulses that shape our lives and that seem to generate their own discourse" (Telotte, 8). Chandler's Philip Marlowe and other film noir characters such as Dashielle Hammett's Sam Spade and his anonymous Continental

Op, provide emotional and moral judgements on the people and world around them. They take stances that oppose societal corruption, thus proving that individuals can "cling to some human values" (Telotte, 6), even when faced with corruption on every side. Film noir's style and characters have enabled Walker to discuss aspects of human nature and morality (such as characters' motivations, struggles for power, forging of a link with the rest of society and the need for communication of vital truths) in a comprehensible format for viewers.

While Walker admits to using 'B' movie conventions, he does not want people to feel that he is parodying them. In an interview with Robert Wallace for The Works in 1982, Walker said that he uses their conventions because:

I tend to frame the world and use various genres to do that. 'B' movies are a generic frame that gives me freedom to jump off in any direction that I want or that the characters take me.³⁹

This common framework in which to house his plays has served two purposes. The Power Plays, in particular, found an audience for Walker and began a period of more popular success for him. In my opinion, they also served to help him feel more comfortable in his role as playwright, thereby allowing him to move into his later plays, beginning with the East End plays and continuing to the present. These plays have not relied on 'B' grade films (of any type) for characters or framework; rather they utilize present-day Canadian settings and characters.⁴⁰

According to Walker, this was a deliberate change on his part. He decided that while the incorporation of cinematic conventions and frameworks served a useful purpose, a serious drawback resulted. Viewers became so simplistically happy and comfortable with the basic format and characters that they never looked beyond the familiar to determine Walker's real purposes and meanings. They were content to accept the detective story without hearing the comments on morality or society. While Walker does want to entertain audiences, writing theatrical movie spoofs was not his intention.

Feeling that these conventions distracted audiences from his main goal, Walker decided to move his plays into more current times and depend upon dialogue and real-life situations and characters, not conventional frameworks, to appeal to audiences. His attempt has been to connect with audiences in a way that they can immediately access and relate to their own lives rather than relying upon filmic frameworks that possibly distract audiences into complacency and oblivion, thereby missing deeper purposes.⁴¹

A clear example of this shift might be his latest play, Tough, currently being performed (1994) by a traveling cast from the Green Thumb Theatre. Tough has three characters, teenagers all trying to deal with the unexpected pregnancy of Tina, one of the three. Teenage pregnancy and single mothers are concerns of today as is the idea of assuming responsibility for one's actions. Walker's new play, geared

towards teens, deals with these issues in a realistic, yet funny manner. Audiences can laugh at the characters while also relating to the pain and emotional turmoil all three characters experience.

While borrowing aspects of film was effective for Walker in his early and middle plays, it is obvious that he has developed as a playwright to the point where this is no longer necessary. Certainly the popular and critical success of his later plays (while perhaps not as significant as he might wish) indicates that he can write plays that are dependent solely upon his own style rather than a style that incorporates motifs of or borrows elements from film. It would appear that he has moved away from film and into a framework that is completely his own.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Walker's style has developed considerably over the past twenty years. His early plays often borrowed elements from 'B' grade movies such as film noir, westerns and gothic horror, as well as aspects from other genres such as Laurel and Hardy dialogues, slapstick interchanges and Theatre of the Absurd comedy. As he realized that these recognizable elements sometimes overshadowed or interfered with his true intent, Walker abandoned well-known frameworks, thus beginning the development of his own personal dramaturgy, a style that is completely different from that of other playwrights.

Structurally, Walker's plays are rather complicated. Most of them have multiple levels, with different themes corresponding to each level. He may start with a play reminiscent of a film noir mystery, with all the requisite characters, plots and setting. After allowing viewers to relax with their preconceived expectations, the initial structure soon gives way to a play concerned with the corruption of modern society. As the structure of the play changes, so do the themes. While all of his themes are important, the one hidden beneath the top layers often

reflects his beliefs of power and morality. This creates a play that, because of the numerous levels on which it operates, challenges viewers to keep pace and pay attention.

Characters played an important part in this discussion. Walker's characters are interesting in that they, too, operate on more than one level, much as real people do. Viewers can watch characters develop through the course of a play much as real people learn and grow through various situations that affect their lives. Many of Walker's characters make journeys of moral proportion as they change from indecisive, confused men (or women) who are incapable of action, to people who accept that their world is not perfect but are willing to take steps to make changes.

