

Wint Selby – American, aged 19

AH! WILDERNESS EUGENE O'NEILL

First performed at the Nixon Theatre, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1933 and transferred in the same year to the Guild Theatre, New York. It is a comedy set in 1906 and described as a study of middle-class family life.

Nat Miller, owner of *The Evening Globe*, lives in Connecticut with his wife and four children – Arthur, the eldest who is at Yale, 16-year-old Richard, and young Mildred and Tommy. It is the Fourth of July and the family are at dinner. Richard's girlfriend has left him and he is feeling wretched. His mother tells him it is his own fault. Upset, he walks out of the dining room.

Outside he hears a low whistle coming from the porch. It is **Wint Selby**, a classmate of Arthur's at Yale and a typical college boy of the period. He has called to see Arthur but he is out. He explains to Richard that he has dated a couple of girls for the night, but cannot afford to buy drinks for both of them. The situation is urgent. Richard offers to lend him 11 dollars. But **Wint** doesn't want his money, he wants Richard to stand in for his elder brother.

Published by Jonathan Cape, London

Wint

(As he enters - warningly, in a low tone) Keep it quiet, Kid. I don't want the folks to know I'm here. Tell Art I want to see him a second – on the QT . . . *(irritably)* Damn! I thought he'd be here for dinner. *(More irritably)* Hell, that gums the works for fair! . . . I ran into a couple of swift babies from New Haven this after, and I dated them up for tonight, thinking I could catch Art. But now it's too late to get anyone else and I'll have to pass it up. I'm nearly broke and I can't afford to blow them both to drinks . . . *(shaking his head)* Nix, Kid, I don't want to borrow your money. *(Then getting an idea)* But say, have you got anything on for tonight? . . . Want to come along with me? *(Then quickly)* I'm not trying to lead you astray, understand. But it'll be a help if you would just sit around with Belle and feed her a few drinks while I'm off with Edith. *(He winks)* See what I mean? You don't have to do anything, not even take a glass of beer – unless you want to . . . Ever been out with any girls – I mean, real swift ones that there's something doing with, not these dead Janes around here . . . Ever drink anything besides sodas? . . . *(impressed)* Hell, you know more than I thought. *(Then considering)* Can you fix it so your folks won't get wise? I don't want your old man coming after me. You can get back by half-past ten or eleven, though, all right. Think you can cook up some lie to cover that? *(As Richard hesitates - encouraging him)* Ought to be easy – on the Fourth . . . But you've got to keep your face closed about this, you hear? – to Art and everybody else. I tell you straight, I wouldn't ask you to come if I wasn't in a hole – and if I didn't know you were coming down to Yale next year, and didn't think you're giving me the straight goods about having been around before. I don't want to lead you astray . . . Well, you be at the Pleasant Beach Hotel at half-past nine then. Come in the back room. And don't forget to grab some cloves to take the booze off your breath . . . See you later, then. *(He starts out and is just about to close the door when he thinks of something)* And say, I'll say you're a Harvard freshman, and you back me up. They don't know a damn thing about Harvard. I don't want them thinking I'm travelling around with any high-school kid . . . So long then. You better beat it right after your dinner while you've got a chance, and hang around until it's time. Watch your step, Kid.

Guy Bennett – aged 17

ANOTHER COUNTRY JULIAN MITCHELL

First produced at the Greenwich Theatre in 1981, then transferred to the Queens Theatre, London, and revived at The Arts Theatre, London, in 2000.

The play takes place in an English public school in the early 30s, where future leaders of the ruling class are being prepared for their entry into the Establishment. In this environment the two central characters – **Guy Bennett**, coming to terms with his homosexuality, and Tommy Judd, a committed Marxist – are very much 'outsiders'.

In this scene, set in the fourth-year library, **Bennett**, Judd and Devenish are talking about the Dedication they have just attended. Judd dismisses it as ludicrous for 400 boys to line up and blub for a lot of people they never knew who died in a businessman's war. **Bennet** remarks that it made him think of his father whom he loathed, and goes on to describe in detail the ghastly circumstances of his death.

