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The Anxious *Double: Twins in Plays of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s.

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THE ANXIOUS DOUBLE:

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in

The Department of Theatre

by

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For Lynn
My mirror twin and soul-mate
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ABSTRACT

Twin characters have consistently appeared in dramatic literature throughout history. Playwrights from Shakespeare to Goldoni have employed twins in works which usually rely upon the device of mistaken identity. However, twin characters who have appeared in plays of the last thirty years have been employed with more weighty intentions. This dissertation analyzes recent playwrights' portrayals of twins and the playwrights' detailed explorations of the anxieties which drive the twins' relationships with each other and society. Recent playwrights have also employed twins to symbolize fears peripheral to the phenomenon of twins: anxieties which plagued these three decades play heavily into these works, including tensions in the aftermath of the Vietnam War and the civil rights movements, concerns over the stewardship of our country's prosperity, as well as the deterioration of the family unit.

Conpersonas (1974) by Paul Stephen Lim and Corpse! (1985) by Gerald Moon each toy with twins' entangled identities, thereby preying upon postmodern fears concerning fragmented selfhood. Marina Carr's Portia Coughlan (1996) and Mark Handley's Idioglossia (1987) each explore the intimacy of the twin bond and use this bond to highlight the society member's fear of being abandoned and falling prey to...
loneliness. *The Wedding of the Siamese Twins* (1984) by Burton Cohen and *Side Show* (1996) by Bill Russell and Henry Krieger capitalize upon America’s guilt concerning its prosperity, which society may view as being gained by the exploitation of other countries and her countrymen. These plays each feature as protagonists conjoined twins who are victims of society’s exploitation while Philip Ridley exploits his twin protagonists’ fears to create his horrific play, *The Pitchfork Disney* (1991). The audiences’ and critics’ reception of these plays confirms Rene Girard’s theory of scapegoating: twin characters today have replaced groups such as African-Americans and women as the “other” and are being used as society’s scapegoats. These playwrights suggest that twins are somehow responsible for the tensions presented in these works, and the audience members viewing these productions ritually slay twins on stage to vicariously experience violence and transport evil away from the community via these twin scapegoats.
INTRODUCTION

The prevalence of twin images in popular culture is not an unusual phenomenon. Twins were employed in the mythology of ancient cultures ranging from the Romans to the Hebrews and have since consistently appeared as major characters in the literature of a vast array of different cultures. Today, television commercials advertising products from chewing gum to shampoo capitalize on the popularity of twin imagery as do the marketing schemes of department stores and talk shows. While these contemporary uses of twins highlight the cuteness of twin pairs, our society’s fascination with twins has led some to suggest this characteristic stems not from mere curiosity but from a deep-rooted anxiety, perhaps even an inescapable fear, of twins.

To be sure, the concept of the double is inextricably linked with anxiety, which, in fact, is the mechanism which drives the meaning of the double. For the purposes of this dissertation, “anxiety” will be employed to denote the discomfort and disjointedness which the double often arouses in society and between the twins themselves. The manifestation of this anxiety has taken different forms throughout time, including cultural practices such as the Yoruban ritual of killing of one or both of the twins at
birth or the exiling of the twins and mother to a "twin town." This anxiety has also presented itself through various cultures' myths and literature. Numerous anthropological studies such as John Lash's 1993 Twins and the Double and Taiwo Oruene's 1985 study of Yoruban twins have explored cultural practices regarding the treatment of twins. Literary studies have been conducted on works concerning the double, especially concentrating on works such as Dostoyevsky's The Double, Goethe's Faust, Edgar Allan Poe's William Wilson and Maupassant's He. However, a study has not yet concentrated specifically on the portrayal of twins in dramatic literature in spite of the appearance of a number of psychologically profound plays written in the last thirty years of the twentieth century.

This idea of anxiety as it drives playwrights' works merits exploration, inasmuch as prior to the 1970s, playwrights primarily employed twin protagonists in lighthearted works. In brief, playwrights of twin plays preceding the 1970s have differed in their employment of twins in that the twin characters are empowered to control the play's events and other characters. Recent playwrights have reclaimed their right to orchestrate the play's events and have typically stripped their twin protagonists of the near-deity status with which they have been portrayed.
through the centuries. The twin plays of the last thirty years employ twins as a device to present plays of ideas, rather than as a device of propelling the action, and they use twins in multifarious ways to present these messages. Recent twin plays have probed deeply into the heart of the double, examining the psyches of the pair and the psychological and even metaphysical connection between the twins. This shift in the playwright’s approach to twins and his employment of the twins to present various angst-ridden topics requires analysis. Although these plays often share themes, the range and treatment of topics is remarkable.

One may question the reason for the diverse treatment twins have received at the hands of playwrights in the last thirty years. As twins have appeared often throughout the centuries in dramatic literature, one may surmise that by the late twentieth century, this device would have run its course. As this study will show, the employment of twins in plays of the last thirty years differs significantly from previous plays. Perhaps the device of twins not only arouses fears concerning the pair itself, but the twin may also serve as a manifestation of other, unrelated anxieties. The treatment of twins throughout these three decades varies widely: it would seem that the playwrights are expressing both anxieties associated with the twins as well as
anxieties borne of their own environment and time. This study will endeavor to explain the recent playwright's interest in twins by illuminating the varied anxieties revealed in these works, both related to twins and peripheral to twins.

When examining these plays, one should bear in mind the varied stresses of these three decades. The 1970s were shaped by the reverberations of the Vietnam War, as veterans struggled to find a place in a society which halfheartedly welcomed them home, and our nation endeavored to come to terms with this conflict which was resolved neither in our favor nor against us. This decade also experienced a certain restructuring of societal hierarchy in the wake of civil rights movements, as women and African-Americans sought a new status in society. Paul Stephen Lim's Conpersonalas, written in 1974, reflects this movement as it centrally explores the notion of a search for one's true identity. In the 1980s, America's prosperity became a subconscious source of anxiety, as our nation enjoyed greater affluence than any country in history. The '80s have been called the "me" decade, and a certain guilt concerning this self indulgence and tendencies toward exploitation may be detected in the twin plays of the decade. The 1990s were likewise influenced by the amazing
wealth of our country, along with the scandals which plagued the Clinton presidency: perhaps both of these factors promoted a sense of guilt or anxiety for society's members. Finally, the deterioration of the family unit became a prominent source of anxiety for Americans, as the cornerstone of our nation seemed to be crumbling. This study will demonstrate that playwrights have relegated twins to the position of scapegoat: as a result of their novelty, twins have become representatives of numerous sources of anxiety and are acting as society's punching bag.

This study will explore the notion of anxiety as it is manifested in nine of these plays, whether the anxiety exists between or within the twins, and/or if the anxiety concerning the twins exists in society. The playwrights of these works express this anxiety through different combinations of twins: male and female, saint and sinner, conjoined twins, homosexual twin and heterosexual twin, as well as twins who have lost a twin. As the playwrights of these works express their own version of this anxiety, they choose various topics which the device of twins makes possible and interesting, including autonomous language, rivalry, death of one's twin, murder, twins' sexualities, and twins' physicalities.
The plays included in this analysis have been chosen based on the following criteria: 1) the play must employ a twin or a pair of twins as the central character(s) 2) the twins must be employed for purposes other than that of mistaken identity 3) the play must have been scripted in the 1970s, 1980s, or 1990s.

Chapter One, "An Overview of Twins in Dramatic Literature," explores the treatment of twin protagonists at the hands of playwrights from the second century B. C. until the 1960s. This survey establishes the innovative treatment twin characters have received in the plays of the last three decades. Furthermore, this chapter prompts the reader to question recent playwrights' revival of interest in the device of twins.

Chapter Two, "Doubles and Mirrors," examines the theories of Otto Rank, Jacques Lacan, Rene Girard, and others as they illuminate the anxieties associated with twins. Various cultural practices and ancient myths associated with twins will also be examined, as these provide an insight into different cultures' perceptions of twins. These practices and myths periodically surface in the work of various playwrights of recent twin plays. Most notably, Marina Carr, Terrence McNally and Burton Cohen call upon different cultures' notions about twins to frame their
portrayals of the double. Cultures included in this discussion are the Yoruban tribes of Nigeria, the Ga people of southeastern Ghana, the people of Bali, and the ancient Celts. This chapter establishes the notion that although twin-related anxieties are not a new phenomenon, the playwright's treatment of these anxieties represents a new trend in twin literature.

Chapter Three, "Twins' Identities," takes up the notion so often employed in past twin plays, but these recent plays express the anxiety borne of the postmodern sense of fragmented selfhood. Paul Stephen Lim's 1974 play, Conpersonas, features a priest, Mark Ziegler, whose twin has committed suicide. In his search to discover his brother's reasoning for committing suicide, Mark unearths his true identity. Mark cannot accept this identity, and he also kills himself. Through his play, Lim examines the consequences of denying one's true identity, a fear he complicates by allowing Mark's identity to elude him throughout most of the play. Corpse!, by Gerald Moon (1985), plays upon society's fear that twins may swap identities and society will be none the wiser. For Moon's twins, too, the matter of identities is one of life and death, for Evelyn Farrant covets his brother's identity and will commit murder to obtain an identity he believes is
rightly his own. In addition to the notion of identities, both Lim and Moon take up other anxieties, especially twins’ psychic abilities. The playwrights appear to be preying upon society’s fear of the untapped powers of the brain.

Chapter Four, “The Bond Which Overcomes Barriers of Language and Death,” concentrates on the power of the twin bond, a bond which engenders trepidation in many who have witnessed the connection some twins share. Many twins express their shared identity by preserving communication with each other even beyond the grave, as opposed to Lim and Moon’s twins, who desire an individual identity and rebel against the identity they share with their twins. In Marina Carr’s 1996 play, Portia Coughlan, the characters around the twins become overwhelmed by their anxieties concerning the twins and these societal fears ultimately drive the twins to kill themselves. Portia holds herself responsible for her twin’s suicide and is ultimately overcome by the guilt which her dead twin exacerbates by communicating with her beyond the grave. Mark Handley’s Idioglossia (1987) focuses on Nell, a woman who also has lost her twin. Handley, however, examines the ways in which Nell’s memory of her twin and the twins’ language enables her to cope with her twin’s absence. Like the characters in Portia Coughlan, Idioglossia’s characters harbor anxieties concerning this twin language.
which inform their treatment of Nell. Apart from treating
the twin bond, Carr and Handley also exploit society’s fear
of death: again, twins are used to represent this anxiety
which is, in fact, peripheral to the phenomenon of twins,
but the twins are presented as somehow responsible for this
evil.

In Chapter Five, “Twins and their Sexualities,” the
anxieties and suspicions which have prompted societies to
kill twins are explored: the intimate bond explored by Carr
and Handley is rumored to extend to the twins’ sexualities.
Paula Vogel’s The Mineola Twins (1998) features Myra and
Myrna, whose troubled relationship is a result of unrequited
love: the twins are hesitant to admit their sexual
attraction to each other. Terrence McNally’s Love! Valour!
Compassion! (1994) focuses on society’s tendency toward
exclusion. McNally’s parable about society’s outcasts
highlights James Jeckyll, who is dying of AIDS, and his
twin, John Jeckyll, whom everyone hates. Curiously, both of
these playwrights satisfy their anxieties about these twins
by jeopardizing the life of or by killing one or both of the
twins. One may wonder if these plays are feeding society’s
frenzy about twins and prompting society’s exclusion of
twins.
Chapter Six, "Twins and the Grotesque," explores many of the anxieties society harbors concerning twins and how society often exploits twins in a sort of self-defense against the twins' perceived power, deviant sexualities, or employment of an exclusive language. In Burton Cohen's *The Wedding of the Siamese Twins* (1984) and *Side Show* by Bill Russell and Henry Krieger (1996), the playwrights seem to pick up where Vogel and McNally's plays end by choosing conjoined twins as a method of discussing society's exploitation of outcasts. Philip Ridley, in *The Pitchfork Disney* (1991), seemingly avenges society for the torment twins have historically caused it. Ridley exacts his revenge by exploiting his grotesque twin characters' fears to create his horrific play.