Walker's characters seem real in another way; they are emotionally complicated. Like normal people, most of his characters possess qualities that are both good and bad. A few characters, such as Zastrozzi and Medeiros, are larger than life. They initially appear evil, but as the plays progress, they become less nasty and more likeable. While seductive in nature, they are too far removed from normal man to be real.

The remaining characters (with the possible exceptions of the stock characters in the early plays and the ancillary characters in the newer plays) are neither wholly evil nor completely good; rather, they are combinations of both with the capacity to do either bad or good deeds based on the

situations with which they are faced. They love and learn, or hate and use, based on their personalities and circumstances.

When two characters with opposing beliefs conflict with one another, a power struggle results. Whoever wins is, at that point in time, more powerful. This, of course, leads into my suggestion that power struggles exemplify Walker's moral views. As is true of today's world, some of Walker's characters misuse their power while others attempt to use it for the betterment of their fellow humans. A seemingly good person may triumph on one occasion, while he or she may lose on the next. Walker's plays present a realistic portrait of the world, but not in a realistic dramaturgy.

At the heart of everything, is Walker's sense of morality. He appears to have definitive views on societal problems and realizes that the most effective way to cause changes is to provide a vehicle for those problems to become known. His plays represent a means to express the serious issues that effect everyone. His early plays were black, often pointing out problems but not offering any solutions or hope for change. His later plays are less bitter, exemplifying Walker's own lightened perspective. They indicate that changes are possible, as long as people are willing to fight for that in which they believe.

In the entire discussion on Walker, there are three very important ideas that, while mentioned occasionally, were never

discussed in detail. Obviously, no single paper could touch upon everything that comprises Walker and his plays, but these areas do merit a brief mention.

Dialogue is one of Walker's strongest points. Many plays rely on the verbal interplay between characters⁴² and Walker's are no different. Having spoken to him regarding his process of writing, I was surprised to learn that Walker hears dialogues in his head, long before he ever puts pen to paper. Somehow, internally, a character begins talking and, as that speech develops, so does the play. He says he begins with one character needing to say something. Then, another character must respond. In the course of the dialogue, the characters develop as does the plot and the structure of the play. Interestingly enough, theme, plot, setting and structure are by-products of dialogue. Perhaps this is why the words spoken by his characters seem life-like and real. They are accurate representations of the manner in which real people talk with one another. We laugh at and with other people. We tease friends and argue with family. Many of us even talk to ourselves. We tend to lead very verbal existences and Walker has captured that very precisely.

This leads into the important second point. Walker's plays are very funny and this is very easy to forget when analyzing his work. The material is amusing. One reason for this is the dialogue. The words exchanged between characters, the quick repartees, the puns and comebacks all make audiences

laugh hysterically. For instance, when Matilda decides she must kill her rival, Julia asks why she cannot just leave. Matilda says, "That won't do. Besides, I will enjoy killing you. It is women like you who make me look like a tart," to which Julia replies, "Nonsense. It's the way you dress" (Zastrozzi, 60). This and numerous other examples demonstrate an incredible command of the English language as well as a superior wit. Walker's characters can entertain while also demonstrating more serious themes.

The comic words and other elements of humour found elsewhere in Walker's plays have other functions. He seeks to entertain, but that is not his only purpose. Walker told me that he needs to connect with his audience. He uses whatever vehicle necessary to help his audiences understand what he is saying. He possesses the unique ability to couch serious issues, such as morality, teen-aged pregnancy and governmental corruption, in ways that are palatable to audiences. Most audiences want to be entertained. They want to laugh. They want to relate to what they see on stage. Walker, through his dialogue and humour, manages to create situations and characters that seem real to viewers. They understand the problems the characters face. They laugh at the silly situations and jokes. They comprehend the pain or anger a character feels because they have experienced similar situations and feelings. Walker's recent plays are his attempts to connect with the audiences: to give them what they

want while also clearly stating his case, in an amusing manner.

Finally, there is another element that is important to understanding Walker and his plays. David Bolt told me that every good Walker performance he has ever acted in or seen has required one important element: energy. Having seen several Walker plays, this made sense. Comedy, by nature, requires speed. Walker's plays are no exception. They are fast-paced, almost frenetic (not frantic) in nature. For Walker's dialogues to be effective and realistic, they must occur quickly. Characters also are very physical with themselves and one another. Conflicts may include physical as well as verbal exchanges. Something that might be described as a sense of fatigue occurs at the end of a Walker play. There are a couple of reasons for this.