Published by Amber Lane Press

Bennett

It was the Easter hols. I was reading in bed one night when I heard the most peculiar noise – a sort of muffled squeaking. I thought it was the cat at first. But then it went on and on – sort of feeble and desperate at the same time. Like something trapped. So I got up and looked out into the passage. It seemed to be coming from my parents' room, and there was a light under the door, so I assumed – well, I mean, what would you have thought? . . . I was just going back to bed to mind my own business, and feeling pretty queasy because – well, I mean, one's own parents! . . . When I quite distinctly heard my mater say, 'Help!' *(He imitates her)* 'Help!' *(Devenish is enthralled. Judd is more and more sceptical)* It was terribly eerie. Complete silence, then suddenly there it was again. 'Help!' So – I didn't know what to do. I went down the passage to their door. I listened a moment, then I knocked and said, 'Are you all right?' And she said – *(Imitation of the muffled voice again)* – 'Guy! Quick – help!' She sounded absolutely at her last gasp. So I turned the door handle to go in – only of course the door was locked . . . All the bedroom keys are the same in our house. I see why now. But it took me ages to push their key out backwards and get mine in. And then, when I finally got the door open – my pater had had a heart attack right in the middle of – *(Judd claps ironically, Bennett turns on him)* Have you ever tried lifting your father's corpse off your living mother? . . . It's incredibly difficult. He was like a huge sack of – of wet mud. The weight never went where I was expecting . . . My mother kept her eyes shut the whole time. I suppose she thought if she couldn't see me, I couldn't see her. But of course I could . . . He was a very fleshy man. And they were in rather a complicated position. I think that's what did it. The mechanics were too much for him. There was a ghastly moment I thought I might have to break one of his arms . . . What made it all the more macabre was, I'd always hated him. He was a complete loather. Whereas my mother – I couldn't help thinking – it's all right for him – what better way to go? But for *her* – and *me*, seeing her, like it says in the Bible, uncovered – I honestly wondered if we'd ever be able to look each other in the eye again. If you ask me, it's why she's marrying this awful Colonel person.

Serpent

BACK TO METHUSELAH

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

First presented by the Theatre Guild at the Garrick Theatre, New York, in 1922. In his preface Shaw says that he has written this play as a contribution to the modern Bible.

In this first section – ‘In The Beginning’ – Adam and Eve are in the Garden of Eden and, curled around the branches of a great tree, is an immense **Serpent**. Adam has discovered a fawn lying with its neck broken. He calls to Eve and together they try to revive the creature. It is their first experience of death and they are very frightened. As Adam goes off to throw the fawn’s body into the river, the **Serpent** becomes visible, glowing in wonderful new colours. It rears its head slowly and speaks seductively into Eve’s ear.

Published by Penguin Books, London

Serpent

Eve . . . It was I who whispered the word to you that you did not know. Dead. Death. Die . . . Death is not an unhappy thing when you have learnt how to conquer it . . . By another thing, called birth . . . The serpent never dies. Some day you shall see me come out of this beautiful skin, a new snake with a new and lovelier skin. That is birth . . . If I can do that, what can I not do? I tell you I am very subtle. When you and Adam talk, I hear you say ‘Why?’ Always ‘Why?’ You see things; and you say ‘Why?’ But I dream things that never were; and I say ‘Why not?’ . . . Why not be born again and again as I am, new and beautiful every time? . . . Listen. I will tell you a great secret. I am very subtle; and I have thought and thought and thought. And I am very wilful, and must have what I want; and I have willed and willed and willed. And I have eaten strange things: stones and apples that you are afraid to eat . . . I dared everything . . . I gathered a part of the life in my body, and shut it into a tiny white case made of the stones I had eaten . . . I shewed the little case to the sun, and left it in its warmth. And it burst; and a little snake came out; and it became bigger and bigger from day to day until it was as big as I. That was the second birth . . . It nearly tore me asunder. Yet I am alive, and can burst my skin and renew myself as before. Soon there will be as many snakes in Eden as there are scales on my body. Then death will not matter: this snake and that snake will die; but the snakes will live . . . Think. Will. Eat the dust. Lick the white stone: bite the apple you dread. The sun will give life . . . Do. Dare it. Everything is possible: everything.

Morgan Evans – Welsh, aged 17

THE CORN IS GREEN EMLYN WILLIAMS

First produced at the Duchess Theatre, London, in 1938 and set in a mining village in the Welsh countryside in the late 1800s.