Chapter Seven, "Twins in Films of the 1970s, '80s, and '90s," surveys filmmakers' employment of twin protagonists during the same thirty year period in which twins are so uniquely portrayed in plays. This chapter reveals striking parallels between the creators of the different mediums in terms of twin depiction, thereby establishing the notion that playwrights are not unique in their expressions of angst concerning twins. Films' portrayals of twin characters likewise express deeply-rooted fears which plague society. As will be shown, however, the different mediums
of film and stage affect their audience members differently with their twin portrayals.

The pertinence of this analysis of twin plays, which are principally dramas as opposed to comedies, becomes apparent when studying the writings of Otto Rank. In this dissertation, “drama” will denote a work which employs twins to convey a serious message, while “comedy” will indicate a work which has more lighthearted purposes. Rank deprecates the treatment of twins in plays up to the time of his writing. He reminds his readers that “Everyone knows the famous twin-comedies which for more than 2000 years provided the theatre of our Western world with never-ending entertainment” (Psychology 85). Rank enumerates such plays as Plautus’ Menaechmi, Shakespeare’s Comedy of Errors, which he notes as “recently revived on Broadway as The Boys from Syracuse,” and Gilbert and Sullivan’s The Gondoliers. Rank concludes that only one humorist, Mark Twain, saved the twin from shoddy playwrights because he “recaptured its underlying depth and thus gave back to the sophisticated motif its true human value” (Psychology 85). Today, given the psychologically complex twin plays of the last thirty years, Rank would no doubt retract his indictment against the treatment of twins in dramatic literature.
Rather than serving primarily as sources of entertainment, twin plays today are studies. These plays fully explore the phenomenon of twins and the anxieties which drive the twins' relationships with each other and with society. Playwrights of the last thirty years have further employed twins to symbolize fears and anxieties peripheral to the phenomenon of twins: with this utilization, recent playwrights have portrayed twins as the "other," and have assigned twins the role of society's scapegoat.
CHAPTER ONE: AN OVERVIEW OF TWINS IN DRAMATIC LITERATURE

Some of the world's best and most prolific playwrights have turned to the phenomenon of twins as subjects for their works of dramatic literature. The Menaechmus Twins is the first recorded twin play, which Plautus penned for the enjoyment of his fellow Romans. Through the centuries, prominent playwrights such as William Shakespeare, Jean Racine, Carlo Goldoni, Victor Hugo and Jean Anouilh have probed the world of twins and expressed their curiosity concerning genetic doubles.

From the time of Plautus' writing (c.254-c.186 B.C.) until the 1960s, playwrights dealt with twins with striking uniformity. After an extensive search, this investigator has located fifteen twin plays which have been published and/or widely performed from Plautus' time to the 1960s. Remarkably, in the thirty year span from 1970-1999, approximately eleven plays have featured twin protagonists. Clearly, playwrights' interest in twins as a dramatic device has exploded in the last thirty years. Perhaps this proliferation may be explained by the markedly divergent approaches to twins which playwrights of the last thirty years have taken.

Playwrights from Plautus to Jean Anouilh have approached twin protagonists in what might be called a
"hands-off" manner. To wit, the twins' actions in the plays of previous centuries have dictated for the playwright the events of the play: twins of past centuries' plays have seemingly controlled their own destinies. While playwrights of early twin plays in actuality manipulate the play's world as they wish, there is a sense that these pioneers of twin plays have entrusted their twin creations with the happenings of their plays. Conversely, twin protagonists of the last three decades are subject to the playwright's whimsy, in that playwrights have spun their plays' actions from the havoc they have wreaked in the twins' lives. The playwrights of the last thirty years have assumed control of the twins' destinies in order to express the central theme of these idea-driven works. Prior to the 1970s, most twin plays dealt with a handful of subjects and ideas which twin protagonists made available, such as rivalry over a birthright or a love interest, and most commonly, mistaken identity. The playwright of the last three decades, however, preys on a number of societal anxieties concerning twins and therefore, the diversity of themes presented in these plays has increased.

The significance of the innovations introduced by the playwrights of twin plays of the last thirty years should be facilitated by a brief overview of the employment of twin
protagonists in dramatic literature. Furthermore, this survey will examine the evolution of twins’ treatment in plays by exposing the appearance of the various anxieties in early twin plays which will become the focus for twentieth century playwrights. As mentioned, Plautus’ *The Menaechmus Twins* established the ongoing relationship between playwrights and twin protagonists in the second century B.C. Plautus’ twins, Menaechmus I and Menaechmus II, have been separated since birth. Plautus’ objective is to afford his audiences laughs, which he accomplishes through the mistress of Menaechmus I, who mistakes Menaechmus II for his brother. Many complications arise due to the twins’ identical appearances, but in the end, the twins are reunited. Plautus allows the twins to control the world of the play: events are resolved as the playwright believes both the twins, and more importantly, his audience, desire. Plautus employed his twins toward humorous ends to curry favor with his audience, and he allows the twins a happy ending as compensation for their cooperation.

Notable twin protagonists next appear in the works of William Shakespeare, who himself was father to a pair of twins. Judith and Hamnet were born of Anne Hathaway on February 2, 1585, seven years before Shakespeare’s writing of *The Comedy of Errors*. Hamnet died in 1596, between
Shakespeare’s writing of *The Comedy of Errors* and *Twelfth Night*.

*The Comedy of Errors* was first performed in December 1594, and as it has fewer than 1,800 lines, it is Shakespeare’s shortest play. Shakespeare relied upon Plautus’ twin play as his primary source, but as was Shakespeare’s custom when borrowing from other writers, Shakespeare significantly re-worked Plautus’ comedy. For *The Comedy of Errors*, Shakespeare doubled the instances of mistaken identity by assigning the twin protagonists a pair of twin servants. While Shakespeare’s comedy cannot be argued as fundamentally more humorous than Plautus’ work, one may consider that Shakespeare deepens the audience’s experience by capitalizing upon Egeon’s longing to be reunited with his twin sons. Egeon’s prologue initially sets a distressful tone for the play, and when he reappears in Act Five, he is repudiated by his son: here, Shakespeare employs mistaken identity as a source of angst, as would the playwrights of the late twentieth century. One also detects a sort of postmodern anxiety concerning selfhood in Shakespeare’s play. Charles Boyce analyzes that “it is evident that the distress undergone by the four misidentified twins is caused by the loss of their sense of identity” (123).
Antipholus of Syracuse and Antipholus of Ephesus, shipwrecked at birth with their servants, have spent their lives searching for each other. In this atypically simple Shakespearean plot which revolves around instances of mistaken identity, the twin brothers and the twin servants enjoy a happy reunion, as do the parents of the Antipholuses. Although Shakespeare initially subjects the twins and their families to an event over which they have no control (i.e. a shipwreck), the twins' actions propel the remainder of the play, and in the end, Shakespeare permits the twins to gain their hearts' desires.

Shakespeare's next twin play, Twelfth Night, was written between 1599 and 1601. For this play, Shakespeare employs a male/female twin pair. Viola, posing as a male, is often mistaken for her brother Sebastian, from whom she has been separated since childhood when the twins were shipwrecked. Viola adeptly dupes those around her: by play's end, she and her twin have successfully manipulated their futures by marrying the person they desire. The twins' happy reunion, a device Shakespeare reprises from his first twin play, is a convention which later playwrights do not deem suitable for their works. In their plays Portia Coughlan and Idioglossia, Marina Carr and Mark Handley each permanently separate their twins through death. Through
Olivia's infatuation with Viola as Cesario, Shakespeare toys with the notion of twins' sexualities, a theme which has fascinated late twentieth century playwrights. While Shakespeare's pursuit of the anxiety concerning twins' sexualities is limited in comparison to the examination by late twentieth century playwrights, his foray into this area signals an interest which would long occupy playwrights.

Half a century passed between Shakespeare's experiments with twin protagonists and the next playwright's expedition into the world of twins. William Rider's 1655 play, *The Twins*, takes up one of the motifs employed by Plautus and Shakespeare: Rider also utilizes mistaken identity as a means of propelling the play's action. Charmia, wife of Gratiano, desires a tryst with Gratiano's twin, Fulvio. When Charmia reveals her forbidden desire to Fulvio, he suspects his brother is testing his devotion. Fulvio tells Gratiano of this woman who swears she will die if Fulvio refuses to sleep with her, and Gratiano counsels Fulvio to fulfill her request and to inform him of the situation's outcome. Later, Fulvio divulges the woman's identity to his brother and Gratiano challenges him to a duel, which Fulvio declines. Gratiano later tries to kill his brother, but Fulvio unswords him and grants him mercy. Charmia, ashamed of herself and fearful for her marriage, is relieved when
Fulvio assures her that he was not the one that slept with her, but Gratiano, whom he sent to her bedroom instead. Gratiano thanks Fulvio for his pains and for his life and marriage, which were "saved by a faithful brother" (46).

Rider, unlike twentieth century playwrights, seems to relinquish the reins to his protagonist, who controls the events of the play and the fates of his brother and sister-in-law. Rider differentiates his play from preceding twin plays in that he uses his twins not as comic relief, but as preachers against infidelity. In the play's final moments, Gratiano reconciles with his wife, but he scolds her and his countrymen when he says, "Your lust is the disease of Italy" (46). Furthermore, Rider's suggestion of the possibility of partner-sharing between the twins revives Shakespeare's interest in twins' sexualities. Rider empowers Fulvio to manipulate situations and people to his liking, and Rider ends the play as Fulvio would suggest. Although Rider presents Fulvio with a sticky predicament, he empowers Fulvio to restore his brother's happiness. With the character of Fulvio, an important tendency for playwrights of early twin plays emerges: Fulvio, like many of his successors, exerts power over the lives of other characters in the play. As will be shown, twentieth century
playwrights also examine the power twins wield, but the twins seem unable to successfully manipulate their power.

In the decade after Rider’s play, Jean Racine began his playwriting career with *La Thebaide* (1664), or *The Theban Brothers*, which is a retelling of the Antigone tale. Moliere’s company first performed this play which features Eteocles and Polynices, twin brothers who Oedipus hoped would share the throne. With his portrayal of Eteocles and Polynices, Racine becomes the first playwright to concentrate his energies on twin protagonists who despise each other: this tendency will become popular among late twentieth century playwrights. Eteocles expresses the play’s central conflict when he notes, “No throne did ever more than one lord see; Two do not fit, however broad it be!” (54). Jocasta, the twins’ mother, begs each of her sons not to kill his brother, but to no avail. When the twins refuse to reconcile, Jocasta kills herself. The twins soon attack each other, and as Creon describes it, “with an equal zest they rushed from here, never had their hearts been more at one. The thirst for bathing in his brother’s blood achieved what twin blood had never achieved: They seemed united in their hate” (61). The twins kill each other, Antigone commits suicide, and Creon ascends the throne.
Racine’s depiction of these strong-willed twins dictates the occurrences of the play, in that the twins’ decision to fight each other to the death costs their mother and sister their lives. Here again, the playwright permits the twins to control other characters’ lives, a characteristic not to be employed by most playwrights of twin plays of the late twentieth century.