Having spent several hours with George Walker, that same sense of energy pervades him. He is an engaging person whose intellect and interests seem to propel him along. For him, the key to his writing is emotion. Walker writes about emotions: anger, happiness, irritation, doubt, worry and confusion. Experiencing and expressing emotions require energy from the actors and actresses who portray the characters and the viewers who relate to what they see. Without the ability to control the numerous energy levels (his own, the actors and the audiences'), Walker's material would be much less effective, entertaining and memorable.

The purpose of this thesis was to conduct a general study on one of English-speaking Canada's more prolific playwrights. In the course of the chapters, I looked at George F. Walker and his development as a playwright. More specifically, through analysis of his plays, I discussed how structure, characters and themes have contributed to his ever-evolving style and sense of morality. There is more to Walker and his plays than this.

This thesis began with a brief look at alternative theatre in Canada and how George Walker emerged from and developed along with Canadian theatre. In coming full circle, it seems most appropriate to look quickly at how Walker, though still virtually unknown, even in Canada,⁴³ has changed Canadian theatre and theatre in general. Walker is one of the few playwrights who creates plays to which audiences can relate because they deal with serious issues in a funny manner.

Walker began as a non-traditional playwright and has managed to maintain that status while moving into international circles. He has helped to prove that Canadians can write plays that have national and international appeal. I hope that as time goes on, other people will come to appreciate Walker's work as much as I have. He is an interesting playwright, well-deserving of critical and popular acclaim.

NOTES

¹Urjo Kareda quoted in Up The Mainstream: The Rise of Toronto's Alternative Theatres, 1968-1975 by Denis W. Johnston (Toronto: Simon & Pierre, 1985), 184.

²Chris Johnson, "B Movies Beyond the Absurd," Canadian Literature 85 (Summer 1980): 87.

³Denis W. Johnston, Up the Mainstream: The Rise of Toronto's Alternative Theatres, 1968-1975, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 107.

⁴Malcolm Page, "British Columbia," in Contemporary Canadian Theatre: New World Visions, ed. Anton Wagner (Toronto: Simon & Pierre, 1985), 171.

⁵Robert Wallace, "Introduction," in Love and Anger by George Walker (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1990), 7.

⁶Gina Mallet, "The Art of War," Toronto Star (24 Feb. 1983); quoted in W. Conolly, ed., Canadian Drama and the Critics (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1987), 300.

⁷Boyd Neil, "The Art of War," Canadian Forum 63 (May 1983); quoted in W. Conolly, ed., Canadian Drama and the Critics (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1987), 301.

⁸Hrant Alianak, "Interview: Urjo Kareda and Hrant Alianak," in Return of the Big Five, ed. Connie Brissendon (Toronto: Fineglow, 1985), 10.

⁹Renate Usmiani, "The Alternative Theatre Movement," in Contemporary Canadian Theatre: New World Visions, ed. Anton Wagner (Toronto: Simon & Pierre, 1985), 57.

¹⁰Some of the common themes explored in Canadian literature of the 20th century include: Canadian identity; French-English schism; self-realization; human interdependence; coping with alienation and loneliness in the Canadian frontier; alienation; reunification of self and family; and cultural and racial prejudices. For more specific information on this subject, the reader is referred to Northrop Frye's "Conclusion" in the Literary History of

Canada: Canadian Literature In English, ed. Carl Klink (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), 821-852 as well as the Encyclopedia of World Literature in the 20th Century, vol 1, ed. Leonard Klein (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1981), 396-399.

¹¹George Walker, Better Living, play in The East End Plays (Toronto: Playwrights Union of Canada, 1988), 160.

¹²See above note on the common themes found in Canadian literature.

¹³Several examples of Philip Marlowe movies, based on novels by Raymond Chandler, include Lady In White (1947), The Big Sleep (1946) and Murder My Sweet (1944). The latter was based on the novel entitled Farewell, My Lovely. The movie Farewell, My Lovely premiered in 1975. In 1946, Bob Hope starred in a spoof of Murder My Sweet entitled My Favorite Brunette. The Last Goodbye, directed by Robert Altman in 1979 was a remake of The Big Sleep.