An English teacher, Miss Moffat, comes down from London to take over the house left to her by her uncle. There is an old barn next door and she decides to turn it into a school for the local children. One of her pupils – a young miner, **Morgan Evans** – shows exceptional promise and for the next two years she takes a special interest in him, eventually persuading the local squire to fund his application for a scholarship to Oxford.

In this scene **Morgan** has begun to resent his studies and, unknown to Miss Moffat, has been drinking every evening in the Gwesmor Arms with the local lads. Miss Moffat tells him she has entered him for the scholarship and is going to start teaching him Greek. She has also found him a nail-file and will show him how to use it. **Morgan** flings his pen down on the table and announces that he is going back to the coal-mine.

Published by Heinemann Educational Books, Oxford

Morgan

[Quietly] I shall not need a nail-file in the coal-mine . . . I am going back to the coal-mine . . . *[She turns and looks at him. He rises, breathing fast. They look at each other. A pause]* I do not want to learn Greek, nor to pronounce any long English words, nor to keep my hands clean . . . Because . . . *[plunging]* . . . because I was born in a Welsh hayfield when my mother was helpin' with the harvest – and I always lived in a little house with no stairs only a ladder – and no water – and until my brothers was killed I never sleep except three in a bed. I know that is terrible grammar but it is true . . . The last two years I have not had no proper talk with English chaps in the mine because I was so busy keepin' this old grammar in its place. Tryin' to better myself . . . *[his voice rising]* . . . tryin' to better myself, the day and the night! . . . You cannot take a nail-file into the Gwesmor Arms public bar! . . . I have been there every afternoon for a week, spendin' your pocket-money, and I have been there now, and that is why I can speak my mind! . . . Because you are not interested in me . . . *[losing control]* How can you be interested in a machine that you put a penny in and if nothing comes out you give it a good shake? 'Evans, write me an essay, Evans, get up and bow, Evans, what is a subjunctive!' My name is Morgan Evans, and all my friends call me Morgan, and if there is anything gets on the wrong side of me it is callin' me Evans! . . . And do you know what they call me in the village? Ci bach yr ysgol! The schoolmistress's little dog. What has it got to do with you if my nails are dirty? Mind your own business! *[He bursts into sobs and buries his head in his hands on the end of the sofa.]*

Sloane – young

ENTERTAINING MR SLOANE JOE ORTON

This black comedy was first produced at Wyndham's Theatre, London, in 1964 and more recently at The Arts Theatre, London, in 2001.

Mr Sloane is a young psychopath, ruthless and single-minded. When he arrives at landlady Kath's house looking for a room, she and her brother, Ed, welcome him with open arms. He is such a nice young man and both are intent on seducing him. Only their elderly father, Kemp, is suspicious of Sloane, having seen him somewhere before. Sloane silences him by kicking him to death. Brother and sister now have Sloane exactly where they want him and each agree to 'share' him for six months of the year.

In this scene Sloane is alone with Kemp. He pulls the old man's stick away from him, pushes him into a chair and demands to know what he has been saying about him. Kemp foolishly accuses him of killing his 'old boss'.

From: Orton, *The Complete Plays – Master Playwrights*
Published by Methuen Drama

Sloane

Your vision is faulty. You couldn't identify nobody now. So long after. You said so yourself . . . Sit still! *[Silence]* . . . It was an accident, Pop. I'm innocent. You don't know the circumstances . . . Accidental death . . . You're pre-judging my case . . . Keep quiet. *[Silence]* It's like this see. One day I leave the Home. Stroll along. Sky blue. Fresh air. They'd found me a likeable permanent situation. Canteen facilities. Fortnight's paid holiday. Overtime? Time and a half after midnight. A staff dance each year. What more could one wish to devote one's life to? I certainly loved that place. The air round Twickenham was like wine. Then one day I take a trip to the old man's grave. Hic Jacets in profusion. Ashes to Ashes. Alas the fleeting. The sun was declining. A few press-ups on a tomb belonging to a family name of Cavaneagh, and I left the graveyard. I thumbs a lift from a geysir who promises me a bed. Gives me a bath. And a meal. Very friendly. All you could wish he was, a photographer. He shows me one or two experimental studies. An experience for the retina and no mistake. He wanted to photo me. For certain interesting features I had that he wanted the exclusive right of preserving. You know how it is. I didn't like to refuse. No harm in it I suppose. But then I got to thinking . . . I knew a kid once called MacBride that happened to. Oh, yes . . . so when I gets to think of this I decide I got to do something about it. And I gets up in the middle of the night looking for the film see. He has a lot of expensive equipment about in his studio see. Well it appears that he gets the wrong idea. Runs in. Gives a shout. And the long and the short of it is I loses my head which is a thing I never ought to a done with the worry of them photos an all. And I hits him. I hits him. *[Pause]* He must have had a weak heart. Something like that I should imagine. Definitely should have seen his doctor before that. I wasn't to know was I? I'm not to blame. *[Silence]*