Matthew Medbourne next employed twins in an unusual play entitled St. Cecilie, or, The Converted Twins, A Christian Tragedy. This work, first published in 1666, also takes up the notion of twin rivalry in love, as the twin protagonists, Tiburtius and Valerian, are both enamored of Cecilie. Cecilie, a devout Christian, initially resists her arranged marriage to Valerian, the elder of the twins, because he is a pagan. Cecilie implores both of the twins to convert to Christianity, and the twins, impressed by Cecilie’s devotion to Christianity, agree to convert. Ultimately, the twins and Cecilie are killed because they refuse to sacrifice to pagan gods.

Medbourne’s portrayal of the twins in many ways prefigures the treatment twin protagonists receive at the hands of late twentieth century playwrights. For instance, at their conversion, Cecilie blesses the twins: “Joyn Arm in Arm as you enwombed lay, A loving pair, yet happier twins
too day" (51). Here, Medbourne introduces society's fascination with the twins' time in the womb which will become a prominent theme in late twentieth century twin plays. Furthermore, Medbourne introduces the twins' spiritual connection which many twentieth century playwrights highlight. An officer relates his vision of the twins' simultaneous ascension after their execution: "the glorious souls I see of that blest pair, Valerian and Tiburtius" (56).

Thomas Otway's 1680 play, The Orphan, parallels many of the themes presented in Medbourne's play. Otway's twin characters, Castalio and Polydore, are both in love with Monimia, but as the eldest, Polydore has the right to court and marry her. Castalio and Monimia marry, and Polydore, unaware that the two have been secretly wed, sneaks into Monimia's chamber. Monimia mistakes Polydore as Castalio and shares her wedding night with her husband's brother. When Polydore learns of the sin he has unwittingly committed, he vows to live a life of penance. Castalio and Polydore argue and Polydore thrusts himself onto Castalio's sword to restore their friendship. After Polydore dies, Castalio kills himself, as does Monimia.

Otway, like his predecessors, empowers the twins to control others' lives. Polydore's encounter with his twin's
wife destroys the lives of his twin and sister-in-law: Polydore takes his own life to atone for his mistake, which leads Castalio and Monimia to do the same. With Otway’s notion of partner-sharing between twins, he, like Shakespeare and Rider, capitalizes upon society’s fascination with twins’ sexualities, a preoccupation which will erupt in the plays of the late twentieth century.

After the relative popularity of twin plays in the seventeenth century, the occurrence of twins as protagonists waned considerably, as twins appeared in only two plays in the 1700s. Sixty years passed without a twin play until Georges Farquhar revived interest in twin characters in his 1739 play, The Twin Rivals: with his portrayal of the twins, Farquhar takes up the oft-employed theme of the good twin versus the evil twin. In Farquhar’s telling, Young Wou’dbe (Y. W.) is a humpback who endeavors, just after his father’s death, to steal the birthright to an inheritance and a young lady’s heart which belongs to Elder Wou’dbe (E. W.). Y. W. bribes Mrs. Midnight, midwife to the twins’ mother, to testify to Y. W.’s primogeniture and he falsifies a letter stating that E. W. has been killed abroad. E. W. returns to mourn his father’s death, only to learn of his brother’s mischief. Y. W. challenges his brother to a duel, but the twins are disarmed before they harm each other.
Mrs. Midnight confesses that E. W. was actually born first, and order is restored to the family.

In addition to exploring the idea of the good and evil twin, Farquhar hints at a fascination with twins as members of the grotesque, as Y. W. is described as deformed. Several playwrights of the late twentieth century would later explore and manipulate twins' connections with the grotesque, especially in terms of conjoined twins. Also, Farquhar suggests the power of these twins through their control over the lives of the destitute. Instead of carrying on his father's legacy by providing for the poor, Y. W. spends his money on liquor. Y. W. adds to his list of sins by attempting to steal his brother's birthright by bribing Mrs. Midnight to falsely testify as to the order of the twins' birth. E. W., however, restores order to the world of the play: Farquhar places the characters into kind hands at play's end. Later twin plays typically do not enjoy such a tidy resolution.

Carlo Goldoni's 1748 comedy, The Venetian Twins, yet again relies upon the notion of mistaken identity for its action. This work features a pair of twins who, like Y. W., manage to humorously complicate the lives of those around them. Tonino and Zanetto live in separate towns and do not often see each other. Zanetto arrives in Venice to woo
Rosauro, who has been promised in marriage to him, while Tonino also travels to Venice to search for Beatrice, his beloved. Tonino poses as Zanetto throughout the play, and the other characters mistake the twins for each other on numerous occasions. Tonino’s charade costs Zanetto his bride, and one might argue that because of his distress, Zanetto meets his end. Pancrazio, who loves Zanetto’s Rosauro, tricks Zanetto into taking a potion which Pancrazio promises will cure Zanetto of his heartache and any future longings for women. Zanetto drinks the poison and dies, and the characters believe Tonino to be Zanetto’s ghost. Tonino quells the community’s fears when he reveals that he is Zanetto’s twin. Tonino also saves the day by trapping Pancrazio into a confession, and Pancrazio kills himself. Tonino later unearths Rosauro’s true identity: she is the twins’ long lost sister. Goldoni’s comedy expresses a jarring sentiment, in that Tonino’s assumption of his twin’s identity not only causes distress for the other characters, but it costs his brother his life. Although Tonino is empowered to manipulate the world of the play, Goldoni requires Tonino to pay dearly for his power.

Twins enjoyed a renewed interest by playwrights in the 1800s: at least four plays of the nineteenth century feature twin protagonists. G. Dibdin Pitt’s 1844 farce, The Twins,
or, *A Hero in Spite of Himself*, examines a pair of identical twins with markedly different personalities. John, engaged to be married, fears that his fiancee will not be able to distinguish between her husband and his roguish twin, Richard. Richard, known to his army buddies as "Dare Devil Dick," is reported as taking an absence from the army without leave, and Dick's superior officer informs John that if Dick fails to fight in the upcoming battle, he will face dire consequences. John, whose disposition is not suited to battle, determines to save his brother's career, and he fights in Dick's stead. Dick receives a promotion and John weds his beloved.

With his portrayal of John's ability to deceive the military, Pitt maintains the traditional portrayal of twins as exerting control over others and possessing the ability to manipulate situations for their own advantage. Furthermore, John's fear that Dick might deceive his fiancee into sleeping with him perpetuates the theme of mistaken identity and the complications that arise from twins' similar appearances. Pitt's use of the suspicion that twins may be inclined toward sharing sexual partners carries on Shakespeare and Otway's fascination with twins' sexualities.

In 1850, Eugene Grange took a somewhat serious look at the twin relationship with his play *The Corsican Brothers,*
"adapted from the romance of M. Dumas" (v). Louis and Fabien dei Franchi were conjoined at birth, but were successfully separated. Fabien maintains, however, that "the moral adhesion has subsisted, which causes us, although far removed from each other, to have always the same body, the same heart, the same soul" (14). Fabien also explains that the twins have agreed to "appear to the other, at the very instant of his death, and afterwards, at all the momentous periods of his life" (17). Although Louis is studying away from his brother in Paris, Fabien senses that Louis is in danger. Fabien’s fears are confirmed when Louis appears to Fabien in a blood-stained shirt and Louis enables Fabien to psychically witness the duel in which Louis was killed. In Grange’s portrayal, the twins’ power extends to the world beyond the present, as Louis appears to and communicates with his brother after he is murdered. Fabien vows to avenge his brother, and he challenges Renard, Louis’s assassin, to a duel. After Fabien kills Renard, Louis appears, and the stage directions note that he “places his hand on the shoulder of Fabien” (60) and says, “Why weep for me, my brother? Shall we not meet above?” The stage directions continue, “Fabien falls on his knees with his face to the Figure” (60).
Grange’s story capitalizes upon a theme often employed by late twentieth century playwrights, namely, twins’ uncanny ability to communicate through unconventional channels, including psychic communication. Grange’s depiction differs from that of his successors in that Fabien, while given the ability to communicate with the next world, is able to function normally within the present world. In twentieth century playwrights’ depictions of this psychic ability, the surviving twin seems torn between the present world and the next. In Portia Coughlan, the title character feels so displaced that she commits suicide in order to join her twin in the next world.

Gilbert Abbott A’Beckett’s 1856 farce, The Siamese Twins, curiously toys with the powers associated with twinhood. This play features Dennis O’Glib and Simon Slow, two unrelated men who pretend to be conjoined twins in pursuit of notoriety and a fortune. Ultimately, the “twins” encounter too many obstacles to achieve stardom, but A’Beckett’s portrayal of two individuals who desire the various powers twinhood affords merits mention. Burton Cohen, Bill Russell and Henry Krieger take up A’Beckett’s idea in their plays The Wedding of the Siamese Twins and Side Show. Each of these twentieth century plays feature
conjoined twins and their exploitation at the hands of a society fearful of their power.

The detailed psychological exploration of twin relationships in the plays of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s exploded in the years just prior to Paul Stephen Lim’s 1974 play, Conpersonas. Until that time, even twentieth century playwrights continued to structure twin plays according to the tradition of Plautus and Shakespeare. Jean Anouilh’s 1950 play, Ring Round the Moon, features identical and wealthy twins Frederick and Hugo, who enjoy a close relationship despite their divergent personalities. Frederick, the shy and “good” twin, is bound to marry the rather pretentious Diana. Hugo senses that Frederick is unhappy with the arrangement, and he orchestrates an elaborate scheme whereby he hopes his brother will become involved in a relationship more befitting his personality. Ultimately, Hugo is triumphant: Frederick becomes engaged to good-natured Isabelle, while Hugo proposes to Diana, who is a suitable match for the mischievous brother. Clearly, Anouilh follows the tried and true pattern of twin plays, in that the twins are portrayed as near-deities capable of manipulating circumstances to suit their desires.

Jack Popplewell also follows this pattern, as the title suggests, in his 1961 play, Hocus Pocus. Popplewell’s play
features identical twins Peter, a financier, and Simon, a member of the clergy. The twins switch places to improve the other’s workplace conditions: Simon persuades Peter’s partners to conduct business in an ethical manner, while Peter employs his business savvy to solicit enough money to save Simon’s church from financial ruin. Even at this late date, these twins control the play’s events and their actions determine the paths of those around them. This pattern will take a drastic turn only thirteen years later with the writing of Paul Stephen Lim’s *Conpersonas*.

The pioneers of twin plays largely adhered to conventional portrayals of twins in terms of their usage of devices such as twin rivalry over love or a birthright and mistaken identity. These early twin plays, however, must also be recognized as broaching subjects which were causes of anxiety for their societies: these anxieties would later serve as the central focus of twin plays in the late twentieth century. *Conpersonas* and *Corpse!*, which primarily concentrate upon twins’ struggle for identity, explore issues which were introduced by Plautus, Shakespeare, Goldoni, and Pitt. The notion of the uniqueness of the twin bond and its enabling twins to communicate psychically is the central focus of *Portia Coughlan* and *Idioglossia*, but this idea was introduced by Matthew Medbourne in *St. Cecily*.
and Eugene Grange in *The Corsican Brothers*. Twins' sexualities have long perplexed playwrights, as is evidenced by *Twelfth Night*, Rider's *The Twins*, Otway's *The Orphan* and Pitt's *The Twins*. Paula Vogel and Terrence McNally also take up the notion of twins' sexualities in their late twentieth century plays. Furthermore, the anxiety associated with conjoined twins provides the subject for *The Wedding of the Siamese Twins* and *Side Show*, but twentieth century playwrights were not the first to employ this notion, as A’Beckett concentrated upon this anxiety in *The Siamese Twins*, as did Grange in *The Corsican Brothers*.

