

Background—*Ghosts*

Ibsen's *A Doll's House* was produced on the shores of the Mediterranean in summer in Italy. Ibsen got the idea of this play in Gossensass and after menacing upon it is Rome, he Wrote most of it in an old monastery converted into a hotel just near Amalfi. *A Doll's House* was published in 1879. It received immediate success in Scandinavia and was a great success when staged in the capital cities of Scandinavia. Halvdan Koht, who was a child when this play appeared, recalled 'Perhaps no book in all literature had made such triumphal progress'. The play exploded like a bomb into contemporary life—though it achieved its position in the general European gamut after over a decade. *Ghosts* was also envisaged in the Alps and written by the Mediterranean like *A Doll's House*.

After Completing *A Doll's House*, Ibsen returned from Italy to Munich in the autumn of 1879. He spent the winter there and in the next summer, he went to Berchtesgaden for a holiday, as a genuine German tourist. There was much fog and rain that summer. When his friend John Paulsen enquired about his current writing, he replied: 'It is a family history grey and gloomy as this rainy day'. Thereafter, no actual writing was done by him in Berchtesgaden. He did only brood upon the theme and characters. In the autumn of 1880, he returned to Munich. Ibsen then received a note from the Norwegian Ecclesiastical Department informing him that his son sigurd could not graduate in law in Norway without going through Norwegian education and examinations. Ibsen got infuriated due to this. Because of this rigidity, his son decided to continue his further studies in Italy, and therefore, on 2 November 1880, Ibsen moved to Rome. On 28 June, 1881—Ibsen and his family moved to Sorrento. On 23 November, he uttered to Hegel a warning: '*Ghosts* will probably cause alarm in some circles; but that can't be helped. If it did't, there would have been no necessity for me to write it.'

Thus, *Ghosts* was published by Gyldendal of Copenhagen on 13 December 1881, and immediately aroused a dismay and antagonism. It was beyond anything that Ibsen had predicted. Though he accepted it calmly and knew there were rare chances of getting it performed in Scandinavia or Germany, but he surmised it would have effect on the reading public like *Brand* and *Peer Gynt*.

Later, he remarked that Christmas, which brought joy and peace to most people, usually brought him battle, since it during this time that his books appeared; but to him each battle was joy, and peace was merely a breathing-space until he could start his struggle afresh.

He did not worry due to the criticisms of the people but was anxious that if the edition was large enough, the sales of the book would be damaged. His fears came true. Due to the scandal created by the critics in Norway, people were afraid to buy *Ghosts*. The book attacked the holy principles of the age the purity of marriage, the commandment that a man must honour his parents. The book defended free love and gave a suggestion that not only a woman had the right to leave her husband, but also that her behaviour might be justifiable under certain circumstances. As a result, Hegel had to take back the book from the shops. Ibsen's other books' sale was also affected adversely that Christmas. The book was rejected in a similar manner in the other Scandinavian capitals as well. However, *Ghosts* was attacked most violently in Norway. It was Ibsen's expectation that the right-wing papers would dislike it, but it came as a shock when he discovered that the fundamental press censured it even greatly.

The left-wing Oplanden Avis declared that: 'Complete silence would, in our, opinion, be the most fitting reception for this work.' Andreas Munch, writing in *Morgenbladet*, dismissed Ibsen a 'a fallen star a spent, quenched meteor', and Ibsen's old admirer Henrik Jaeger went round the country giving lectures against the play. The so-called progressive writers as Alexander Kielland and Jonas Lie, showed their objection. Those who came in to defend *Ghosts* publicly were Bjoernson, Camilla Collett and P.O. Schjoett, who wrote in *Nyt Tidsskrift*: "When the dust which ignorant criticism has raised has subsided, which we trust will happen soon, Ibsen's latest drama, with its bold contours, will stand not only as his noblest deed but as the greatest work of art which he, or indeed our whole dramatic literature has yet produced."

Ibsen denied that *Ghosts* advocated nihilism. He said, 'The play is not concerned with advocating anything. It merely points to the fact that nihilism is fermenting beneath the surface in Norway as everywhere else. It is inevitable. A Pastor Manders will always incite some Mrs. Alving into being. And she, simply because she is woman, will, once she has started, go to the ultimate extreme.' On 16 March 1882, he wrote to Hegal, Telling him of his plans for a new work. 'This time it will be a peaceful play, which can be read by cabinet ministers and wholesale merchants and their ladies, and from which the theatres will not need to shrink.....As far as *Ghosts* is concerned, comprehension will seep into the minds of the good people of our country, and that in the not too distant future. But all these fading and decrepit figures who have spat upon this work will some time bring upon

their heads the crushing judgement of future literary historians.....My book contains the future.'

Towards the end of November 1881, before its publication, *Ghosts* had been offered to the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen, but had been rejected by Erik Boegh the Censor of the theatre. The staging of *Ghosts* was refused even by the Christiania Theatre and the Royal in Stockholm. *Ghosts* received its world premiere on 20 May 1882, in Chicago, where it was presented in the original language. This play by Ibsen subsequently toured Minneapolis and other cities of the Middle West which had large Scandinavian population.

In spite of the fact that *Ghosts* shocked the literary and theatrical community of Scandinavia, it made an immediate impact on the youth. A celebrated Danish novelist, Herman Bang, who was twenty-five then describes the excitement created by the novel. Some people gave public readings of the novel and others crowded to obscure places to listen to those readings. A group of actors even decided to take *Ghosts* on tour. But Bang says, 'good society knew its duty', and the project had to be cast off. When Bang was in Germany, he thus tells of a performance of *A Doll's House* at Meiningen, with the celebrated actress Marie Ramlo as guest artist. The theatre was full of young students. "Ramlo was excellent, but it was not she who held their attention. The young people barely heard her. They read when the curtain was down, and they read when the curtain was up. They read furtively and amazed, as though fearful, read, as the book was passed secretly from hand to hand, a little, humble, yellow, paper-bound volume of a hundred pages bearing the title *Gespenster (Ghosts)*. What a strange evening when all those hundreds of young people read as one the play about the sins of their fathers, and when, as a drama about marriage was being acted behind the footlights, that other drama of parents and their children forced its way up from the auditorium on to the stage. They did not dare to read the book at home, and so they read it secretly here."

However, on 17 October 1883, Lindberg presented *Ghosts* for the first time in Ibsen's own country in Christiania. Altogether Lindberg's company performed *Ghosts* seventy five times during the tour, remarkable record for those days. Moreover, he returned with the play to Christiania several times during the next few years. Ibsen himself attended a performance in 1891 and approved of it. In 1883, the Royal Theatre in Stockholm and the Swedish Theatre in Helsinki staged the play. And in 1890, *Ghosts* was played by a totally Norwegian company, at the National Theatre in Bergen. On 29 May 1890, Antoine produced *Ghosts* at the Theatre des Menus Plaisirs in Paris. It was the first recorded performance of any play by Ibsen in France. George Moore, who was present among the audience, has described the occasion vividly in his *Impression and opinions*. The German censorship also withdrew its veto, and in 1894, three separate productions

of *Ghosts* appeared in different theatres in Berlin *Ghosts* was also performed in Vienna and Amsterdam in 1890. In 1891, the play was performed in New York in German and Tiflies in Armenian. It was staged in Milan in 1892, and in 1894 in New York in English. The close of the century saw the recognition of *Ghosts* throughout Europe, the U.S.A. and even in South America. In fact, it has been the most frequently performed of all Ibsen's plays in England in this century.