Tom – American, young

THE GLASS MENAGERIE TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

First performed in London at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, in 1948 and set in the Wingfield family apartment in a tenement building in St Louis, *The Glass Menagerie* is described as a 'memory' play.

Tom Wingfield recalls his life in St Louis with his mother, Amanda, and his crippled sister Laura. Amanda clings to the past and her memories of the 'gentlemen callers' who were once so numerous. Laura lives in a world of her own among her collection of glass animals. Meanwhile, Tom himself spends all his spare time in the cinema in order to escape the intolerable situation at home. When he arrives home with his friend Jim, Amanda welcomes the visitor as a potential 'gentleman caller' for her daughter. But although Jim is kind and sympathetic towards Laura he is already engaged to another girl. Amanda blames Tom for her daughter's disappointment, accusing him of having known about his friend's engagement before bringing him home.

In this earlier scene, Tom is quarrelling with his mother. She has confiscated his books as she considers them unsuitable and tells him she is 'at the end of her patience'.

Published by Penguin Books, London

Tom

What do you think I'm at? Aren't I supposed to have any patience to reach the end of, Mother? I know, I know. It seems unimportant to you, what I'm *doing* – what I *want* to do – having a little *difference* between them! . . . Listen! You think I'm crazy about the *warehouse*? (*He bends fiercely toward her slight figure*) You think I'm in love with the Continental Shoemakers? You think I want to spend fifty-five years down there in that – *celotex interior*! with – *fluorescent – tubes*! Look! I'd rather somebody picked up a crowbar and battered out my brains – than go back mornings! I *go*! Every time you come in yelling that God damn '*Rise and Shine!*' '*Rise and Shine!*' I say to myself, 'How *lucky dead* people are!' But I get up. *I go*! For sixty-five dollars a month I give up all that I dream of doing and being *ever*! And you say self – *self's* all I ever think of. Why, listen, if self is what I thought of, Mother, I'd be where he is – GONE! (*Pointing to father's picture*) As far as the system of transportation reaches! (*He starts past her. She grabs his arm*) Don't grab at me, Mother! . . . I'm going to the *movies*! . . . (*Crouching towards her, overtowering her tiny figure. She backs away, gasping*) I'm going to opium dens! Yes, opium dens, dens of vice and criminals' hang-outs, Mother. I've joined the Hogan gang, I'm a hired assassin, I carry a tommy-gun in a violin case! I run a string of cat-houses in the Valley! They call me Killer, Killer Wingfield, I'm leading a double-life, a simple, honest warehouse worker by day, by night a dynamic *tsar of the underworld, Mother*. I go to gambling casinos, I spin away fortunes on the roulette table! I wear a patch over one eye and a false moustache, sometimes I put on green whiskers. On those occasions they call me – *El Diablo!* Oh, I could tell you things to make you sleepless! My enemies plan to dynamite this place. They're going to blow us all sky-high some night! I'll be glad, very happy, and so will you! You'll go up, up on a broomstick, over Blue Mountain with seventeen gentlemen callers! You ugly – babbling old – *witch* . . . (*He goes*).

Raleigh

– aged 18

JOURNEY'S END R C SHERRIFF

First produced at the Apollo Theatre in 1928 and set in March 1918 towards the end of the First World War.