The playwrights of the late twentieth century make manifest the statement which Rank applied to Mark Twain. The same could be said of the late twentieth century playwrights, in that they rescued the twin from primarily stereotypical portrayals and "recaptured its underlying depth and thus gave back to the sophisticated motif its true human value" (*Psychology* 85). As will be shown, Paul Stephen Lim, Gerald Moon, Mark Handley, Marina Carr, Paula Vogel, Terrence McNally, Burton Cohen, Bill Russell, Henry Krieger, Philip Ridley and others have exploded prior playwriting traditions concerning twins and have dared to significantly extend portrayals of the double beyond the notions of twin rivalry and mistaken identity.
CHAPTER TWO: DOUBLES AND MIRRORS

Otto Rank and Jacques Lacan, theorists whose works are immeasurably indebted to Freud, provide psychological insights into society’s fascination with the double as well as into the anxiety inherent in the phenomenon of the double. The writings of Rank and Lacan seem to suggest that this anxiety exists on two levels: the anxiety is experienced both by the twins themselves and by society. One might further argue that these different victims of anxiety, then, exacerbate the anxieties of one and the other. Rank, Freud’s contemporary and a member of Freud’s inner circle, the “Committee,” penned several works centering on the phenomenon of the double, and while his writings have been challenged, Rank examines many of the themes associated with doubles upon which recent playwrights have concentrated. While Jacques Lacan did not write principally concerning the double, his configuration of the psyche’s development, and most notably, his notion of the mirror stage in this development, may be helpful in understanding the angst associated with the double. Furthermore, these theorists’ notions of the double have significant resonance when considered in tandem with the work of playwrights who have employed twins as principal characters in their dramatic works.
In his works Beyond Psychology and The Double, Rank devises an elaborate conception of the double principally based on his knowledge of psychology. Rank’s primary interest in the double emanates from his curiosity about the authors of works which feature doubles. He concludes that these writers have “decidedly pathological personalities” (Double 35). Rank diagnoses these writers with narcissistic personality disorder and interprets their works as methods of discharging their psychological angst. Rank, however, does not dismiss these works following this diagnosis but emphasizes the universality of this disorder: “in the writer, as in the reader, a superindividual factor seems to be unconsciously vibrating here, lending to these motifs a mysterious psychic resonance” (Double 48).

Rank defines narcissism as “an erotic attitude toward one’s self,” and he applies this definition to both the author of the work and the doubles within designated works (Double 73). Rank proposes that authors frequently perceive the heroes in their works as their own doubles, and because the works will live long after the authors’ deaths, Rank interprets each employment of the double as an effort by the author to immortalize herself. Rank’s explanation of the double further suggests that because the double was originally “created as a wish-defense against a dreaded
eternal destruction," the double is often interpreted as a constant reminder of one's mortality, or even as a "messenger of death" (Double 86). This configuration of the double as it applies to the author suggests a person ill at ease with himself, while his description of double characters in literature (in such works as Dostoyevsky's "The Double" and Edgar Allan Poe's tale "William Wilson") details a relationship between two individuals propelled by tension.

Rank insists that the erotic attitude to one's self is only possible "because along with it the defensive feelings can be discharged by way of the hated and feared double" (Double 73). As this dissertation will show, several plays, including Corpse!, Love! Valour! Compassion! and The Mineola Twins, feature a twin protagonist who suffers from this disorder, and whose illness is fed by his dislike of his twin. Rank posits that the ill defend themselves against narcissism via two principal methods: "in fear and revulsion before one's own image...or, as in the majority of cases, in the loss of the shadow-image or mirror-image" (Double 73). Rank's statement bears itself in the plays chosen here for discussion. As will be found in these plays, the mirror-image, or twin, is sometimes lost, as Rank proposes, or is often removed by the fearful twin through murder.
In those plays which examine twins' anxiety concerning the death of one's twin, this loss is shown to dramatically affect the surviving twin: in both Portia Coughlan and Idioglossia, the audience only meets the surviving twin and witnesses the immense loss experienced by the survivor. Corpse! also explores the phenomenon of death as it occurs in the twin relationship: a man kills his twin in an effort to assume the envied twin's more luxurious lifestyle. The impulse to rid oneself of his double might be explained by Rank's notion that when one twin dies, his twin is assured a longer life: "he has, so to speak, absorbed his original double, be it shadow or twin, into a doubled self which has, as it were, two lives to spare" (Psychology 95).

Rank suggests twin rivalry as another motivation to kill one's twin: he ascertains that the double in literature is "the rival of his prototype in anything and everything, but primarily in the love for woman" (Double 75). In Conpersonas, Corpse!, and Love! Valour! Compassion!, this love for woman presents itself as rivalry for the love of a mother or a sexual partner. Significant to these plays which revolve around twin rivalry is Rank's determination that the double is frequently represented by the brother, and that the "appearance for the most part is as a twin" (Double 75).
Rank's writings further endeavor to explain or justify the power twins are perceived to possess, and in so doing, elucidate the fear associated with twins. He notes that this perceived power became so great that "the Double-Soul, namely, the twin," emerged as "a symbol of greatest importance in the building-up of human civilization" (*Psychology* 84). As an example, he points to the "interesting history of twins as founders of cities which...existed in great numbers at a certain period in Europe and are still to be found in the 'twin-cities' of America" (*Psychology* 90). Rank expends a great deal of effort in establishing the notion of twins as they have represented the mortal and immortal aspects of the human being, and he notes that the twin became "a concrete personification of the soul resembling the body like a double," or, "as the soul in person" (*Psychology* 96). Rank then clarifies the power associated with this phenomenon by saying that "This not only makes him (the twin) independent and invincible but also the fearless revolutionist who dares all mortal men and even the immortal Gods" (*Psychology* 96). Gerald Moon examines this tendency in *Corpse!* One of Moon's twins kills both his father and his twin in order to gain his twin's wealth: he is seemingly oblivious to the consequences justice will demand. Likewise, in *Portia*
Coughlan, the twins imagine that if they kill themselves, they will enter a world of their own creation, rather than the Christian's notion of heaven in which they have been taught to believe.

The anxiety described in Rank's investigation of the double may also be found in the mirror stage of psyche development proposed by Jacques Lacan. The title of Lacan's essay, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I," declares the outcome of the mirror stage: the forming of an identity. According to Lacan, there are three interrelated areas of the psyche: the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic registers. In approximate terms, the Real indicates the realm of subjectivity prior to one's acquisition of language, the Imaginary denotes the realm of images, and the Symbolic represents the realm of language and pre-existing social structures. In order to advance from the realm of the Real to the realm of the Imaginary and ultimately the Symbolic, an infant must undergo the mirror stage. The infant is seen as fragmented prior to the mirror stage, and the significance of the stage is revealed by Lacan's qualification of it as a

drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation--and which manufactures for the subject...the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality (emphasis is mine). (4)
Through the mirror stage, an infant becomes aware of entities other than himself. As Mellard interprets Lacan, the previously fragmented infant "is unified in the specular--mirror-image of its other, the mother" (19). At first, the infant is filled with jubilation at this recognition of the other, but, according to Lacan, this jubilation is soon superseded by anxiety at the realization that the other will compete with the infant for various resources. Lacan's schema allows for only one infant and does not consider two infants beholding and sensing each other inside and outside the womb.

Perhaps this simultaneous development also accounts for the societal anxiety provoked by twins, for not only does the twin infant experience physical mirrors and mirrors as represented by the mother, but the twin is an ever-present mirror, a copy of itself. Furthermore, this would suggest that twins, unlike singletons, perhaps proceed through and remain in the mirror stage, for the presence of one's twin continually heightens one's awareness of the other and forces a questioning of one's own identity. Lacan states that the "moment in which the mirror stage comes to an end inaugurates...the dialectic that will henceforth link the I to socially elaborated situations" (Mirror 5). Because the twins experience each other in the womb, the
question arises, do they not also experience the mirror stage at an earlier stage in development than singletons? This mirror stage, it seems, does not serve as the twins’ link to socially elaborated situations, but one’s twin first serves as the link. It is possible, therefore, that twins are social beings by virtue of their multiple birth before the mirror stage.

Lacan’s suggestion that one’s identity is formed in the mirror stage further explains societal anxiety concerning twins: because twins experience the mirror stage together, their identities become entangled in each other. Jane Gallop interprets Lacan’s mirror stage saying that “the child, although already born, does not become a self until the mirror stage” (85). Some would argue that twins therefore never gain a sense of self; instead, they are one half of a pair, one portion of a shared identity. Pursuing his mirror-stage concept, Lacan suggests that a child must be able to distinguish between itself and the other before moving from the Real to the Imaginary and the Symbolic. Does it follow then that the infant twin recognizes his twin as the other, or as both the other and himself? Perhaps this suspicion that twins do not have a firm grasp of their identity as individuals partly accounts for society’s fear of twins.
Society perhaps perceives an undesirable reflection of itself when viewing the twin as having an unstable sense of himself. The twin plays of the 1970s, '80s and '90s in many ways are products of the period's postmodern philosophy, especially in terms of selfhood. Lacan's mirror stage points to this anxiety concerning the fragmented self. He suggests that we as individuals form a somewhat mistaken identity through reflections and images. In the Ecrits, Lacan deliberates that "Man cannot aim at being whole. The 'total personality' is another of the deviant premises of modern psychotherapy" (223). This sense of fragmentation becomes strikingly evident when playwrights require that twin characters be played by one actor, which is the case for Conpersonas, Corpse!, The Mineola Twins, Love! Valour! Compassion!, and others. In The Postmodern Condition, Jean-Francois Lyotard defines postmodernism's understanding of the self as an entity not unto itself: "A self does not amount to much, but no self is an island; each exists in a fabric of relations that is now more complex and mobile than ever before" (15).

Jean Baudrillard, another postmodern thinker, further sheds light on society's anxiety concerning the phenomenon of twins. In Simulations, he explains, "It is now impossible to isolate the processes of the real or to prove
the real" (41). Clearly, twins exacerbate this confusion. In fact, Baudrillard extends his assessment of the contamination of the real to include the double: as he states in America, "The only physical beauty is created by plastic surgery, the only urban beauty by landscape surgery ...and now, with genetic engineering, comes plastic surgery for the whole human species" (32). Given the proliferation of twin plays in the last thirty years, it would seem that playwrights of recent twin plays have sensed certain societal anxieties and are preying on audiences' fears by simultaneously placing on stage symbols of the real and the referential.

Some cultures, such as those in Bali and India, perceive the twins' identities to be so enmeshed that they believe that the twins become sexually involved with each other in the womb. The playwrights of Portia Coughlan, The Mineola Twins, and Conpersonas capitalize upon this suspicion and feature twins whose simultaneous forming of identities in the mirror stage might account for the sexual desire between them.

Rank's writings further serve to explicate this sexual desire between twins as well as twins' homosexual tendencies. Rank suggests that twins (or double-heroes, as he calls them) have homosexual tendencies because they are
in love with themselves and each other because they suffer from narcissistic personality disorder. Rank uses Oscar Wilde's *Dorian Gray* to explore these ideas:

> From women he is able to obtain only the crudest sensual pleasures, without being capable of a spiritual relationship. Dorian shares this defective capacity for love with almost all double-heroes. He himself says in a significant quotation that the deficiency arises from his narcissistic fixation on his own ego. 'I wish I could love' cried Dorian Gray, with a deep note of pathos in his voice. 'But I have lost the passion, and forgotten the desire. I am too much concentrated on myself.' (*Double* 71-73)

Rank later elaborates, saying, "We know...that the homosexual love object was originally chosen with a narcissistic attitude toward one's own image" (*Double* 75). Further to this explanation of homosexuality of twins and sexual desire between twins Rank notes that "twins were considered self-created, not revived from the spirit of the dead, but generated through their own magic power, independent even of the mother" (*Beyond* 91). Rank, like the playwrights of his time and preceding centuries, endows twins with near-deity status. Rank's claim that twins create themselves leans toward the notion of incarnation.