The original draft for Ibsen's *Ghosts* has not been preserved, and the differences (variations) between his second draft and the final version are very few. However, after the death of Ibsen, Six brief sets of notes relating to *Ghosts* were discovered among his papers; nos. 1-4 on two sheets of quarto, no. 5 on the back of an envelope, and no. 6 on a torn newspaper wrapper. Though undated, these probably belong to the winter and spring of 1881:

(i) The play to be a (realistic) picture of life. Faith undermined—but people daren't admit it. The 'Orphanage'—for the sake of others. They want to be happy—but this, too, is only an illusion—Everything is *Ghosts*—An important point: She has been a believer and a romantic—and this can't completely be eradicated by the attitude she has subsequently adopted—Everything is *Ghosts*. To marry for the wrong reasons, even though they be religious or moral, brings a Nemesis on the children.

She, the illegitimate child, can be saved by being married to the son—but then?

(ii) He in his youth was depraved, a debauchee; then she appeared, a woman who had 'seen the light; she saved him; she was rich. He had wanted to marry a girl who was thought unworthy. His wife bore him a son; then he turned back to the girl; a daughter.

(iii) These modern women, misused as daughters, as sisters, as wives, not educated according to their talents, barred from their vocation, robbed of their inheritance, their minds embittered—these are the woman who are to provide the mothers for the new generation. What will be the consequence?

(iv) She became passionately religious in her youth; partly because of this, but partly also from affection, she married him, the 'bright genius', the 'prodigal'. They move away from town; he 'gets on', eventually becomes a judge, a model public servant, a model man in every way, religious too. They had a son, then another who died young. Very early in his life, the eldest was put to lodge with a clergyman, then sent to a boarding school, was seldom allowed to visit his home. The judge performed his duties for many years, much honoured and respected; she too was honoured as his 'good genius', who had been worthily rewarded for her magnanimity.

Then he died, a large part of the fortune into which he unexpectedly came after his marriage has been formed into a trust, and now this memorial is about to be dedicated. Here the play begins.

(v) The main theme must be: the fine flowering of our spiritual life via literature, art etc.—and by contrast, all mankind wandering blindly on the wrong track.

(vi) The perfect man is no longer a natural product, he is something cultivated like corn and fruit-trees and the Creole race and thoroughbred horses and breeds of dogs, vines, etc.

The trouble is that mankind as a whole is a failure. If a human being demands to live and develop according to his nature as a human being, it's regarded as megalomania. All mankind, especially Christians, suffers from megalomania.

We raise monuments to the dead; because we feel a duty towards them; we allow lepers to marry; but their offspring? The unborn?

The contemporaries of Ibsen saw *Ghosts* as a play about innate physical illness. For some years, Oswald was regarded as the chief character instead of Mrs. Alving. The realization did not come to them that *Ghosts* actually is the de-energizing outcome of inherited caucis. The theme of *Ghosts* is definitely not Oswald's Syphilis. Halvdom Khot quofed: Oswald was branded with disease, not because his father was a beast, but because Mrs. Alving had obeyed the immoral ethics of society....*Ghosts* is a play about ethical, not physical debility of Oswald's illness is far more frightening. Mrs. Alving could have caught syphilis from her husband and passed it on to her son. Another possibility is that Oswald might have been infected as a result of smoking his father's pipe. Ibsen knew a lot about medicine. The themes of every play by Ibsen from *A Doll's House* onwards including *Ghosts* are—the importance of carrying on war against the past, each individual's need to find his or her own freedom, the danger of renouncing love in the name of duty. Even in *Ghosts*, Ibsen targeted the hollowness of great reputations, regionalism of viewpoint, the narrowness of small-town life, the repression of individual freedom from within an without, and the neglect of the significance of heredity.

Ibsen disliked being compared with Zola, as he had a low regard for his works. He once said, 'Zola descends into the sewer to bathe it, I to cleanse it.' Ibsen never admitted that even a single play of his was indebted to any writer. He believed that writers find similar themes in every age.

From a very early age, Ibsen had been repelled by his father having gone bankrupt and perhaps Engstrand's club-foot represents his own father's inability to stand on both feet in the world. Manders (a character in *Ghosts*) was motivated by Ibsen's resentment at the Norwegian Ecclesiastical Department's treatment to and behaviour towards his disdain

for priests was of long repute. Regina was portrayed on the basis of a maid of the Ibsens in Munich. As far as Mrs. Alving is concerned, she is, in fact, Nora (*A Doll's House*) as a mother. Had Nora returned to her husband and children, in twenty years, she might have become like Mrs. Alving. Just like Nora, Mrs. Alving is choked by caucus and a lost sense of duty. Ibsen quoted, 'After Nora, I had to create Mrs. Alving.'

According to this context, Oswald's inherited syphilis may be regarded as a symbol of the dead customs and traditions which we inherit, and which feat and cripple us and make a waste of our life.

Another technical speciality of *Ghosts* is the density of its dialogue. The *Pillars of Society* and *A Doll's House* are simple in the sense the characters say what they mean. In *Ghosts*, however, Mrs. Alving and Manders circle round a subject to which they fear talking about directly, and at such times, the dialogue is slanting and obscure. One of Ibsen's major contributions to prose drama is the double-density dialogue, when the characters say one thing and mean another. Ibsen was very well aware of the fact that when people talk about something which is concerned to their sense of guilt, they do not speak directly but talk deceitfully. The actors, while acting these lines, have to read and speak the text but act the unspoken thoughts. A translator of Ibsen faces a problem regarding the conveying of the meaning behind the meaning; if it is not indicated by Ibsen himself.

Ghosts occupies a place of great importance, when we speak in historical terms. This play had a greater effect on his contemporaries but the modern people have very easily forgotten the play. Factually, *Ghosts* was the first great tragedy about the middle-class people in everyday prose. Even time could not nullify the great impact of *Ghosts* on the people.

C.E. Montague remarked in *Dramatic Values*, his vies on *Ghosts* thus: 'It is strange, there were people once who called *Ghosts* immortal. Was this, you ask now when you see it, the play that launched a thousand ships of critical fury. Why, it is rendingly, scarily moral. When it is before you, you feel that some truths about conduct, which you had thought you knew pretty well, can only have been known as one knows a beast safely caged in a zoo, since now they are going about glaring at you with fanged mouths open; they have turned terrifyingly real. It is fairly arguable that—as Mr. Archer seems to feel—the fierceness of moral intention in *Ghosts* prevents it from ranking with Ibsen's best work. It has a kind of aghast grimness, a bald, austere hardness of conception and a dry, level density in the working out that seem more expressive of the strong man rightly angered by preventable wrong than of the artist excited and even, in a sense, delighted by everything in the world, good and bad. Perhaps it was some sense of this that made Brandes say, when the play first came out and the foolish people were howling, that it might or might not be Ibsen's greatest work, but it was certainly his noblest deed. Immoral!'