The action takes place over three days in a dug-out in France and shows the effect of war on a group of young Officers – some of them not long out of school. **Second Lieutenant Raleigh** has been assigned to Captain Stanhope's Company. He is young and enthusiastic and welcomed by everyone with the exception of Stanhope, who is not at all happy about the new appointment.

In this early scene **Raleigh** has just arrived and introduces himself to Osborne, Stanhope's second in command. Osborne offers him a whiskey and asks if he knows Captain Stanhope.

Published by Penguin Books, London

Raleigh

Yes, rather! We were at school together – at least – of course – I was only a kid and he was one of the big fellows; he's three years older than I am . . . He was skipper of Rugger at Barford, and kept wicket for the eleven. A jolly good bat, too . . . Oh, I think he'll remember me. *(He stops, and goes on rather awkwardly)* You see, it wasn't only that we were just at school together; our fathers were friends, and Dennis used to come and stay with us in the holidays. Of course, at school I didn't see much of him, but in the holidays we were terrific pals . . . Last time he was on leave he came down to the school; he'd just got his MC and been made a captain. He looked splendid! It – sort of – made me feel . . . keen . . . Yes. Keen to get out here. I was frightfully keen to get into Dennis's regiment. I thought, perhaps, with a bit of luck I might get to the same battalion . . . I know. It's an amazing bit of luck. When I was at the base I did an awful thing. You see, my uncle's at the base – he has to detail officers to regiments – General Raleigh. I went to see him on the quiet and asked him if he could get me into this battalion. He bit my head off, and said I'd got to be treated like everybody else – and next day I was told I *was* coming to this battalion. Funny, wasn't it? . . . And when I got to Battalion Headquarters, and the colonel told me to report to 'C' Company, I could have cheered. I expect Dennis'll be frightfully surprised to see me. I've got a message for him. From my sister. You see, Dennis used to stay with us, and naturally my sister *(he hesitates)* – well – perhaps I ought not . . . They're not – er – officially engaged . . . She'll be awfully glad I'm with him here; I can write and tell her all about him. He doesn't say much in his letters; can we write often? *(There is a pause)* You don't think Dennis'll mind my – sort of – forcing myself into his company? I never thought of that; I was so keen.

Harry – Lancashire, aged 17

LOVE ON THE DOLE

RONALD GOW AND WALTER GREENWOOD

First performed at the Manchester Repertory Theatre in 1934 and in London at the Garrick Theatre in 1935, *Love on the Dole* is set in Hanky Park, Salford, Lancashire.

In Hanky Park in the 1930s, unemployment is high. Mr Hardcastle is on the dole and his wife takes in washing. Their daughter Sally works in a mill – the only one in the family bringing in a decent wage. Their son, Harry, earns 17 shillings a week in a machine shop at the local foundry, but already many of his fellow workers have been laid off. He is courting Helen, a 16-year-old local girl, and they are planning to get married. When he wins 22 pounds on the horses it seems like a fortune and he shares it among the family.

In this scene it is a year later and Harry has lost his job in the machine shop. Mrs Hardcastle is in the kitchen making up a bundle of things to take to the pawnshop when Harry comes in looking troubled. The Public Assistance Committee have cut his dole money and to make matters worse, Helen is pregnant.