Correlated to Lacan's recognition of the other in the mirror stage and Rank's explication of the double's homosexuality is Lacan's formulation of desire:

"man's desire finds its meaning in the desire of the other,"
not so much because the other holds the key to the object desired, as because the first object of desire is to be recognized by the other" (58). Inserting a pair of twins into this formula aggravates this already uneasy configuration. One’s twin, as Rank holds, signifies a rival, and according to Lacan’s schema, this rivalry stems from the infants’ possession of his twin’s object of desire, specifically, the attention of his mother. Lacan denotes as the Symbolic Father any object which monopolizes the attention of the baby’s mother, thereby distracting her from her offspring. This object may actually be the father of the child, but it might also exist as another lover, or for our purposes, a favored twin, as is the case in Corpse!, Conpersonas, and Love! Valour! Compassion!

Intensifying this rivalry is the twins’ vying for physical needs of nourishment provided by the mother, space in the crib, physical touch and so forth. Rivalry between twins indubitably accelerates as the babes mature and find themselves competing for shared objects of desire. However, would the presence of the infant’s twin also compensate, in a sense, for Lacan’s psychology of loss caused by the move from the Real register (in which the mother provides for every need) to the Symbolic register (in which the mother provides words as compensation for needs)? As stated
earlier, an infant’s “first object of desire is to be recognized by the other” (58). Could twins not receive this recognition from each other on a more regular basis than a singleton who primarily receives recognition from his parents?

Perhaps when applied to twins, Lacan’s ideas concerning language also account for the societal anxiety engendered by doubles. In the Ecrits, Lacan writes that “the subject is spoken rather than speaking” (71), and that “Man speaks, but it is because the symbol has made him man” (65). Twins, however, have been observed to create their own infant language, a form of speech known as autonomous language. Autonomous language varies from pair to pair, and though most twin pairs do not employ this language after they reach the age of two or three years, some pairs continue this usage into late childhood and even into adulthood. This raises some questions. Because this type of language is not pre-ordained by society, and is, therefore, not the language of the father, but is, instead, co-created by the twins, would Lacan’s statement that the “subject is spoken rather than speaking” hold true? Moreover, since the twins are the only users of this language, would they be, as Lacan has been interpreted, “both joined and separated by language, making us a community of alienated and alienating subjects”
(Hill 32)? Would not the twins primarily be joined by this language since this language alienates them from the rest of the society? Again, this superior capacity for verbal communication might instigate apprehension. Perhaps an even greater cause for discomfort is twins' legendary ability to communicate with each other psychically. Twins are noted for communicating with each other nonverbally and somehow connecting with each other through psychic abilities: twins might therefore be said to have yet another form of language at their disposal.

Rene Girard, one of the twentieth century's preeminent theorists of myth, has since the early 1970s developed a theory of "scapegoating" which may further illuminate various societies' apprehension concerning twins. This theory carries significant meaning when considered in tandem with the plays written during the same period as Girard's formulation of this concept. Girard postulates that social and cultural orders have emerged from instances of sacrificial violence against blameless victims, or as he designates them, "scapegoats." The treatment of twins in various primitive societies reveals that twins have served the function of scapegoat in their communities. Girard explains that a community assigns a sacrificial victim an unforgivable sin, and with the removal of this
victim, the community is purged of its sin, as well as its
tendency toward violence. Through this process, the unity
within the society is maintained.

The phenomenon of twins has long presented a paradox
for those archaically-rooted societies into which twins are
born. Twins by their very appearance induce confusion in
the beholder, and many societies have therefore viewed twins
as a threat to the well-being of their communities. Some
cultures, in an effort to decipher the ambiguity twins
embody, have reasoned that twins are the result of an evil
or immoral act, and believe that as such, twins are sources
of evil. These entities must therefore be expelled from
society to maintain the order and health of the community,
as the twins could serve to undermine moral and social
structures. Girard notes that the scapegoat is typically
accused of repulsive crimes such as rape, incest, patricide,
and bestiality. According to Girard, these accusations are
made to "bridge the gap between the insignificance of the
individual and the enormity of the social body," for if the
scapegoat is to purge the entire social body, his or her
actions must greatly exceed those of the average citizen in
terms of destructiveness (Scapegoat 15). As will be shown,
many of these twin characters are guilty of repugnant
crimes. In Conpersonas, Portia Coughlan, and The Mineola
Twins the twins are guilty of committing incest with each other or desiring to do so; one of the twins in Corpse! is guilty of patricide, and Portia of Portia Coughlan desires to rape her own mother.

In traditional societies, such as in Africa when the sacrificial victim is killed, the action is most frequently carried out not by a single person or group of individuals but by the entire community. This ensures the unanimity of the group’s action and prevents division among themselves, which could pose a threat to the communal code. Interestingly, the playwrights of these works seem to be carrying out the scapegoating function for society: in all but two of these plays, twins die violently by drowning, from AIDS, being murdered, or committing suicide. As the audience witnesses these ritual deaths through the drama, society perhaps reaps the benefits of sacrificing a scapegoat, a vehicle for transporting evil away from the community.

Girard explains that frequently, the scapegoat is a member of a racial, religious, or ethnic minority (Scapegoat 31). This statement could conceivably be expanded to include twins, members of a genetic minority, for the practices of many societies concerning the treatment of twins confirms Girard’s theory of scapegoating. These
practices may include a combination of customs, including the killing of one or both of the twins, or the performance of certain rituals, as will be shown later.

Historically, the rate of twin births among the Yorubas of Nigeria has been the highest in the world, a trend that has continued till today (Oruene 208). The treatment of twins among the Yorubas is significant, for it has taken a dramatic turn in the last three hundred years, and it has compelling relevance to Girard’s model of scapegoating. In ancient times, when the birth of twins was announced, the news was dreaded because, like many other societies, it was believed the event portended evil, and in order to avoid the calamity that might ensue, drastic measures were adopted. One method demanded the killing of the twins and the mother, either by a ritual killing or by leaving them to the mercy of the animals in the forest. In some communities only one twin was killed, but in others, both. In communities which adopted banishment, the exile could be temporary or permanent. If temporary, the mother was often allowed to return to the community after a designated period, either with one twin or none at all. If the banishment was permanent, the mothers were usually exiled to “twin-towns,” designated areas for exiled mothers and twins (Oruene 209).
The Yorubas punished mothers and twins because twins were believed to pose a threat to the society in terms of its moral order and its social structure. To the ancient Yorubas, a twin birth could only emerge from two fathers, thereby causing a problem of paternity. It was believed that the mother had committed adultery either with an evil spirit or with another man. Either way, the woman had been defiled, and the ensuing paternity confusion would disrupt the stability and peace of the whole society. In terms of the social structure, a serious disturbance could be caused by the acceptance of two persons of similar age in a society where seniority was the basis of social structure (Oruene 209). The people of India and Bali also associate sexual immorality with the birth of twins. In India, twins are loathed because they are believed to commit incest in the womb. Likewise, in Bali, each twin is dubbed the "betrothed" and the twins are viewed as lovers (Lash 82).

The Yoruban practice of ritual killing and banishment of twins was mysteriously abandoned: the exact period and reason for twins' acceptance into the Yoruba community is purely conjectural. Some factors, however, doubtlessly contributed to this change of perspective concerning twins. One was the ambivalent feeling toward twins' birth and death. Originally, twins were feared and therefore
eliminated; however, later on the fear seemed to have been transformed into reverence for the twins. As in other cultures, twins were believed to have a divine origin, being representatives of the twins-god orisa-obeji, and possessing supernatural powers (Oruene 210). The Yorubas still harbor anxiety concerning twins, but the anxiety is expressed through fearful reverence rather than violence.

Significant to some of these plays is the Yoruban practice which surrounds the death of one of the twins. If one of the twins dies, a wooden figurine, an ibeji, is carved in the image of the deceased twin. This practice evolved from the belief that the twins share a soul, and the living twin could not be expected to live with half a soul. Also, it is believed that one of the twins is actually a "sky-double," or a "heavenly counterpart believed to exist for every Yoruban" (Schwartz 72). This belief is grounded in the Yoruban conception of the soul. Bascom explains that each individual has two ancestral guardians, one residing in the head and the other in heaven. The one in heaven is his individual spiritual counterpart, or double, which is doing exactly the same things in heaven that he himself is doing on earth. (114)

One of the twins, therefore, is a heavenly being whose existence has somehow been fixed on earth. Correlated to this belief is that of the Ga of southeastern Ghana. As Kilson explains, "for every set of twins on earth, a
corresponding pair of bushcow spirits is believed to exist in the sky" (80). At the birth of twins, a shrine is built in the twins' home which houses bushcow horns which spirits are believed to inhabit. The Ga believe that twins can cause sickness, if not death, in their enemies when they beat these horns together.

The ancient Celts likewise associated animals with the spirits of twins. According to Irish superstition, swans are never to be killed, for it is thought that swans were transformed twins. According to O'Hogain, this belief has links to the story in medieval Irish literature of the children of the mythical King Lir, who were twin children transformed into swans by their jealous stepmother (62). Marina Carr capitalizes upon this superstition in her play Portia Coughlan.

Lacan and Rank's respective theories propose explication for the dread which drives the double. From narcissistic personality disorder to transgressions against society's preordained language and aberrations in the mirror stage, apprehension provoked by twins appears to be justifiable. Though this distress takes on different forms in plays and manifests itself through different societal practices, it will been shown that playwrights consistently exploit this anxiety, producing captivating dramatic works.
CHAPTER THREE: TWINS' IDENTITIES

"Which one are you?" Many twin pairs are barraged with this question repeatedly during their lifetimes. While the twins usually chuckle and respond truthfully, the question is motivated by a deeply-rooted fear that twins are deceptive and endeavor to pass themselves off as their doubles. The prevalence of this suspicion that twins use their identical appearances to their advantage is evidenced by the amount of literature which features mistaken identity as its central device. Many plays, mainly comedies, capitalize upon this device, including Jean Anouilh's Ring Round the Moon (1950), Hocus Pocus by Jack Popplewell (1961) and William Rider's The Twins (1655). Scores of children's books, notably the Bobbsey Twins series, as well as mystery novels such as Lois Duncan's 1981 Stranger With My Face employ this device. Twins' identities are a source of angst for those around the twins and for the twins themselves, for ambiguity so muddles the twins' individual identities.

Paul Stephen Lim's Conpersonas concerns itself with twin protagonists whose relationship has been troubled since the day of their unusual birth. In this play, Lim concentrates on the subject of identities, and through his twin protagonists, he seems to say that if one betrays his true identity, he destroys himself. Miles and Mark Ziegler
are born with the same identity, they fight over how to express this identity, and the discrepancy in their expressions ultimately leads to their deaths. The play opens at a Thanksgiving party being given by Miles Ziegler, an advertising agent. Mark, Miles' twin brother and a Jesuit priest, arrives and cannot gain entry into Miles' bedroom. When he forces the door open, he finds Miles has killed himself. Mark recounts the history of his relationship with Miles to Miles' friends, and has sexual intercourse with Miles' male lover, Jesse. Later that night, Mark has sex with two of Miles' female friends, showers, wraps himself in the purple towel in which Miles killed himself, goes into Miles' bedroom, and kills himself with the remaining derringer of a pair belonging to his brother.