¹⁴Film noir is a French term created to define the standard conventions of an American film style. The plot is very convoluted, to the point where neither the main characters nor the audiences are quite sure what is occurring. Ambiguity and confusion prevail. Generally, an honest, straight-forward detective is asked to solve what appears to be a simple case. As the movie progresses, sub-plots take over and he becomes ensnared in a number of related, yet seemingly unconnected occurrences. The detective often is a brusque man with little money and a rather hardened view of the world. He drinks rather heavily and often is beaten during the course of his investigations. He is very attractive to women yet rarely experiences a lasting relationship. Film noir is discussed further in Chapter Five. For more information on film noir, the reader is directed to Voices In the Dark: the Narrative Patterns of Film Noir by J. P. Telotte, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980).

¹⁵As the Power plays also have a recurrent theme of characters seeking power, I wonder if Walker deliberately combined a well-known Hollywood name (which people would recognize) with a pun on the idea of power. My guess would be he did.

¹⁶George Walker, Gossip, play in The Power Plays (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1984), 18.

¹⁷Christo strove to create "active social dialogues," works that were political, economic and social statements because "any art that is less political, less economical, less

social today, is simply less contemporary" World Artists 1950-1980: An H. W. W. Biographical Dictionary, by Claude Marks (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1984), 157. His interest in wrapping or packaging familiar objects served to make them unrecognizable, thereby creating an air of mystery or presence designed to make statements about the world. Oxford Companion to 20th Century Art, ed. Harold Osborne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 158.

His current project is an attempt to wrap the Reichstag in Berlin; only within the last month (March 1994) or so did he receive the necessary paperwork and permission to begin his project. For pictures of his larger works (most of which existed only for brief periods of time), the reader is directed to Christo by Dominique Laporte. Trans. by Abby Pollak (NY: Pantheon Books, 1986).

¹⁸George Walker, Filthy Rich, play in The Power Plays (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1984), 76.

¹⁹A thorough explanation of minimalistic literature is provided by John Barth in his article "A Few Words About Minimalism" that appeared in the December 28, 1986 edition of The New York Times Book Review, pages 1-27. Central to this article is the idea that many writers have made use of minimalistic theory, but have done so in very different ways. Barth defines the main minimalistic principle as "an artistic effect [that] may be enhanced by a radical economy or artistic means, even where such parsimony compromises other values" (Barth, 1). To sum up the remaining ideas, he says, "In short, less is more" (Barth, 25). The literary form to which Barth refers would be equivalent to minimalism and conceptualism in the art world. Minimalism, in the last twenty years, has continued with artists in Italy who practice "arte povera" or poverty art.

²⁰Several people, including noted Canadian theatrical actor, David Bolt (who has starred in a number of Walker plays, including the lead role in the Power Plays), have suggested that Jamie might be the character most closely associated with Walker. Jamie is a fresh, rather idealistic character who wants to connect with and make changes to the world around him. His energy stimulates Power to get on with his life and his tasks.

²¹John Bemrose, "Satan With a Sword," Macleans, 25 May 1987, 22.

²²Robert Wallace, "Preface," in Nothing Sacred by George Walker (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1988), 7.

²³George Walker, Zastrozzi (Toronto: Playwrights' Union of Canada, 1977), 12.

²⁴George Walker, Love and Anger (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1992), 14-15.

²⁵George Walker, Nothing Sacred, Toronto: Coach House Press, 1988, 49.

²⁶George Walker, The Art of War, play in The Power Plays (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1984), 37.

²⁷George Walker, Beautiful City, play in The East End Plays (Toronto: Playwrights' Union of Canada, 1988), 292.

I suggest that part of Paul's speech is a reflection of the progression Walker has made with regards to his work. He too realized that he did not always make a connection with his public, so he has made an effort to be more accessible. I do not think that he has gone beyond that, as his character does, to the point where it is not satisfying and he hates his work. Rather, I think he still enjoys his work.

²⁸George Walker suggested that perhaps Zastrozzi's greatest accomplishment resides in the viewers' confusion over him. He is compelling and charismatic; he also has the capability to commit acts of absolute evil. He is the ultimate seducer. He seduces the young, virtuous Julia out of boredom and the desire to be alone. He convinces the audience that, despite his previous actions, he is no worse than any of the other characters. Obviously, he is a character on a different plane from normal man. This same unworldly character is found in Science and Madness Medeiros.

²⁹George Walker, Science and Madness (Toronto: Playwrights' Union of Canada, 1982), 3.