Published by Samuel French, London

Harry

[Sits by the table and stares at the floor] Ma . . . I've got bad news . . . They've knocked me off the dole money . . . They've knocked me off the dole, I tell you . . . It's the Public Assistance Committee. They say the money's got to stop because Sally's working and Dad's getting the dole as it is. They say there's enough coming into one house . . . But – it's Helen I'm thinking of. You see, we were going to get married . . . I mean we've got to! . . . Ay – she's seen the doctor – we've got to . . . Look here, Ma, it isn't that I don't want to marry her. I do. I like her better than – well, anything, and we was planning to marry. We was going to make do on my dole money and what she's getting herself, and now this happens. If only we can get a start. I'll be drawing the dole again as soon as we are wed. And I thought perhaps – Well, I thought you and Dad would let her come here, and we could share the back room with Sally . . . Oh, gosh, Ma, it's driving me barmy. *[He breaks down and buries his face. Mrs Hardcastle turns to Harry and timidly puts her hand on his shoulder]* Sorry, Ma, but I'm ashamed to walk the streets. I feel they're all watching me. I've been to twenty places this morning and it's the same blasted story all the time. 'No hands wanted.' Though they don't usually say it so polite. And look at me clothes. It'll take six months' pay to buy new ones. Aw, God, just let me get a job. I don't care if it's only half-pay, but give me something . . . *[Hardcastle comes in from the street, hangs up his cap, looks from one to the other]* You see, Dad, I'll have to marry her and I thought . . . I thought, maybe, that we could come and live here and get a bed in back room with Sal . . . *[rises – warmly]* Hey! I'm not having you calling her a slut. Just you leave her name out of it . . . I'm asking you for nothing. I'm not the only one out of work in this house, remember. Yah, you treat me like a kid just because I've got nothing and I'm out of work. You didn't talk like that when I was sharing my winnings with you, did you? Once let me get hold of some money again and I'll never part with a penny of it. I'm supposed to be a man, I am – Well, look at me. Aye, and if there was another war you'd call me a man too. I'd be a bloody hero then . . . I don't want to live here. Do you understand? I wouldn't live with you if I got the chance. You can go to hell! I'm leaving here.

Oggy Moxon – aged 16–17

TEACHERS JOHN GODBER

First performed by the Hull Truck Company at the Edinburgh Festival in 1987 and set in a School Hall with a wooden stage, desks and chairs.

School leavers, Salty, Hobby and Gail, are presenting a play about life at Whitewall High – described as a comprehensive school somewhere in England, with its fair share of problems. All three play different characters, sometimes acting as narrators. In this scene Gail plays 'Bobby Moxon' – the cock of Whitewall High – known to all and sundry as 'Oggy Moxon'. ['Oggy' can be played either as 'Oggy' himself or as Gail playing 'Oggy'.]

From: John Godber: *Five Plays*
Published by Penguin Books, London

Note: If a male actor is playing 'Oggy' then you need to cut the lines from 'I knew that he fancied me' to 'somebody ought to drop him' and then take it up again from the line 'Oggy Moxon's speech about being hard' and continue to the end of the extract.

Oggy Moxon

The cock of Whitewall High was Bobby Moxon, known to all and sundry as – Oggy Moxon. There was no doubt at all that Oggy was dangerous, all the teachers gave him a wide berth. He was sixteen going on twenty-five. Rumour had it that he had lost his virginity when he was ten and that Miss Prime fancied the pants off him . . . One Wednesday, I was stood outside one of the mobile classrooms. Mr Dean had sent me out of class. I'd told him that I thought Peter the Great was a bossy gett! And he sent me out. I'm stood there with a mood on when Oggy comes past . . . I knew that he fancied me. *(As Oggy)* What you doing? *(As Gail)* Waiting for Christmas, what's it look like? *(As Oggy)* I'm having a party in my dad's pub, wanna come? Most of the third year is coming. Should be a good night . . . Might see you there . . . Wear something that's easy to get off. Your luck might be in. *(As Gail)* I hate him . . . Somebody ought to drop him . . . Oggy Moxon's speech about being hard: I'm Oggy Moxon . . . We said you'd have to use your imaginations. I'm Oggy, I'm as hard as nails, as toe-capped boots I'm hard, as marble in church, as concrete on your head I'm hard. As calculus I'm hard. As learning Hebrew is hard, then so am I. Even Basford knows I'm rock, his cane wilts like an old sock. And if any teachers in the shitpot school with their degrees and bad breath lay a finger on me, God be my judge, I'll have their hides. And if not me, our Nobby will be up to this knowledge college in a flash. All the female flesh fancy me in my five-o-ones, no uniform for me never. From big Mrs Grimes to pert Miss Prime I see their eyes flick to my button-holed flies. And they know like I that no male on this staff could satisfy them like me, cos I'm hard all the time. Last Christmas dance me and Miss Prime pranced to some bullshit track and my hand slipped down her back, and she told me she thought that I was great, I felt that arse, that schoolboy wank, a tight-buttocked, Reebok-footed, leggy-arse . . . I touched that and heard her sigh . . . for me. And as I walk my last two terms through these corridors of sickly books and boredom, I see grown men flinch and fear. In cookery one day my hands were all covered with sticky paste, and in haste I asked pretty Miss Bell if she could get for me an hanky from my pockets, of course she would, a student on teaching practice – wanting to help, not knowing my pockets had holes and my underpants were in the wash. 'Oh, no,' she yelped, but in truth got herself a thrill, and has talked of nothing else these last two years. Be warned, when Oggy Moxon is around get out your cigs . . . And lock up your daughters . . .