Most comedies employing twins as protagonists revolve around the device of mistaken identity: this drama also utilizes this device, but the anxiety generated in others by this ambiguity in the twins' identities drives the action rather than creating comic situations. The play's title, Conpersonas, is a word invented by the playwright and significantly comments upon the personas of the twins: the play details a search for the true identity of each of the twins as each twin has in some way been living a life
opposite or against (con) his true identity. The recommended stage decor complements this notion of personas and consists of “masks of all sorts (Greek, Japanese, African, etc.)” and a print by “Magritte, entitled ‘Not to be Reproduced,’ which shows the back view of a man looking at himself in a mirror and seeing only the back view of himself looking at yet another mirror” (6). The presence of Miles’ portrait poses this question about Miles’ true identity, for it represents a different person to Jesse (Miles’ male lover), Shelagh (Miles’ girlfriend), and Mark: Miles kept secrets from each of them. Mark’s physical appearance compounds the confusion about Miles’ true identity. This confusion perplexes Mark, as he explains to Jesse: “people are always mistaking me for Miles, but never, not once, to my knowledge, has anyone ever mistaken Miles for me. I used to wonder about that, you know. I mean, why only me? Why not him?” (29). Jesse, in his efforts to dissect the twins’ relationship and discover the truth about their identities, proposes to Mark a conclusion about “the collar you wear. The one mark of distinction which you hang on to so doggedly, so tenaciously despite the fact that it offers you no guarantee of individuality” (32).

Questions about truth and identities motivate the conversations between Jesse and Mark in Act One. Jesse
endeavors to destroy Mark, as he represents a living reminder of his twin brother, the man Jesse loves and mourns. Jesse, who senses Mark's sexual orientation and his discomfort concerning that identity, repeatedly questions Mark about his identity, and Mark ultimately reveals his stance concerning identities: “Someone... anyone who goes to all the trouble of creating a mask, a facade... Such a person ought to have the right to retain and preserve the persona of his or her own creation!” (40). Jesse, not satisfied with this answer, prods him: “And are you yourself wearing such a mask at this very moment?” (40). Mark replies: “The question ought not to be, ‘Are you or are you not wearing a mask?’ It is of no importance whatsoever, what mask I may or may not be wearing. You are either for me or against me” (40). Moments later, Mark discovers that Jesse is against him. Jesse destroys Mark by seducing him: he forces Mark to break his vow of celibacy and accept his sexual identity.

Both Jesse and Shelagh's attacks upon Mark are arguably motivated by their fear of the unconventionally simultaneous forming of the twins' identities in Lacan's mirror stage. As established earlier, Lacan submits that a person's identity is formed in the mirror stage, but his configuration does not account for twins' passing through this stage together. Jesse and Shelagh might fear that
Miles and Mark, because they experienced the mirror stage simultaneously, actually share the same identity: the Zieglers each own half of an identity, as they share a common identity and have never gained a sense of self.

In Act Two, Mark’s quest to discover Miles’ genuine identity mirrors Jesse’s tenacity in pursuing Mark’s true identity, and therefore, his own. Mark is aware of the danger in this, as he tells Shelagh: “Truth, however, also has its ‘consequences’—sometimes comic, sometimes tragic” (57). Mark proceeds with his crusade, however, for he demands that he and Shelagh play a game of Truth or Consequences for which he revises the rules. Mark insists that she always provide some truth he requests about Miles, and he will always accept the consequences she demands. Mark reveals his objectives for playing the game when he says, “I must know the truth...about Miles. It is a wise Christian who knows his own brother” (66). During this game, Mark learns of Miles’ bisexuality, his promiscuity, and how frequently he attended church. By conceding to the consequences Shelagh demands, Mark allows her to seduce and destroy him. But, for this price Mark has come to a realization of the identity he shares with Miles.

Exacerbating the confusion surrounding each of these twins’ identities are metatheatrical references. The
playwright winks at the audience on numerous occasions, letting the audience in on the joke about identities, masks, actors and their characters. Mark and Shelagh enjoy an involved conversation concerning the absurdists, and ultimately, Shelagh concludes that Mark does not like the absurdists because they trick the audience into believing something will come out of all their wordplay, when in fact, nothing happens. Mark argues that absurdists, in effect, lie to their audiences. Lim continues this theme when Mark discusses a Shakespearean production he attended in which one of his male friends played a female: “Very Elizabethan, you know. The whole idea of boy-actors” (62). Shelagh asks, “Did they also have to wear masks?,” and Mark answers, “No. No masks. You’re confusing the Elizabethans with the Greeks” (62). With this discussion, Lim comments upon the duality of character and actor, mask and persona, and the ambiguous sexuality of both of these twins. The tenor of Mark and Shelagh’s conversation also recalls tabus associated with mirrors of which Otto Rank writes, “These precautions result from the fear of one’s own reflection” (Double 64).

The nature of the Ziegler twins’ relationship is one of struggle, and this struggle, rooted in the twins’ identities, becomes evident at several levels. Most
discernibly, the twins’ struggle is made physical in their appearances. Miles and Mark are mirror twins, identical opposites: their hair swirls in opposite directions, they have moles on opposite shoulders, and share other physical traits. These twins really look in Jacques Lacan’s mirror. Furthermore, Mark’s vocation as a Jesuit priest and Miles’ concern with the worldly as an advertising agent embody Rank’s split of the immortal and mortal: “For the twins, through their unusual birth have evinced in a concrete manner the dualistic conception of the soul” (Psychology 91). Also, at the play’s beginning, the twins are polar opposites in terms of sexual identity as Mark’s celibacy and Miles’ bisexuality attest. The twins’ deaths mirror each other, as well. In the play’s opening sequence, Miles “turns up the volume of the music to a bearable maximum, just in time to catch the tail of the 1812 Overture...the 1812 comes to a grand climax soon afterwards, with its final round of 11 cannon shots” (10). During this climax, Miles shoots himself in his bedroom offstage. At the play’s end, Mark turns on Miles’ sound equipment, but “it sounds like some strange electronic music. It soon becomes evident that he has not done it right, and that the 1812 Overture is now being played completely backwards” (77). Mark exits into Miles’ bedroom and kills himself with the remaining pistol.
of Miles’ pair of derringers. Interestingly, when Miles and Mark appear in the towel before their respective deaths, Lim suggests that each twin should walk around the apartment for a few moments in the nude. With this direction, Lim touches on the notion that the twins are joined in their death in the same state as they entered the world together. This direction of nudity also comments on each of the twins’ search for his true identity.

The rivalry that permeates the twins’ relationship may be attributed to numerous sources. Perhaps the most conventional source of competition between twins appears in the form of a birthright, and this rivalry is no exception. The birthright in this instance, however, does not consist of Jacob and Esau’s land or wealth, but in the right to express one’s true sexual identity. Miles, the firstborn, has spent his adult life as a practicing bisexual while Mark has remained faithful to his vows of celibacy. Miles’ parents give him a trip to Europe as a graduation gift, where he remains for twelve years and discovers his sexual orientation. Mark, however, stays at home and enters the priesthood. After Miles’ death, Mark claims his birthright and sleeps with all three of Miles’ sexual partners.

The twins’ relationship with their mother seems to have intensified the competitive nature of their bond. With her
very choice of the babies' names, the mother set the two against each other. As Mark explains, both "Miles" and "Mark" are derived from the Latin word meaning "soldier": the twins' names become self-fulfilling prophecies as they spend their lives battling against each other and their own identities. The mother aggravated this tension by forcing the two to dress alike, perhaps in an effort to bridge the gap between the boys, until Miles went to Europe and Mark to seminary.

Lacan designates as the "Symbolic Father" any agent which interferes with the child's holding the attention of the mother. For Miles, that agent is his twin brother. As Mark explains to Jesse, Miles' male lover,

even when we were six or seven years old, when Miles took to telling everyone how he was really the older of us two, Mother would smile and say, 'yes, it's true, Miles is older than Mark, by six or seven minutes.' Then she'd draw me closer to her side, and whisper in my ear, ever so softly, 'Yes, it's true, Miles is older than Mark, but Mark is my favorite.' (18)

Jesse's objective of bedding Mark and therefore destroying this living reminder of his dead lover is used by the playwright to force Mark into a realization of his true sexual identity. Jesse quickly detects this source of strife between the twins as Mark relates stories of the twins' relationship, and he interprets, "your mother whispered sweet nothings in your ear, you being her
favorite!" (28). Jesse’s use of “sweet nothings” signals the sexual undercurrents in Mark’s feelings for his mother, and Mark later confirms this notion when he parodies the practice of confession for Shelagh, Miles’ girlfriend: “I killed my father and married my own mother, 365 times” (59). This Oedipal tone extends to discussions of religion through which Jesse seduces Mark. Jesse says, “Father and Son are one, aren’t they? Lovers united in yet a third, aren’t they?” (31). Here, Jesse parallels the relationship of the Holy Trinity to the relationship among Mark, Miles, and Jesse. Later, Mark extends this way of thinking to religion: “Three in one. One in three. It’s the magical number, the supernatural mystery, the eternal triangle, the most vicious of circles! The Oedipal vision, remember?” (34).

Catholicism plays a major role in the Ziegler twins’ identities as this religion, in a sense, pits the twins against each other and themselves. Much is made of Miles’ failure to attend his father’s funeral and of his late arrival at his mother’s funeral. Miles’ behavior might be explained by the knowledge that Mark said the Mass for the Dead at both of these liturgies. Throughout the twins’ childhood, the neighbors assumed that Miles would become a priest because he so diligently said his prayers, but Mark
pursued the priesthood in his stead. Furthermore, Miles never attended Mark's masses even though they lived in the same city, and Mark therefore assumed Miles was not religious. Shelagh, however, stuns Mark with the news flash that Miles is "always going to church" (69). Perhaps Miles' jealousy of Mark's vocation explains why Miles never even mentioned Mark to Jesse, Miles' lover of many years. Jesse recognizes this as peculiar, saying, "Were you and Miles at odds with one another? Is that why in all the years I have known Miles, he has never, not once, spoken about you?...I had no idea that Miles even had a brother. And you a twin!" (21).

Guilt-ridden devotion to Catholicism further wreaks havoc in the twins' lives as individuals as each discovers his sexuality. Mark details Miles' childhood bedtime routine for Jesse:

When we were children together, Miles used to have a special devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Every night, before going to sleep, he used to say three Hail Mary's like we were told to do, in school, by the fathers...he used to say those three Hail Mary's for purity of mind and body. (19)

Mark later tells Jesse that he, too, said these devotions for purity of mind and body. After Mark has sexual intercourse with Jesse, he vomits, disturbed by this forbidden encounter with his dead twin's lover. When
Shelagh arrives after this incident, she asks why Mark is wearing a purple turtleneck instead of his clerical collar, and he explains, "Purple is...the color of penance" (65). Purple, the color used during the penitential seasons of Lent and Advent, is utilized in other ways to symbolize the twins' feelings of guilt. In the play's opening sequence, the stage directions require that "Miles Ziegler emerges from the bedroom. He has been taking a shower and he is still drying his hair with a purple bath towel" (7). Mark also uses this purple towel in the play's closing sequence. Each twin kills himself just after appearing in this towel, overwhelmed by feelings of guilt derived from practicing his sexuality and pursuing his genuine identity.