Setting of Ghosts

Hailed as one of the pioneers of modern drama, Ibsen broke away from the romantic tradition of nineteenth-century theater with his realistic portrayals of individuals, his focus on psychological concerns, and his investigation into the role of the artist in society. While initially utilizing suspense and mistaken identity, Ibsen later used dialogue, commonplace events, and symbolism to explore the elusiveness of self-knowledge and the restrictive nature of traditional morality. Once writing that "I prefer to ask; 'tis not my task to answer." Ibsen did not establish distinct dichotomies between good and evil, but instead provided a context in which to explore the complexities of human behavior and the ambiguities of reality'. Martin Esslin explained: "Ibsen can ... be seen as one of the principal creators and well-springs of the whole modern movement in drama, having contributed to the development of all its diverse and often seemingly opposed and contradictory manifestations: the ideological and political theatre, as well as the introspective, introverted trends which tend towards the representation of inner realities and dreams."

Ibsen was born to wealthy parents in Skien, a lumbering town south of Christiania now Oslo. The family was reduced to poverty when his father's business failed in 1834. After leaving school at age fifteen and working for six years as a pharmacist's assistant, Ibsen went to Christiania hoping to continue his studies at Christiania University. He failed the Greek and mathematics portions of the entrance examinations, however, and was not admitted. During this time, he read and wrote poetry, which he would later say came more easily to him than prose. He wrote his first drama, *Catiline* (*Catiline*), in 1850 and although this work generated little interest and was not produced until several years later, it evidenced Ibsen's emerging concerns with the conflict between guilt and desire.

Shortly after writing *Catiline*, Ibsen became assistant stage manager at the Norwegian Theater in Bergen. His duties included composing and producing an original drama each year. Ibsen was expected to write about Norway's glorious past, but because Norway had just recently acquired its independence from Denmark after five hundred years, medieval folklore and Viking sagas were his only sources of inspiration. Although these early plays were coldly received and are often considered insignificant, they

further indicated the direction Ibsen's drama was to take, especially in their presentation of strong individuals who come in conflict with the oppressive social mores of nineteenth-century Norwegian society. In 1862, verging on a nervous breakdown from overwork, Ibsen began to petition the government for a grant to travel and write. He was given a stipend in 1864, and various scholarships and pensions subsequently followed. For the next twenty-seven years he lived in Italy and Germany, returning to Norway only twice. While critics often cite Ibsen's bitter memories of his father's financial failure and his own lack of success as a theater manager as the causes for his long absence, it is also noted that Ibsen believed that only by distancing himself from his homeland could he obtain the perspective necessary to write truly Norwegian drama. Ibsen explained: "I could never lead a consistent life [in Norway]. I was one man in my work and another outside-and for that reason my work failed in consistency too."

Ibsen's drama, *Et Dukkehjem* (1879; *A Doll's House*), is often considered a masterpiece of realist theatre. The account of the collapse of a middle-class marriage, this work, in addition to sparking debate about women's rights and divorce, is also regarded as innovative and daring because of its emphasis on psychological tension rather than external action. This technique required that emotion be conveyed through small, controlled gestures, shifts in inflection, and pauses, and therefore instituted a new style of acting.

Gengangere (1881; *Ghosts*) and *En Folkefiende* (1882; *An Enemy of Society*) are the last plays included in Ibsen's realist period. In *Ghosts* Ibsen uses a character infected with syphilis to symbolize how stale habits and prejudices can be passed down from generation to generation; *An Enemy of Society* demonstrates Ibsen's contempt for what he considered stagnant political rhetoric. Audiences accustomed to the Romantic sentimentality of the "well-made play" were initially taken aback by such controversial subjects. However, when dramatists Bernard Shaw and George Brandes, among others, defended Ibsen's works, the theater-going public began to accept drama as social commentary and not merely as entertainment.

With *Vildanden* (1884; *The Wild Duck*) and *Hedda Gabler* (1890), Ibsen entered a period of transition during which he continued to deal with modern, realistic themes, but made increasing use of symbolism and metaphor. *The Wild Duck*, regarded as one of Ibsen's greatest tragicomical works, explores the role of illusion and self-deception in everyday life. In this play, Gregers Werle, vehemently believing that everyone must be painstakingly honest, inadvertently causes great harm by meddling in other people's affairs. At the end of *The Wild Duck*, Ibsen's implication that humankind is unable to bear absolute truth is reflected in the words of the character named Helling: "If you rob the average man of his illusion, you are almost certain to rob him of his happiness." *Hedda Gabler* concerns a

frustrated aristocratic woman and the vengeance she inflicts on herself and those around her. Taking place entirely in Hedda's sitting room shortly after her marriage, this play has been praised for its subtle investigation into the psyche of a woman who is unable to love others or confront her sexuality.

After completing *When We Dead Awaken*, Ibsen suffered a series of strokes that left him an invalid for five years until his death in 1906. Although audiences considered Ibsen's dramas highly controversial during his lifetime because of his frank treatment of social problems, present scholars focus on the philosophical and psychological elements of his plays and the ideological debates they have generated. Ibsen's occasional use of theatrical conventions and outmoded subject matter has caused some critics to dismiss his work as obsolete and irrelevant to contemporary society, but others recognize his profound influence on the development of modern drama. Haskell M. Block asserted: "In its seemingly limitless capacity to respond to the changing need and desires of successive generations of audiences, [Ibsen's] work is truly classic, universal in implication and yet capable of endless transformation."

Ghosts—An Introduction

A great artist, Henrik Ibsen, has handled the Modern Drama very artistically. The centre of interest is no more action now, it is the happening in the minds of the people. The older dramatists did much for their times and the modern—day dramatist is also believed to do so in the present. Ibsen was such a dramatist. But he first received a trial as a reformer. On the introduction of his work in England in the 1880s, he was recognised as a moral and social rebel. Those who believed in reformation backed him strongly. In Bernard Shaw's Quintessence of Ibsenism, we find that the author emphasises and discusses the criticism of morality and of the various social institutions it has. Problem plays rouse a tumult of discussion, but his is only for some period of time later on, either the people get habitual to the criticism or there is a change in the law and order—that makes the problem no longer seem important. Ibsen was considered a strong supporter of women's rights and *A Doll's House* was understood as one such work by him, that supported the liberation of women. But he never accepted this. On a dinner given in his honour he said, "To me, this problem has seemed the problem of humanity in general. And if you read my works carefully, you will understand this. True, I think it is desirable to solve the problem of women's rights along with others; but that has not been the whole purpose; my task has been the description of humanity." Therefore, it is erroneous to think of Ibsen as a writer of problem plays. His real subject was the soul—which is a permanent subject-matter.

It is a very complex task to write about the inner self. For this, the dramatist has to create sequences causing changes within the characters created by him. Along with that, he needs to create such changes in the self, which would influence the events taking place. He has to coin dialogues for his characters, which would reveal what is concealed in them as well as words these characters would have never even spoken to themselves. On the other hand, these words must be naturally convincing to the audience. The victory of a dramatist is to compose a logical story—related to reality; to include in it ideas which are practical, and to make us feel that we have actually felt the truth of life. And as Ibsen, through his plays, attains all this, he emerges triumphant. He succeeds in combining realism and fascination in his works.