the character can take the time to ponder events and his reaction to them. Turgenev's method is to allow a character time for psychological exploration of emotions and motivations. Notice the pauses and the different stances Rakin takes: he walks, he sits, he abruptly rises, he turns about, his physical state duplicates the restless confusion of his thoughts. He is constantly caught up in an either/or debate with himself. It is typical of the character to vacillate with civilised grace. He is neither angry nor in despair. He is neither direct nor confident. He loves Natalya but mainly from afar, and will do nothing to disrupt the domestic bliss which he, along with everyone else, works very hard to maintain. His last line is a key to his open-ended indecision: 'But then, that's the way I am, so it seems . . .'

A Doll's House

(1879) Henrik Ibsen

Act 3. Norway. A room furnished not expensively but comfortably and tastefully. It is evening.

Torvald Helmer (30s-40s) is a successful lawyer and bank manager. He has been married to his wife Nora for eight years and has kept her pampered, protected and isolated at home. He treats her like a child, giving her the nickname 'Little Squirrel'. However, Nora, having forged a signature on a cheque to get the money to pay for a life-saving holiday for her husband, is now being threatened with blackmail by the moneylender Nils Krogstad. This evening the couple have been to a party where Helmer consumed a lot of champagne. After coming home Helmer opens a letter from Krogstad threatening that the only way to avoid a scandal is if Helmer creates a position for Krogstad at the bank. Helmer confronts Nora with the contents of this letter.

HELMER.

Enough of your play-acting! (*Locking the door.*) Now you're going to stay right here and give me a full explanation. Do you understand what you've done? Answer me! Do you understand! . . . (*Striding about.*) What an eye-opener! During those eight years – she who was my pride and joy – a hypocrite and liar – worse, yes worse – a criminal! Oh it's so disgusting! The disgrace, the shame! (*Nora says nothing and continues to stare straight at him. He stops in front of her.*) I should've guessed something like this would happen. I should've known. What with your father and those foolish, misguided ways of his – Listen to me! – I'll repeat myself – your father and all his foolish, misguided ways have been passed on directly to you! No religion, no morals, no sense of duty! Oh and how I'm punished for turning a blind eye to his stupidity. But I did it for your sake and now you go

and reward me with this . . . Now you've ruined all my happiness. You've just destroyed my whole future. Oh it's too awful to even think about it. I'm entirely at the mercy of that mean little bastard; he can do whatever he pleases with me, get what he wants, order me about – and yet I can't do a thing about him. I'm going to be miserably humiliated and all thanks to this flighty, feeble woman . . . If he were to make all of this public, which he might well do, it could easily look as if I were an accomplice to your crime. People might even think that I was the one behind it all – the one who put you up to it. It's you I should thank for all of this, you who I supported so protectively through all those years of marriage! Is it becoming clear just what you've done to me? . . . It's so incredible I just can't believe it. We've got to find some way out. Take off that shawl. Take it off, I said! Somehow I've got to buy him off. It doesn't matter what it costs; this has to be hushed up. In terms of our relationship – to the outside world, everything must appear just as before. Mind you, only *appear*, of course. Therefore you will continue to live in this house. That's understood. However I'll have the children taken away from your control. I can't risk trusting you with them any longer. Oh, having to say all this to the woman I once loved so much – and who I still –! No, all that has got to end. From now on happiness won't enter into it; we must just endeavour to save what scraps and shreds . . .

The front door bell rings. Helmer starts.

Who can that be? At this time of night? It couldn't be –?
He wouldn't –? Hide yourself Nora. . . .

Nora does not move. Helmer goes to open the door.

COMMENTARY: Ibsen's *A Doll's House* uses elements of the problem play with intrigue and some melodrama to probe a marriage that is based on false premises. The image of a wife trapped in a marriage has had a resonant influence down through the decades. Nora's selfless act to aid her husband is greeted by his harsh and unremitting anger. On the basis of that reaction, Nora leaves Helmer and her children, with the famous slamming of the door, to seek some kind of life in which she can be more than his plaything.