Mutual desire constitutes another source of tension in the twins' relationship as one could argue that Miles and Mark want to have sex with each other, perhaps in an effort to solidify or complete their identities. Three weeks prior to the play's opening scene, Miles had planned to attend a Mass officiated by Mark. When conveying this to Jesse, Mark explains, "He said he wanted to receive Holy Communion...at the appointed hour...from my own hand. I was...quite stunned. Because I had...never done it before. Not with Miles." (21) Later he adds,

It was to have been the first time, that 6:00 Mass, with Miles in the audience...sitting,
standing, kneeling, watching, and then receiving...the body and blood of Christ. From my own hand. That, you see, had never happened before. Not with my own brother. (21)

This telling has blatant sexual overtones and reveals Mark's excitement about this encounter with Miles. Mark goes on to say he bought a bottle of brandy to celebrate the occasion with Miles, but Miles never arrived. "To drink, back in his apartment, this apartment. To drink, after the 6:00 engagement, after dinner, after the movies. To celebrate!" (25). Mark's behavior after Miles' death further suggests his desire to have intercourse with his twin as he has sex with Jesse, Rhoda, and Shelagh, all three of whom have been Miles' sexual partners. It is as though Mark endeavors to recapture his missed chance at intercourse with his brother by sleeping with Miles' current bedmates.

These bedmates sense the struggle between Miles and Mark, and the actions of these characters reveal their fear of the twins' bond. This fear primarily surfaces through Jesse's character as Jesse orchestrates Mark's undoing: again, Jesse deals with his grief over his lover's death by destroying Mark, a living reminder of Miles.

Conversations between Jesse and Mark comprise the bulk of Act One. Throughout these discussions, Jesse sadistically probes Mark's psyche, and he ultimately takes advantage of Mark while he is drunk and in shock over his
twin's death. Jesse repeatedly asks questions about the bond between the twins and Mark finally relents and tries to explain: "we've always had this bond...this thing...Perhaps it's only because we share the same genetic blueprint...It's not really E.S.P. or anything like that, you understand" (27). Jesse becomes impatient and says, "For crying out loud, what thing?" to which Mark replies, "A kind of sixth sense" (27). The script then requires Jesse to "spill his drink on himself, and ice cubes on the floor," and later, Jesse is so disturbed that "he picks up a couple of ice cubes from the floor and, instead of discarding them immediately, he presses them against his eyes, as though to cool off" (27). Jesse's reactions reveal his fear of the consequences of his planned actions, for this sixth sense enables Miles to sense Jesse's assault on Mark. Jesse's fear recalls the beliefs of the Ga people of southeastern Ghana, who "fear human twins because they can cause sickness, if not death, in enemies" (Kilson 81).

Just on the heels of this revelation, Jesse launches verbal warfare on the surviving twin, seemingly in an attempt to understand this bond and obliterate it. Jesse asks Mark if he is as hairy as his brother and says, "I was merely suggesting that you are Jacob to your brother's..." (28). Jesse goes on to pose questions about the twins'
relationship with their mother and he initiates the Oedipally themed discussions of religion. Jesse aggravates Mark's discomfort over Miles' death by revealing that Miles said that the telegram about his father's death had been sent by a close friend: Miles never even mentioned that he had a twin brother. Here, Jesse seems to be feeding Mark's jealousy and prompts Mark to seek revenge against Miles by sleeping with his sexual partners.

Jesse continues this onslaught when he insists that Mark should not pity Miles because "Your brother was used to having only the best of everything. From everyone. At all times. Everywhere" (41). This tactic seems to work on the distraught twin, for he replies, "No use praying for him now. Not anymore. He has sent himself to Coventry!" and with this line, he points downward in the direction of hell (41). Jesse stokes Mark's jealousy by saying that Miles could not attend his father's funeral because "We were visiting friends in Spain. Artists. The same man, as a matter of fact, who painted that portrait of Miles. The fellow was quite taken with Miles. We all were, I suppose" (43). The stage directions then suggest that "With perhaps a tinge of envy," Mark replies, "You were in Spain. Together" (43).
The portrait to which Jesse refers speaks volumes about Jesse's feelings toward both Miles and Mark as the stage directions meticulously record Jesse's interactions with this likeness. At the play's beginning, before Miles' guests realize Miles is dead, the playwright's stage directions communicate Jesse's feeling for Miles when Jesse drops a rose and kneels to retrieve it: "From the audience, it looks as though he is also genuflecting in front of the portrait" (11). Later, Jesse stares at the portrait and then looks at Mark and says, "It's extraordinary. I mean, really extraordinary, how any two people can be so...And yet two people so..." (18). Here, Jesse reveals his perplexity and irritation at the phenomenon of these twins' sameness and difference: he soon sets out to prove that they are, in fact, the same, at least in terms of being sexually attracted to him. Jesse's strategy to remove Mile's mirror-image consists of a calculated seduction: early in the process, Jesse touches Mark's hand provocatively and persuades Mark to drink in order to calm his nerves. Later, Jesse puts his head in Mark's lap, then dances a Greek dance with him and tousles Mark's hair. At the end of Act One, Jesse helps Mark off with his jacket and shirt when he complains of being warm, and Jesse "stares at the portrait, sadly, thoughtfully" and says, "Oh, Miles. Miles! Why
didn’t you trust me enough to tell me anything? And now it
is too late!” (44). Jesse then picks up a vase of roses,
smooths his hair, and enters Miles’ bedroom to have sex with
Mark.

Does Jesse suggest that Miles knew that Jesse would be
attracted to his twin and that Jesse would try to destroy
Mark’s life by causing him to confront his sexual identity
and break his vow of chastity? Was Miles, in fact,
protecting Mark with his silence about his brother? If
Miles’ silence is interpreted in this way, one might also
contend that Mark takes on the role of a thwarted savior for
his brother when he reveals his guilt about not having
reached Miles’ apartment before Miles killed himself. In an
oddly poignant speech, Mark delivers a sermon of sorts
“Between gales of helpless laughter,” and then in a telling
mood swing, “Mark stops laughing, there is a deadly silence
for a few seconds, and then the rest of the ‘sermon’ is
delivered solemnly, sadly” (37). This sermon consists of
Mark’s quoting of a passage from scripture detailing
Lazarus’ death and Jesus’ raising him back to life. Mark’s
sadness arguably stems from his failure to act as savior for
his brother.

After intermission and the encounter between Mark and
Jesse, Jesse stares briefly at the portrait. Shelagh enters
without seeing Jesse and picks up Mark’s clothes and smells them with some passion, and Jesse says, "(Maliciously) They’re not completely identical, but they do smell alike, don’t they?" (46). Jesse seems to be satisfied, that he has discerned something on some level of the twins’ bond. Jesse does not end his experiment here, however, as he tells Shelagh as he leaves to “be sure to ask if he plans to say his three Hail Mary’s before going to bed” (50). Jesse incriminates himself with this, as he taunts Mark for violating his vows of chastity with his twin brother’s lover, a verdict which drives Mark to his grave.

Shelagh’s fear presumably springs from the twins’ identical appearances, and her motivation to sleep with Mark differs somewhat from Jesse’s motivation. While Jesse seeks to destroy Mark because he represents a living reminder of his dead lover, Shelagh wants to continue her relationship with Miles through Mark. Shelagh easily transfers her love and desire from the dead twin to the survivor as her entrance at the beginning of Act Two suggests: "she begins to examine Mark’s clothes—at first in a rather detached manner, and then with great consuming interest, some passion even" (46). After Jesse leaves and Mark enters, Shelagh gasps and says “Miles? Miles!”, and the stage directions reveal her distress: “When she realizes that she has
confused the two brothers, she turns away and tries to steady herself against the dinner table” (51). Miles’ death at last registers in Shelagh’s mind, and, perhaps in an attempt to assuage her grief, Shelagh soon launches an attack on Miles’ lookalike. As Shelagh and Mark talk, he complains of being tired, and she insists that he lie in her lap while she massages his temples. She then conveys her transfer of feelings from Miles to Mark: “The sweater you’re wearing. It was my last gift to Miles. It’s very becoming on you. The color becomes you” (65).

Shelagh’s strategy then becomes vindictive as she conveys truths about Miles as she and Mark play Truth or Consequences: she appears to be taking revenge on both of the twins. When she tells of how she met Miles in a gay bar and of Miles’ exceptional promiscuity, Mark is “devastated,” as the stage directions relate (70). Perhaps here, Mark grasps his own sexual identity. Shelagh also confesses to Mark that she “wanted so desperately to have your brother’s child” (70). Does Shelagh have intercourse with Mark at the play’s end because she sees in Mark a purer form of Miles? Perhaps she does, because Miles impregnated Shelagh. But, Shelagh aborted the baby because she contracted gonorrhea from Miles. Shelagh detects Mark’s distress during this game of Truth or Consequences, but she continues to provide
Mark with haunting truths about Miles until he hysterically asks, “What is my name? Where am I? Where is my brother? How did he die? Who killed him?” (71). Is Mark wondering if Shelagh and Jesse will also drive him to his own grave? Shelagh directs Mark to the case of the pistols, and the pistols so startle him that he falls down the stairs. Shelagh does not comfort Mark, but seizes her chance to prey upon his disheveled state by saying that she gave the pistols to Miles “For his last birthday. Your last birthday” (71).

Shelagh’s anger about Miles’ death surfaces when she screams at the portrait: she “speaks to it harshly, angrily, accusingly,” “We were going to get married in December, remember? As soon as the divorce came through. The Feast of the Immaculate Conception, right?” (72). During this speech, Shelagh is distracted from her outburst as Mark simultaneously delivers part of the Mass for the Dead for Miles and concludes with three Hail Mary’s. Clearly upset, Mark “reaches for the gun, looks at the barrel, then up at Shelagh,” and asks, “What am I to do?” (73). Shelagh denies his request for help, saying, “Jesse tells me that you and Miles are not completely identical. I want you to show me where” (73). Mark explains that they are mirror twins, takes off the purple turtleneck, shows her a mole on his
right shoulder, and says that Miles had a mole on his left shoulder. Shelagh then "examines the mole. She touches it gently, then bends down and licks it, passionately. Mark shudders" and begs her, "Help me. Please help me" (74). Shelagh responds by leading him up the stairs to the bedroom, an action which Mark initially resists. Rhoda enters shortly, sees her mother’s overcoat, strips, and goes to the bedroom to join in the menage a trois.

During the following interlude, Shelagh picks up both Mark’s undershirt and Miles’ purple turtleneck and takes each with her: her action serves as a visual representation of the fusion of the twins in her mind. As the two women leave, they sadistically "burst out laughing" (75). Mark appears at the top of the stairs, hears their laughter, and shortly returns to the bedroom where he will kill himself, now fully aware that the twins also share sexual identities, and his life as a priest is not in accordance with his true identity.

Gerald Moon’s Corpse! shares common themes with Conpersonas, but as Corpse! is labelled a “comedy thriller,” these themes are presented in a somewhat lighter manner. The question of identity becomes crucial in the lives of the principal characters and like the Ziegler twins, Moon’s Farrant twins ransom their lives for the sake of their
identities. Like Mark, Evelyn Farrant envies his twin's identity, and he plots to murder his twin and assume the identity of his elder brother.

_Corpse!_ concerns Evelyn, a male actor, who employs a Major Powell to kill Rupert, Evelyn's twin. Powell kills Rupert at Evelyn’s flat, and Evelyn assumes Rupert’s identity, convincing Powell he has killed the wrong twin. Powell demands payment for his services, Evelyn refuses, and Powell shoots Evelyn, not killing him. Back at Evelyn’s flat, Rupert revives, having been shot by a blank, and returns to his home, where Powell shoots and kills him. Evelyn and Powell fence, and after Evelyn reveals that Powell is the twins' father, Evelyn impales Powell. A constable finds Powell’s body, and Evelyn is implicated in the murder.