The sequence of events and situations in the dramas of Ibsen might appear as having small worth but its beauty is inner and satisfies the soul. Throwing light on the intensity into his works, Ibsen writes in one of his letters: "Everything that I have written has the closest possible connection with what I have lived through, even though it has not been my own experience." This makes it clear that the intensity in his plays is due to his own solitariness. He did not merely observe his characters, he found their designs close to his own self.

Ibsen believed that whatever each person can do for making himself a happy man is much more important than what society can do to assist him. In this sense, Ibsen was called an individualist. He started his awakening with the decree of the second French Republic but after some time, he lost belief in revolutions, as he then realized that he desired a revolution in man's soul. Ibsen's tragedies are tales of sacrifice of goodness wherein the judge is every individual to some ideal. All his tragedies—*Ghosts*, *Brand*, *John Gabriel Borkman*, *The Wild Duck*—the tragedy is that to destruct the joy of life of an individual is a sin, which cannot be pardoned.

No other lay of Ibsen became a cause of uproar as great as *Ghosts*. The censor banned the play for almost 25 years as it was believed that it contained poison and then during the 1914 war, the play was encouraged. This attitude of the censor exposes is opportunism. In his preface to the 1900 edition of this play, William Archer has kept a record of some comments after its first performance. "An open drain' a loathsome sore unbaudaged Absolutely loathsome and fetid..... Prosecution under Lord Campbell's act Revoltingly suggestive and blasphemous Garbage and offal As foul and filthy a concoction as has ever been allowed to disgrace the boards of an English theatre." Ibsen's admirers were described as "lovers of prurience and dabblers in impropriety who are eager to gratify their illicit tastes under the pretence of art Outside a silly clique, there is not the slightest interest in the Scandinavian humbug."

In the beginning of the play, we find a lady - Mrs. Alving happy with herself and the world around her. The orphanage was to be opened by Pastor Manders, in her husband's memory. She has even decided to rid herself of the wealth of her husband. She also has her loving son, who has returned to honour the found memories of his father.

Then, we find the intervention of fate in her life. The orphanage might have been a way for her to drive away the ghosts from within her but the past defeats her in the form of Oswald, who his inherited syphilis. The climax is all the more tragic. It has a terrible impact on the audience.

Mrs. Alving had married young, for the pleasure of her family—a rich but a frugal man and suffered the consequences of this unfortunate union. On discovering his betrayals, she had approached pastor Manders, the man she liked before her marriage, but he, over coming his own attraction, had

sent her back to her family life. She dedicated herself to hiding the scandals of her husband. He even earned for him by managing his estates and maintained his reputation. Somehow she kept him at home at nights; but she could not prevent him getting entangled with one of the servants, the relationship that bore the fruit of a daughter. She then got the servant married to an old lame carpenter and the girl (daughter) was taken in as a servant. Therefore, although Mrs. Alving succeeded in saving her husband's decency, she had to pay the price by sending her son away from home; so that he could be kept away from the truth.

But all her sacrifice proves useless when we reach the climax. She is and remains a victim of tragedy and ill-luck, the consequences of which she will have to suffer throughout her life.

The Action of the Play

The play opens with Regina and Engstrand engaged in a struggle for territorial possession: whether or not he can be allowed to enter the living room from the garden room. The struggle concludes with Engstrand's 'victory'—he enters the room despite Regina's Objection.

The rear glass wall is an 'actor' and will show the continuing rain, the fire at the Childrens Home and the sun over the peaks and glaciers at the end. The thematic props of flowers, rain, books, Orphanage documents, lamp, champagne, are all brought, one by one, to that centrally placed round table. All are visual aspects of the play's argument. When the play opens, Helene already has advanced beyond Manders' world-view as those books attest: but she is only 'intellectually' emancipated. For tragic insight she will need to be emotionally devastated. This is the journey the play will take her on.

The dialogue of Act I exposes the inability of Manders' dogmatic moralism to comprehend "the facts of life" and dramatizes his complete moral defeat. He progressively becomes irrelevant to the play's tragic action and, through his spiritual cowardice, will decline into a comic-melodramatic figure doomed to be unscrupulously manipulated by Engstrand and Regine. The Manders-Engstrand-Regine melodrama contrasts with the Osvald-Helene-Alving tragedy. Because they cannily never face up to inconvenient truth, this trio of survivors is incapable of the dialectic the mother and son will embark upon. The closing scene of Act I has 'shaken' Helene and prepares her for her journey to tragedy in which she must discard one comforting certainty after another until, at the close, her mind is a kind of horrified openness, ready for any possibility, including killing her own son. To embark on this journey, she must be separated from her false self, built up over a lifetime. "To be oneself is to slay oneself the Button Molder told Peer Gynt. This tragic vision is the Hellenic dimension to the play. It involves Osvald's defense of, the instincts, art, the intellect and that joy of life (*livsglede*) whose emblem will be the rising sun: a creative, cosmic power that devastates the little human and moral order Helene lived by. Helene's struggle, to authenticity, to truth and courage, under Osvald's relentless prompting, recovers the Hellenic (and Alving) values she violated through her life-denying attachment to the values of Duty inculcated by Manders and his community. As in *The Bakhae* the offended god punishes mother and son.

Oswald's tragic character is revealed, in Act III, in his grim motive for returning home: to seek out someone mentally strong enough to kill him. Regine had seemed capable: hence his obsession with her. His final choice of his mother grimly reverses the Orestes—Clytemnestra situation. Helene must kill her husband, now seen incarnated in her son, just when she has come to love him. Oswald's attachment to Regina is less from erotic infatuation than from his recognition of her ruthlessness in being prepared to finish him off if necessary!

The agenda of the play requires the removal of Manders as a force in the tragic dialectic. His leaguening with Engstrand in Act III measures his full degradation. After he is finished off, ethically, in Act I, he has no role except to demonstrate the futility and irrelevance of his orientation to the world: So he retreats to a comic role in the background, to be duped by Engstrand and Regine. Manders and Engstrand leave the tragic scene to travel "by the same boat" together to set up Engstrand's brothel. Manders' Christianity requires an anti-tragic symbiosis of good and evil... These concepts are dialectically linked together. Without Engstrand, Manders' identity is jeopardized! Aeschylus, in *The Oresteia* set out the pagan version of this symbiosis: without crime there would be no law; without the murderous history of the Aganemnon there would be no tragic evolution to the democracy of Athens. The three plays of the trilogy were stages of tragic learning—*pathei mathos* As T.S. Eliot wrote: (in *Gerontion*):

Unnatural vices

Are fathered by our heroism. Virtues

Are forced upon us by our impudent crimes.

Greek tragedy is about the clash of Good vs. Good: Antigone vs. Creon, Oedipus vs. Apollo. There are no villains in Greek tragedy. Nor does the cosmos conform to human morality. Tragedy emerges from human error, not cosmic evil.