³⁰ When asked about his earlier plays and their more morose tone than the later plays, Walker indicated that this was the result of his own mood in his earlier years. He since has realized that he has hope and it can and should be incorporated into his plays, particularly if he wishes to make a connection with his audiences. As this is one of his main goals, he has attempted to write plays that are more involved with current times, places, situations, themes and characters, knowing that if viewers can relate to his material, he stands a better chance of reaching out to them and making them understand his points.

³¹George Walker, Escape From Happiness (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1992), 118.

³² Few playwrights have been successful at discussing modern society in a style that is both comedic and comprehensible to today's audiences. Some notable exceptions are David Williamson in Australia, Heiner Muller in Germany and occasionally, David Mamet in the United States.

³³ Some of the playwrights who have incorporated aspects of film into their theatrical productions are: Ronald Tavel, part of the Warhol entourage; Charles Ludlam who often used film as the basis of his plays; Everett Quinan who currently runs Ludlam's theatre originally called the Playhouse of the Ridiculous and now named the Charles Ludlam Theater in New York City; Austrian Wolfgang Bauer who often sets his plays in England; Sam Shepard who shares Walker's sense of pop culture (particularly noticeable in Fool For Love); the early plays of Christopher Durang, including Titanic and Denity Crisis; American Woody Allen; Samuel Beckett; early Ken Gass; Kenneth Bernard; Hrant Alianak and Sky Gilbert.

³⁴David Bolt, Interview, 18 February 1994.

³⁵The factual information contained in this paragraph and the following two, was verified in and compiled from two sources: Who's Who In Hollywood by David Ragan (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1976) and The Illustrated Encyclopedia of the World's Great Movie Stars and Their Films from 1900 to The Present Day by Ken Wlaschia (New York: Bonanza Books, 1979). The reader is referred to either for additional information.

³⁶ For more information on the cast of characters and the plot summary of Key Largo, the reader is referred to Magill's American Film Guide, edited by Frank N. Magill (Englewood Cliffs: Salem Press, 1981), 2397 or any similar film reference guide.

³⁷ Again, the reader is referred to Magill's American Film Guide for further information.

³⁸Telotte's definition of film noir goes on to say that these films:

explore not only the flaws and falsehoods pervading that [human] discourse but also the state of human isolation that has almost paradoxically followed the world seems largely populated by isolates, and the ability to reverse the situation or to communicate any vital truths at all appears increasingly unlikely. Seen in this light, the more conventional film noir become almost case studies in the mechanism of repression these films

effectively lead from one level of contradiction to another, while they also model the cultural conditions that give their analyses immediacy. What they thereby show most clearly is how the individual in modern society, even as he tries to forge a meaningful link to others or to society as a whole--or to what the public discourse of radio, newspaper, television, and film seem to view society as--constantly finds the self denied and isolated, reduced to a permanent other in the world of others these works depict cultured man, the modern individual bound by the world he inhabits and the sense of self he has constructed for that world. In fact, the self-image that film noir describes is of an individual perpetually bound by his own desires. (Telotte, 27-9)

³⁹Robert Wallace, The Work: Conversations With English-Canadian Playwrights, eds. Robert Wallace and Cynthia Zimmerman (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1982), 218.

⁴⁰Nothing Sacred is, to date, the one exception to this trend. Rather than setting this play in the present, Walker chose to revisit the setting established by Turgenev's novel Fathers and Sons: Russia in 1859.

⁴¹Interview with Walker, 19 February 1994.

⁴²There are some notable exceptions to the idea that dialogue is important in plays. Minimalistic theatre and theatre of movement are specific examples where actions, rather than words, become the focal point.

⁴³Intellectually, I know that Walker is not a playwright whose name is familiar to everyone (as Shakespeare might be), but that idea was driven home when I went to Toronto to speak with David Bolt and George Walker. I learned that people, even in Toronto, where Walker makes his home, generally are not familiar with his work. When he walked down the street after speaking with me, people passing by did not recognize him. This reinforced the idea that even though he has found some measure of success, he has not achieved the instant recognition and popularity of the rock and movie stars in our pop culture. Most playwrights never do. For me, this further exemplified Walker's idea. Our society, inundated with television, movies and music, may never allow people like Walker (or Albee or Brecht or Alianak) to achieve that instant recognition and status now reserved for movie and music stars.

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