Torvald Helmer's unremitting castigation of his wife reveals a temper untouched by love or sympathy. At last the tyrant surfaces in the man. Notice how he reveals his deeper resentments towards Nora and her father. To be perfectly fair though, the actor must see that to Helmer, financial chicanery is a mortal sin. He is a banker and expects his house to be run like a bank as well. He seems to see Nora as either a fragile doll or a criminal; there is no middle ground. Throughout the play we have seen examples of her flightiness so some of Helmer's aggravation has a genuine source. Appearances, however, are everything and social disgrace is his worst fear. All evening he has been drinking champagne so you can imagine that the alcohol releases both his tongue and the venomous anger. Notice how physical he has become in his rage: locking the door, striding about. It is as if he is trying to rein in a violent tendency. He threatens Nora with both his words and his physical presence. Here he shows himself to be a completely different kind of man than the one seen elsewhere in the play.

Miss Julie
(1888) August Strindberg

A large kitchen in a Swedish country house. Midsummer eve.

Jean (30) is a valet in the house of Miss Julie's father, the Count. He is engaged to Kristin, the cook. Jean is confident and intelligent and ambitiously dreams of moving up in the world. Miss Julie is the incarnation of all he aspires to. Miss Julie enjoys mixing with the servants on her father's estate and during the Midsummer celebrations she visits the kitchen. She and Jean engage in seductive, provocative chat. At one point Jean boldly kisses Miss Julie and she retaliates by boxing his ears. But, as in a game of cat and mouse, they resume their taunting conversation. Here he recounts how as a child he became infatuated with her.

JEAN.

It's easy to say that now. But you despise me just the same. . . . Anyway – one day I entered that Garden of Paradise with my mother, to weed the onion beds. Right by the vegetable garden was a Turkish pavilion, shaded by jasmine and overgrown with honeysuckle. I'd no idea what it was used for, but I'd never seen such a beautiful building. People would go inside, and then come out again. And one day, the door was left open. I sneaked in and saw the walls covered with pictures of emperors and kings, and at the windows there were red curtains with tassels hanging down – You do know the place I'm talking about – don't you? . . . I . . . (*He snaps off a piece of lilac and holds it under Miss Julie's nose.*) I'd never been inside the big house – only ever been inside a church. But this was much more beautiful. It didn't matter what I tried to think about, my thoughts would always return to that place. A desire kept growing in me to experience completely the delights of that

place . . . *Enfin*. I crept in, took it all in, and marvelled. Then I heard someone coming! For the upper classes there was only the one exit. But for me, there was another. Since I had no choice, I took it. . . . (*Julie, having accepted the lilac offered by Jean, lets it drop onto the table.*) Then I bolted, plunging through raspberry bushes, scrambling across strawberry beds, ending up on the rose terrace. There I spotted a pink dress and a pair of white stockings – That was you. I scrambled under a pile of weeds and hid there – just imagine lying under that stinking, soggy earth with all those thistles pricking me. I watched you walk among your roses. I said to myself 'If it's true that a thief can enter heaven and be with the angels, then why can't a poor man's child, here on God's earth, enter the Count's garden and play with his daughter.' . . . So, do you know what I did next? I leapt into the millstream, with all my clothes on. Got fished out, and was given a good beating. But next Sunday, when father and all the family had gone to my grandmother's I made sure I was left at home. I washed myself thoroughly with warm water and soap, put on my best clothes and went to church. I knew I'd see you there. I saw you . . . I went back home determined to die. But I wanted a death that was comfortable and peaceful – free of all pain. Suddenly I remembered that it was supposed to be dangerous to sleep under an elder bush. We had a big one in full bloom. So I ripped off every one of those flowers and created a bed for myself in the oat-bin. Have you ever noticed how silky and smooth oats are? Soft as human skin . . . Then I pulled the lid tight, shut my eyes and fell into a deep sleep. When they found me and woke me up I was really, really sick. But, as you see, I didn't die. I don't know what I was trying to prove. I had no hope of gaining you – but you were a symbol, warning me of the absolute futility of ever trying to escape from the class of my birth.