As Manders retires from the center of the play, Oswald takes his place. That is, melodramatic Christian themes give way to tragic Hellenic ones. So the plot moves Oswald to the foreground of the play. The themes of joy of life, of artistic creativity, of Eros, of human fulfillment on earth, not in heaven, and the pagan courage to end life if it proves unacceptable are notably pagan themes that displace Manders' themes of living only to do one's Duty with no right to happiness. Oswald's values of 'livsgleden' (joy of life) will be seen more and more to belong to the dead and disgraced father, now emerging as the one greatly wronged. The conflict extends beyond the human figures and becomes a battle of imagery struggling to possess the stage.

The gradual destruction of Helene's world-view, therefore, is articulated not only through verbal argument but also through stage images that forcefully amplify the verbal battle. Act I created a fairly easy demolition of the whole conventional world of Manders and Helene as a preparation for the true tragic journey of Acts II and III. Livsgleden is first

sounded in Act II as the description of a lamentably excluded world: Paris, the life of young artists, the human creativity that Manders abhors. As so often in Ibsen, what is absent from the stage becomes vividly present as an imaginatively perceived world.

Under the emotional pressure of her love for Oswald Helene begins to see her husband reincarnated in her son (the final ghost of the play). In Act I she quickly dismissed this ghost when Manders suggested Oswald resembled his father. In Act II Helene suddenly "sees it all" and the value of Alving is about to reclaim the stage, to be resurrected. At this moment the false world of the past (the asylum) burns up. All it represented is seen as a phantom without truth, and is removed forever from the world of the play. A resurrected Hellenism is recovered as a militant, but creative force in life. Helene condemns herself and rehabilitates her husband. Joy of life, associated with the Sun, now comes into its rights as a value and a force. As in e.g. the Bakkhae the offended power punishes its human opponents for their hubris in trying to remake the cosmos in Christian-moral terms. The Manders world-view is seen as 'against Nature' which cannot be permitted. Oswald raises the Hellenic spirit at its most challenging: if he cannot pursue a fully human life he insists on a fully human death: that pagan choice of suicide the Christian world condemned. Major actions and themes of Greek drama now are swiftly recapitulated. Like Orestes, Oswald pursues his mother, dragging her back for a final, terrible confrontation. At the same time, Helene's journey of devastating, retrospective self-knowledge recalls that of Oedipus. The son, as victim of his mother's refusal to acknowledge the god of livsgleden repeats the tragic conclusion of *The Bakkhae*. Helene's whole world is destroyed and with it the whole idea of the world represented by Manders, the pietistic community and Helene's former self.

Helene's transgression had been against Eros and, in the form of hereditary syphilis, Eros strikes back. Engstrand's brothel for wandering sailors will survive with the priest's help and with Captain Alving's name on the institution. Joy-of-life or livsgleden is rescued and rehabilitated by the play in spite of the major project of the chief protagonist, Helene to eradicate its whole existence. Her original project had been the exact opposite: by means of the fraudulent memorial to destroy and obliterate every shred of the memory of Alving and all he stood for and to exonerate her own life dedicated to the Duty instilled in her by Manders' Church and Society.

Ibsen takes the dialectic of this first group from the 'unexamined' social world of Pillars of Society, through the domestic world of modern marriage in *A Doll's House*, then to the very generation of families through both infected biological and cultural streams, stretching back to our origins as a species. In the next play we return to the social scene and its male protagonist, Thomas Stockmann, who will exemplify that joy-of-life tragically suppressed in *Ghosts*. The metaphor of 'pollution' now will broaden from disease in Dr. Rank and Oswald to that of infected streams contaminating a whole society, in *An Enemy of the People*.

Ghosts—A Synopsis

ACT I

A young girl, Regina Engstrand serves Mrs. Alving. She appears in the garden. She is trying to stop her father, Jacob Engstrand, from entering the house. Jacob looks notorious. Moreover, he looks dilapidated and crude because of the rain. Regina clearly mentions that she is ashamed of his earthy appearance. Actually, Engstrand has come to take Regina to live an work with him in the "inn for sailors that he is scheduling. Jacob has succeeded in saving enough money for his new venture his carpentry work on the new orphanage that Mrs. Alving is constructing. Commenting on Regina, he says that she has grown into "Such a fine wench" that she would be a precious asset to his "Seamen's home" which would actually be a brothel. Regina informs him in a straightforward manner that she has her own plans for the future, specially as Mrs. Alving's son, Oswald Alving, has just returned from Paris. Eugstrand leaves the place.

Pastor Manders arrives soon after Engstrand's departure. He discusses with Regina about her father. He says that Jacob needs someone to guide him and keep him away from drinking and that since he is fond of Regind and respects her judgement, she should return to live with him, out of her duty to her father. Regina answers that she would better find a place as a housekeeper.

When Regina moves to fetch Mrs. Alving, Pastor Manders trails some books, which are there on the table. He gives a start on glancing at the title page of one book and looks at others disapprovingly. Mrs. Alving enters and greets him warmly. Manders makes an enquiry about Oswald, praises him for his filial duty and then wants to know who reads the books. He is surprised and shocked to know they belong to her and asks her whether the reading of such books make her feel better or happier. When Mrs. Alving says that the books make her feel more secure, he is taken aback. She wants to know what he objects to in the books & he replies that he has read quite enough of them to disapprove of them. On being countered by Mrs. Alving about forming his own opinion, he says:

"My dear Mrs. Alving, there are many occasions in life when one must rely on the judgement of others. That is the way things are and it is good that it should be so. If it were not so, what would become of society?"

Pastor Manders has come there to discuss about the captain Alving orphanage. This has been built by Mrs. Alving in memory of her late husband. Though Manders has all the details, he wants to know whether the buildings of the orphanage should be insured. Mrs. Alving promptly says yes but then he objects saying that the orphanage is sanctified to a higher purpose. Manders further indicates that the followers of other denominations might conclude that neither he nor Mrs. Alving had sufficient faith on the Divine power and his protection. He further says that then they would not be able to prevent a false construal of their action, which would in turn, affect the very purpose of the orphanage. He feels that since he has acted as her advisor, he would be the first one to be attacked by over-zealous people, who would publicly attack him through certain newspapers and periodicals. Mrs. Alving assures him that she would not want the buildings to be insured under such conditions.

Further, Mrs. Alving makes a mention of the building nearly catching fire the day before due to some shavings at fire in the carpenter's shop. She has also come to know that Engstrand is often careless with matches. Manders protects Engstrand by saying that the poor man (Engstrand) had many worries. He says, "Thank heaven" and adds that he has come to know that Engstrand has vowed to lead a righteous life and has also assured the same himself. Manders feels it would be very important for Engstrand to have Regina, his daughter, return to live with him. But Mrs. Alving is not at all ready to send Regina to him.

Now, Oswald appears and Manders is surprised to see his resemblance to his dead father. Mrs. Alving quickly adds that Oswald takes after her. The pastor is shocked When Oswald expresses his views about family life and the common-law marriages of his fellow artists. Manders disapproves of this and says that the artists had circles where immorality exists opens. He is at a failure to understand how the authorities would accept such things. When oswald leaves, Mrs. Alving accepts that Oswald was right in whatever he said and that she has always believed in her loneliness, that the esteemed married men tend to do the greatest sins of immorality and fidelity.

Manders says he feels sorry for her but as her priest, he is happy for what he had done when she had strayed in the past. Manders had stood by her at that time and still stands by her. She is reminded of coming to him after a year of marriage and rejecting to go back to her husband. However, Mrs. Alving reminds Manders that she was desperately unhappy during that first year. Manders answers that it was the sign of rebellion. He adds that instead of demanding happiness, Mrs. Alving should have followed her marital duty which was to remain with the person chosen by her and with whom she had a sacred tie. He goes on to say that even if a husband is a spendthrift, it is the duty of the wife to bear the cross assigned to her by a higher will. It was inconsiderate on her part to seek shelter with him. At the

same time, Manders thanks God that he (Manders) possessed the required firmness and he could lead her back to the path of her duty, to her husband by law. Manders also says that once she disowned her wifely duty and since then, she has also disowned her motherly duty. So, instead of provide Oswald education at home, she sent him to the boarding schools—among Strangers, and consequently, became a stranger to him. Manders adds that she has sinned against her husband and is now, making good her fault, by raising the orphanage. But she should confess having sinned against her son too and that as a mother, she carries a burden of guilt-feeling.

Mrs. Alving answers that he should not conclude so easily, since he knew nothing of her thereafter. She thinks he must know the truth that her husband died just as debauched, as he had been throughout his life. She also tells him that her husband, Mr. Alving died due to a disease contracted from the excesses in his life. Manders is greatly shocked at this. Mrs. Alving further conveys to Manders that her husband had offended her within their own house too. She says that she also witnessed Alving's advances to their servant, Oanna. She says that Alving's relationship with Joanna had its own consequences, Mrs. Alving explains how she had to sit with him during his drinking session as a companion so that he would remain in the house. She had to listen to his senseless talk, and later force him, to go to bed. But she endured it all, just for the sake of her son, Oswald. She send Oswald to the boarding School, when he began to notice things and to ask questions. She says that she never allowed Oswald to enter his home while his father lived. Other than Oswald, she had her work to keep her going. She added to Mr. Alving's estate, did all the improvements and useful innovations for which Alving got the praise. She says that she is converting that estate of his into raising captain Alving Orphanage and with this action, she desires to destroy all rumours and remove all doubt about her husband's life in reality. She does not want Oswald to inherit anything from his father, Alving. She convinces herself saying her son would inherit everything from her alone.

Irritated by the continuous rain, Oswald returns after a walk. Regina announces the dinner and Oswald follows her into the dining room to help her open the wine bottles. Mrs. Alving and Manders continue with the discussion of the opening of the orphanage, scheduled for the day after. Mrs. Alving is relieved that after the dedication of the orphanage, it would be as if her dead husband never lived in that house and then, there would be no one there except her son and she herself.

They hear a quiet brawl from the dining-room, followed by Regina's whisper: "Oswald! Are you mad? Let me go!" Mrs. Alving is full of terror and says hoarse to manders: "Ghosts. The couple in the conservatory—once more." Manders is stupefied. He questions: "Regina—? Is she the child?" Mrs. Alving accepts. She holds his arm and walks irresolutely towards the dining-room.

The scene is the same room. It has stopped raining an mist lies heavily over the landscape. After dinner, Oswald goes out for a walk and Regina moves to do the laundry work. Manders and Mrs. Alving resume their conversation. Mrs. Alving goes on to tell Pastor Manders how she could put an end to her husband's scandal by giving Joanna a handsome amount and getting her married to Jacob Engstrand. Manders is shocked to hear this and remembers how Engstrand came to him to arrange the wedding and had accused himself of having indulged with Joanna in a weak moment. He is not able to imagine how a person can marry a fallen woman for a mere fifty pounds. At this, Mrs. Alving points out the fact that even she was married to a fallen man, but the Pastor says that the two cases were entirely different. Mrs. Alving agrees that there was a huge difference in the price—between a more fifty pounds and the entire fortune. Moreover, hers was a marriage arranged by her family as she was in love with someone else then. Manders defends saying that atleast the match as in full accordance with the law. But Mrs. Alving believes that law and order usually cause all the unhappiness in the world. She calls herself a coward as otherwise, she would have disclosed the truth to Oswald, the truth about his father-captain Alving.

Manders brings to her memory that it is her simple duty and that she has taught her to idealise his father. He asks her whether a voice in a mother's heart does not forbid her to shatter her son's ideals. When Mrs. Alving wants to know what would happen with the truth, Manders again reminds her of the ideals.

Mrs. Alving expresses her fear that she shouldn't allow Oswald to have any relations with Regina lest she be in a trouble. She accepts her cowardice once again and goes on to say that she should rather encourage a marriage or to make any other arrangement. Mander is shocked to hear her terrible idea. Mrs. Alving further states that there is something ghostlike from which she can never free herself. She goes on saying, "When I heard Regina and Oswald, it was as if I saw ghosts. Almost think we are all ghosts. It is not only what we have inherited from our father and mother that exists in us. It is all types of dead ideas all kinds of old and outdated beliefs. Though they are not alive in us; they remain in us, and we can never get rid of them. I take a newspaper and read it, I see ghosts between the lines. There must be ghosts all over the place. They scatter as thick grains of sand. And we are all so terribly afraid of light."

Manders condemns her reading for such strange ideas, her reading of the 'free-thinking books.' But Mrs. Alving opines that her ideas come from what Manders praised her "as right and what my whole spirit revolted against as something abominable. Manders retorts saying that he entreated her as a wife, to return to her lawful husband when she came to him

distressed and cried to take her in was it his crime. And Mrs. Alving agrees that it was truly his crime to do so.

Manders further adds that he would help her to drive away the ghosts around her. He declares that he can no longer permit a young and unprotected girl, Regina, to remain in Mrs. Alving's house. There is a knock at the door. Engstrand enters and requests pastor Manders to lead them in some concluding prayers at the orphanage. Manders questions Engstrand about his marriage to Joanna and offers him a chance to explain and lighten the burden on his guilty conscience. While narrating his emotional story, Engstrand presents in a showy manner—his sensitivity and pious thoughts. He adds that he has brought up the child—Regina with tender care and had been a loving husband to poor Joanna and looked after the household the way the Bible says. With tears in his eyes, Manders asks Engstrand to forgive him for having misjudged him. He shakes hands with him too. Manders further states to Mrs. Alving that one must be extremely careful about condemning one's fellows. But Mrs. Alving says that he is and will always be a great baby. She adds that she would love to throw her arms around him. Manders frees himself quickly and gathers the documents related to the Orphanage and hurries out to conduct the prayers. Mrs. Alving notices Oswald in the dining-room and sits on the sofa by the window. She warns Oswald to be careful with liquor. Oswald and Mrs. Alving sit for a chat. Oswald has a complaint that he gets tired easily and that the absence of sunlight prevents him from painting. He explains to Mrs. Alving that when he had gone back again to Paris last time, he had begun to feel terrible pains in his head—mostly at the back. He says that it is not an ordinary fatigue since when he wanted to begin a new painting, his powers failed him. It was as if he was paralysed—he could not see anything clearly and when he sent for the doctor, he got to know the truth. After a lot of questioning, the doctor had said that Oswald had been worm-eaten since birth; and added 'The sins of the fathers will be visited on children.' Oswald read some of his mother's letters to the doctor to prove that his father was virtuous. Mrs. Alving whispers—'The sins of the fathers'.

Oswald confesses that he should have remained away from his happy life with his comrades; and that a single act of gullibility must have caused all the trouble. He is distressed that he flung his life in that manner for a short-lived pleasure and requests Mrs. Alving for something to drink to drown his horrible thoughts and to forget his worries. Mrs. Alving asks Regina to bring champagne.

Oswald tells his mother that Regina is his only hope and that he cannot bear his misery all alone. He expresses his desire to take Regina with him and leave home. He feels that Regina will provide him salvation; as he saw that she was full of joy of life. Oswald goes on to say that here people are made to believe that work is a curse, a punishment, and life is a misery

which the people do their best to get out of very quickly. But, in his world, people feel differently. They believe in the wonder and the glory of life. Oswald is afraid to stay there lest everything in him will degenerate into ugliness. As Mrs. Alving is to say the truth to Oswald and Regina, Manders enters and declares his happiness on spending a fruitful time at the prayers. He announces that Regina must assist Engstrand with the sailors' home; and that she should go and live with him. Oswald states that Regina is going away with him as his wife, if she so desires. Manders looks at Mrs. Alving in a state of shock. In spite of Manders' pleading, Mrs. Alving declares that she could then speak the truth and shall not destroy any ideals too. There is shouting outside at this moment. Regina goes into the conservatory and announces aloud on seeing a red glow that the orphanage is on fire.

Manders exclaims that God's judgement blazes upon the sinful house—the orphanage. They all rush towards the orphanage; and Manders is left moaning that the house is not insured either. Later, he also follows them.

ACT III

This scene also takes place in Mrs. Alving's house. It is dark, except for a faint glow from the fire outside. The entire orphanage has been burned. Regina and Manders are talking about the tragedy. To the Pastor's surprise, Engstrand enters. He teases the pastor saying that the fire was started by the prayer candles and especially with which he snuffed with his fingers and threw the wick among the wooden shavings down on the ground. Engstrand therefore blames it as the Pastor's fault. He also speculates on the public uproar and scandal that the fire will cause. Manders is quite frightful to think about the hateful accusations by the public. Mrs. Alving enters at this juncture and asks the pastor to take all the paperwork with him—she doesn't want to ponder on the topic of the orphanage again. She considers the fire just a business loss. She permits Manders to use the property and the remaining capital in the bank, in the way he likes.

Engstrand thinks he can put the freehold to some purpose and the money could be used in supporting some enterprise of benefit to the town. Engstrand reminds the pastor of his 'home' for sailors, but the pastor is apprehensive about his remaining in power since public opinion may overthrow him before he can donate anything. Engstrand offers himself as an angel of deliverance, and says that he himself will answer to the charges by the public. Manders is relieved and promises the money to Engstrand's 'home' for sailors. Engstrand declares that the house for wandering sailors will be called captain Alving's Home. He gullibly promises that it will be a worthy memorial to captain Alving, if he (Engstrand) is allowed to run it as per his ideas. But the fact is that it will be a worthy memorial since it will be

a house of debauchery just as the real captain was himself a man of debauchery. Together, Engstrand and Pastor Manders leave the house. Engstrand implores Regina to join him which she clearly ignores.

Oswald returns and when he comes to know of the 'home', predicts that the establishment will burn, just like the all the memories of his father. He brings his mother and Regina close to him, telling them that he needs a "helping hand." Mrs. Alving is prepared to remove the burden from his mind alongwith the remorse and self-reproach he speaks of. She tells Oswald that his father, captain Alving was full of the joy of life in his young days. "He had to live with no purpose in life in a little town; simply a position to keep up. He could find no work into which he could throw himself totally—just keeping the wheels of business going. He did not have a single friend, capable enough of knowing what the joy of life means, only the idlers and drunkards and the inevitable happened."

When Oswald wants to know what was inevitable his mother replies that he had himself described what would happen to him if he stayed at home. She adds that his poor father never found any outlet for the joy of life that was there in him and that she did not bring any sunshine into his home. She had always been taught about duty and she waited patiently for too long believing in them. Everything became a matter of duty—her duty and his duty and that she had made his home intolerable for his father.

When Oswald wants to know why she had never written to him or told him about it, Mrs. Alving says she never thought it as something a son should know about his father; since his father was a depraved man even before his birth. She also admits that Regina "belongs in the house." Regina guesses her meaning immediately and asks to leave. She is bitter that Mrs. Alving hired her as a maid when she should have raised her as a gentleman's daughter. She leaves the house in the hope that pastor Manders will take care of him and if things go wrong, she can belong to captain Alving's home for sailors. She exits Regina feels sad that her mother was of that sort. Moreover, she wants to make good use of her youth before it is wasted. Also with Oswald sick, she does not wish to spend her life looking after an invalid.

Oswald is mildly shocked but reminds his mother that he didn't know his father and, indeed, is just as troubled as before. When his mother tells him that every child should love his father, he asks how she can believe in such a "superstition." Mrs. Alving realizes that she is just propagating another ghost. She asks whether he loves her; he says at least he knows her, and that he is very thankful for all her help. Oswald admits that she has relieved him of his self-reproach, but he says nothing can alleviate his dread. She reassures him that soon the sun will come up. He sits her down, telling her that his dread results from the lapses he suffers, the fits of gloom that lurk in his mind and come upon him suddenly, rendering him helpless

as a child. His mother tries to reassure him, saying that, as his mother, she is there to care for her child. But this is just what Oswald doesn't want. He savors the doctor's description of his illness as a "softening of the brain," finding the image charming—like red velvet curtains, supple when stroked.

Mrs. Alving is horrified. Oswald blames her again for scaring away Regina, who could have helped him. He says that the doctor predicted his next attack will be his last, and he shows his mother twelve morphine capsules—a lethal dose. He wants his mother to administer them when his attack comes—he knows that Regina would have done so had he asked her. Mrs. Alving finally promises to do so if necessary. He says that soon the sun will come and she will see the torment he suffers. He says that soon the sun will come and she will see the torment he suffers. She tells him that he has only been suffering from delusions and that now that he is home with his mother, they will go away. The sun rises over the glistening mountains, and she goes to turn out the light. Oswald says, "Mother, give me the sun." His muscles loosen and he slips in the chair. His mother panics and searches for the pills, screaming all the while.

Father-Son Relationship in *Ghosts*

Ghosts by Henry Ibsen is a play that pokes fun of the society in Norway around the 1880's; how people are very closed minded and are not open to new ideas. The scene being looked at is about how society holds men up high in comparison to women. Pastor Manders is an example of narrow minded member of society, where as Mrs. Alving is starting to think for herself and not just falling society.

In society the father is the appropriate and only role model for a young boy. A young boy should watch and study his father so that he can strive to be like him. Sending a child away or not surrounding him by his father would be harmful to the child's growth. Manders disagrees with Mrs. Alving's decision to send her son away at such a young age; because he feels that... "a child's proper place must always be his father's house". That is why Manders is so delighted when Oswald walks into the room looking like his father with a pipe in hand; because even though he didn't grow up with his father, Manders can still see Mr. Alving in him. The man of the house seems to always hold the upper hand, the one to be looked up to, no matter what he does.

Men's tricks and games that are inappropriate are looked at as all in good fun, but if a women ever tried to pull a trick on her son she would be looked down upon. In the scene being looked at Oswald tells the story of the first time he smoked a pipe with his father. When he was a young boy his father took him on his knee and had him smoke his pipe and Oswald sucked in till he was sick and all Mr. Alving did was laugh. While Mrs. Alving helped him back to the nursery. When Oswald asks if his father always played tricks like that, he replies, "When he was young he was full of high spirits..." Manders does not praise Mrs. Alving for taking care of her son, but rather stands up for the man who played a mean trick on his little son. On the other hand, if Mrs. Alving had done what Mr. Alving did, she would have been called an unfit mother. Even if a father plays an inappropriate trick, it is just looked at as all in fun, because he is the head of the family.

Men are meant to be revered by their family. Oswald's mother has been running a house by herself for a while, but Pastor Manders thinks it is great the Oswald comes home to honor his father in opening the Orphanage, but does not mention anything about how he can now **spend time** and help his mother. Oswald also says nothing about coming home for his mother but

rather responses to Pastor Manders praise by saying "That was the least that I could do for my father." Oswald admired his father or the picture of his father that was painted for him, how society felt a relationship between a father and a son should be.

The relationship between a father and son is very important to the society in Norway in the 1880's. The father is held up to be the most important influence in a young child's life because men in general are held so high in society. New ideas such as women shaping their child's future is not accepted in such a narrow-minded society.

Characters of the Play

(i) MRS. ALVING

The leading character of *Ghosts*—Mrs. Alving is brought up as a compliant girl to become a devoted wife. She enters in a incredible way. There is no physical or verbal allusion. There is a kind of external mark that covers the play. It comes so naturally to her that we get the feeling that it is a known coverlet to her and is accepted easily without anybody's notice. This particular gloom that exists in the background provides a satirical comment on her assertion to read and think what would give pleasure to her. She is the founder of the Orphanage with its mark and insincerity and she is ready to restrict her freedom to speak the thoughts that existed in her mind. She accepts to mollify caucus by not using the Orphanage in a wrong way.

Ibsen has drawn the character of Mrs. Alving very elaborately. Moreover, her portrayal is realistic too. We can actually see her live throughout the play. Her agony can be, in fact, experienced by us all. Her character grows inch by inch before us. She is painted in vibrating hues: We see her as a wife, as a lover, as a master and as a mother.

The readers come to know of her trouble. She is bolstered by her son's frankness. She is shocked by the conservative judgement passed by Pastor Manders on her attempt to place herself under his protection, in the very first year of married life. She openly says that her husband, Captain Alving, led a "debauched life." He lived with his vices throughout his life; and died diseased and depraved. It was like Engstrand is—a drunkard. He committed the biggest crime by seducing the maid, Johanna, who gave birth to Regina.

Mrs. Alving is tortured with the crime committed by him. She is disgusted with her husband just like Johanna is with Engstrand. Pastor Manders feels that Mrs. Alving has been severe in judging her husband. He finds her accusations mere exaggeration and nothing else. Mrs. Alving opens out her heart to him when she says that she had borne a lot in the house. "To keep him at home in the evenings—and at night—I had to make myself his companion in his secret dissipations up in his room. There I had to sit alone with him, and to clink my glass with him and drink with him, and listen to his obscene, silly talk. I have had to fight with him to get him

dragged to bed—"all for her son's sake." She then took over the gearshifts of her house. She now had a weapon against him and he dared not murmur. And then she send Oswald away as he was seven by that time and had started asking questions. "No one knows what it cost me."

Pastor Manders wonders that she is raising a memorial for such a person. Mrs. Alving states that she feared this truth about her husband might reveal itself to the world and then the Orphanage would destroy all kinds of rumours and get rid of all suspicion. She also adds that she spent all her husband's fortune so that her son, Oswald, does not inherit anything from his father. However she confesses being guilty of sending her son away.

When she has seen the close empathy between Oswald and Regina, she is troubled by ghosts of the past and she says:

"When I heard Regina and Oswald, it was as if saw ghosts. I almost think we all are ghosts, Pastor Manders, all of us. It is not just what we have inherited from our father and mother that walks in us. It is all kinds of dead ideas and all kinds of old beliefs. They do not live in us; but remain in us, and we can never rid ourselves of them. When I take a newspaper and read it, I see ghosts between the lines. There must be ghosts all over the country, who lie as thick as grains of sand. And we all are, so horribly afraid of the light."

Manders feels that her thoughts are a result of her reading the horrible, rebellious, free-thinking books.

Mrs. Alving thanks Pastor Manders heartily since he forced her into duty and when he praised as correct what her entire spirit rebelled against as something repulsive. It was then that she began to examine the ridges of his learning. What Manders calls it his life's toughest struggle is his deplorable defeat, according to Mrs. Alving. His victory over his own life is a crime against them both, for Mrs. Alving. Mrs. Alving is constantly in struggle with *Ghosts* both within her and without. She blames herself totally for her husband's immorality abandoning her moral obligation to censure it. Since she brought no light to his home, his life provided him no outlet for his "joy of life."

It is very evident that Mrs. Alving cannot shift her duties and responsibilities by charity. She gets the result of her Sham. She had sent Oswald away to take care of his ideals and the result is that she is valued not as a mother, but as his death agent. But still she is unable to understand anything. She does not understand the cause of Oswald's fears after she has revealed the past. Her son asks her to take his life, when he suffers another stroke. She agrees to perform even this. Her pain his in the fact that she has come to know about the sufferings of her loving son, Oswald. The readers

find interest in the character of Mrs. Alving as she is not able to take a stance between putting up facades and behaving in a way that would show her personal reliability. On one hand, she reads contentious literature and feels regretful for the decency in her past life; and on the other hand, she builds a memorial for the repute of her dead husband. She talks of principles and morals; but never tells Regina about her birth; though she brings up Oswald to idealise his dead father. She passes on the 'Ghosts' of her own fears to her children, without even realizing it.

Mrs. Alving is troubled with the tensions, which result in a society which is male dominated and where the female suffers a lot of weaknesses. Thus, this tragedy by Ibsen shows how a woman affirms her uniqueness and wisdom. In a nutshell, Mrs. Helene Alving lives with her maidservant, Regina, in a mansion in Norway's countryside. At her relatives suggestion, she married her late husband, captain Alving. But it was a horrible marriage. She ran away once, to Pastor Manders, to whom she was attracted. He made her return to her husband. She suffered her husband's debauchery but sent away their son, Oswald, when he was seven years of age, with the hope that he would never discover his dead father's immorality. Mrs. Helene Alving has established an Orphanage to memorialize captain Alving's death. It is scheduled to be dedicated very soon. She doesn't want anyone to doubt his goodness and honour. But at the same time, she is a free thinking woman and feels forced to tell her son the truth about his father. The end is tragic indeed; where she needs to play the role of a person, putting an end to the miseries of Oswald.