Though Moon’s play deals with many of the issues undertaken by Lim in _Conpersonas_, a significant new twist appears in Moon’s metatheatrical workings. Moon capitalizes on the duality of the actor and his stage character, as well as the fiction of the stage versus life’s reality. Moon uses these dualities as a framing device for juxtaposing the twin characters’ identical appearances against their different personalities. Moon makes intriguing use of this device as Evelyn assumes the “role” of Rupert after
enlisting Powell to kill his twin, leaving both Major Powell and the audience befuddled by the twins' identities. Moon comments upon the theatre's duplicitous nature by insisting that the twins be played by a single actor and that the play's staging should indicate this casting. The worlds of fiction and reality are further blurred by Evelyn's extensive collection of signature props used in historic productions as well as his appropriating Shakespearean dialogue as his own.

Moon enhances his doubles effect with the use of photographs much as Lim utilizes Miles' portrait. Evelyn's feelings toward his brother are first presented through Rupert's photo in Evelyn's flat. Evelyn introduces Powell to his brother through his photo and says, "I don't mean murder me actually, but him! (Evelyn points to picture of Rupert on wall)" (19). Powell, stunned by the twins' resemblance, asks, "But isn't that..." to which Evelyn snaps, "That, sir, is my brother. My twin brother, Rupert. I want him dead!" (19). Later, Evelyn asks that Powell prove his gunmanship by firing at Rupert's photo, and in a striking visual image, Powell fires and smashes Rupert's likeness. This scene makes manifest Rank's discussion concerning photographs in which he notes, "since these people visualize the person's soul in his image, they fear
that the foreign possessor of this image can have a harmful or deadly effect upon it" (Double 65). When Rupert arrives at Evelyn's flat, he "looks at dishes, then broken picture of himself" just before Powell shoots him (62). The playwright also introduces the twins' dead mother via her photograph. In a scene which reveals Evelyn's motivation for murdering his father, he retrieves his mother's photo, kisses it, and proclaims, "My darling mother, I'm doing all this for you. You know that, don't you? I promised to kill him. He should not have done it, should he, Mummy? It's wrong to do things like that. He must be punished" (60).

The rivalry between Evelyn and Rupert is a bit more conventional than the nature of rivalry between Mark and Miles, as their struggle stems from a monetary inheritance. As Evelyn explains to Powell, his mother relinquished to his stepfather, Gubbins, the little inheritance she received at her parents' death. Gubbins took the money and built a fortune from it. Evelyn communicates his bitterness concerning this change in fortune when he states, "My darling mother had nothing to bequeath me when she died" (22). As Gubbins adored Rupert, he left the fortune to him, an action which Evelyn believes unfair, for he is the oldest "by five whole minutes" (23). Evelyn reveals the degree of injury concerning this inheritance when he proclaims, "now
the time has come to claim what is rightfully mine and because of that...Rupert Farrant, whom everybody loves, must die’’ (23).

The nature of the twins’ relationship exacerbates the rivalry between them. Evelyn recognizes that the tension between them is out of the norm: “everybody is under the impression that twins are devoted to each other... inseparable. Well, we were the exception” (20). Evelyn spent his entire childhood in a state of jealousy, for “Everybody loved Rupert. All the favors were heaped upon him. The sensible one, they’d say, so graceful, so elegant, so insufferably polite. I was the only one who knew that underneath he was cold...calculating” (20). Evelyn recounts stories of how Rupert broke windows and blamed Evelyn, and how he would tie up Evelyn and lock him in the broom cupboard. Furthermore, Evelyn resents the extreme success Rupert enjoyed in school as both a student and an athlete, and how that success continued into his adulthood. Evelyn notes that Rupert was a “spiffing all-rounder! And I couldn’t even get into the cricket eleven!” (21).

Further to Rank’s proposition of the cause of rivalry between twin brothers, he explains that “From this fraternal attitude of rivalry toward the hated competitor in the love for the mother, the death wish and the impulse toward murder
against the double becomes reasonably understandable” (Double 76). One might contend that Rupert has always treated Evelyn with malice because he is jealous of Evelyn’s relationship with their mother. When Rupert first meets Powell, he speaks with disdain of the profession which Evelyn and their mother shared: “It’s a calling for people who don’t want to work--and work hard. That was Evelyn all over. Loved to dress up and lounge about in affected poses--and his mother encouraged him. She found it so amusing” (51). Here, Rupert refers to the twins’ mother as “his” mother, as though Rupert did not belong to her or share her womb with Evelyn. Evelyn recognizes Rupert’s disdain for his profession and his relationship with his mother, for he notes of her death: “I lost the only person who really appreciated my talent” (22).

Another manifestation of the twins’ rivalry surfaces when Evelyn informs Powell that he has a bigger penis than his brother. Evelyn’s claim bears out Rank’s statement that the “double, who personifies narcissistic self-love, becomes an unequivocal rival in sexual love” (Double 86). This discrepancy in the size of the twins’ genitalia prevents Evelyn’s marriage to Rupert’s fiancee as she would, Evelyn explains, discover his assumption of his twin’s identity.
Lacan’s notion of the Symbolic Father also plays into the workings of this brotherly relationship. According to Lacan, any agent which interferes with the mother’s attention which was formerly commanded by her child constitutes a Symbolic Father. Both Rupert and Powell fulfill this definition for Evelyn, as Evelyn reveals when he informs Powell of his strategy: “First objective, Rupert had to die,” “and Second Object, so that I could become the great actor manager that is my destiny” (100). With this second objective, Evelyn seems to be wanting to impress his mother with his success. It is a kind of wooing that further suggests the Oedipal tone of his feelings for his mother. Evelyn eventually reveals his third objective as killing Powell with whom his mother ran away only to be rejected by her family and abandoned by Powell when he discovered she was pregnant and destitute. Evelyn’s anger mounts as Powell, Evelyn’s unwitting father, tells his son of his infidelity, and therefore, his faithlessness as a husband and a father: “You’d be surprised how quickly ladies have always succumbed to my looks and my old-fashioned ways...they were delighted to hand over enormous sums of money” (30). Evelyn’s desire to avenge his mother becomes eerily clear after he kills Powell and asks, “Did I do it right, Mummy? I promised you I’d kill him. Did I do it
right?" (107). Evelyn again reveals his desire to commune with his mother, completely free of his father’s presence, when he seeks to rid himself of his father’s genetic contribution and tells Powell that he gets all his talent from his mother and “Nothing from you. Nothing!” (104).

As Lim does, Moon uses twins and their relationships with each other and their parents as a vehicle for writing variations of Oedipal themes. As with Conpersonas’ twins, one might argue that one of the pair desires his twin sexually. Evelyn, a transvestite homosexual, reveals his perhaps subconscious desire for Rupert when he notes, “I know the names of all his women...I’m...delightfully acquainted with his tastes...sexually. Thank God I’m versatile!” (29). This unnatural attraction recalls Oedipus’ union with his mother. Powell’s remarks about Evelyn’s mother prompt Evelyn to impale Powell: “She was not the goddess you thought she was...She was dull--she was boring--and she was a bad actress!” (107). Another statement which recalls Oedipus’ story and his reaction to his wife/mother’s suicide occurs when Rupert describes Evelyn as the “most unmitigated cad God ever put eyes in” (49).

Patricide, another Oedipal theme, drives the protagonist’s actions. Evelyn’s desire to murder Powell...
results from Powell’s seduction, impregnation, and abandonment of the twins’ mother. One might argue that Evelyn facilitates Rupert’s murder in an attempt to avenge himself because as children, Rupert tormented Evelyn with taunts that their father was dead and buried. In a statement which recalls Oedipus’ unrelenting search for the truth concerning his father’s murder, Evelyn informs Powell of his reply to Rupert’s taunts: “’He’s not dead, and even if he’s dead, one day I’ll find out where the body is buried,’ and now I’ve dug it up. Such a pity I can’t tell Rupert. Hello, Daddy!’ (104). Oedipus’ innocent murder of his father resonates in Powell’s murder scene, for just before Evelyn impales Powell, Powell proclaims, “You’re my son all right. We’re both failures, hiding behind our disguises” (106).

Like most comedies concerning twins, this comedy thriller relies heavily on the device of mistaken identity. Besides being used for comic effect, this device further provokes in the audience the fear and anxiety associated with twins that one twin might actually assume the life of his twin. For much of Act Two, Evelyn poses as Rupert, and Powell is none the wiser. In the play’s climax, when Evelyn is poised to murder Powell, Powell hauntingly guesses at the identity of his murderer: “No, no--Evelyn...Rupert...oh God”
Compounding the audience’s horror is Evelyn’s plan to assume his wealthy twin’s life when he explains to Powell, “Once he is dead—he becomes me—and I become him!” (23). But, Evelyn appears to have another reason for killing his brother; in fact, in Evelyn, Rank’s narcissistic personality disorder is fully illustrated when Evelyn says of Rupert, “It’s perverse of me, I know, but when he’s laid out as the dead Evelyn I want to savor the tributes to my beauty” (34).

Lim and Moon have explored as their primary themes the rivalry between twins and how that rivalry can stem from the complexities of shared identities. This awe-inspiring occurrence of multiple births and subsequent shared mirror stages somehow becomes a curse for the Ziegler twins and the Farrant twins, for each either desires the murder of his twin, or each follows his twin to share his grave. This notion of a reunion in or through death, in fact, a continuation of the twin relationship in spite of death, constitutes the major idea in both Marina Carr’s Portia Coughlan and Mark Handley’s Idioglossia.
CHAPTER FOUR:

THE BOND WHICH OVERCOMES BARRIERS OF LANGUAGE AND DEATH

The bond between twins differs from that between siblings, parent and child, husband and wife, lovers, or friends. For many twin pairs, the bond carries with it an intimacy, a connectedness which cannot be duplicated in other sorts of relationships, and though twins may acquire significant others, no one can serve as a substitute for one’s twin. This bond serves as the mark of distinction in the twin relationship and therefore also represents a cause for anxiety in those not engaged in the twin bond. Marina Carr’s *Portia Coughlan* and Mark Handley’s *Idioglossia* each revolve around the notion of the twin bond and employ as protagonist a twin who has become a singleton through the death of her twin.

Marina Carr received a commission from Dublin’s National Maternity Hospital to celebrate its centenary, and Carr wrote *Portia Coughlan* in a hospital room designated for her use. Carr’s play does not focus on motherhood, as one might expect; rather, Carr concentrates on the power of guilt. Toward this end, the playwright employs a male/female pair of twins, becoming only one of two playwrights in this study to take advantage of the opportunities such a twin pair affords. Through the
twins, Carr notes that the power of guilt can overtake one’s life if that guilt is not attended. Carr employs twins because this power of guilt is intensified by the intimacy of the twin relationship and the numerous levels at which the twins find themselves connected.

Carr’s Irish play, *Portia Coughlan*, is written in such a manner to evoke the Irish Midlands dialect. Act One takes place on Portia’s thirtieth birthday, fifteen years after she and her twin brother Gabriel, tired of being viewed as abnormal by their family, waded into the nearby Belmont river to drown themselves. Portia became afraid and stopped before she proceeded too deeply into the river and tried to stop Gabriel, but he was overtaken by an undertow and drowned. Portia’s soul has since been tormented by Gabriel’s singing at the river, which she lives near with her husband and two children. Acts Two and Three are chronologically reversed. In Act Two, Portia’s body is found in the river, and Damus and Fintan, Portia’s boyfriends, discuss the twins’ oddities. The twins’ parents argue about the twins, and Sly, the father, complains that Marianne, his wife, never let him spend enough time with the twins. In Act Three, Portia laments how terribly she misses Gabriel and longs to be with him again. In the play’s final moments, Portia runs to the river and is seen standing on
the banks clutching the box she and Gabriel prepared to take into their world together.

Carr's investigation of the power of guilt as found in the bond between this male/female twin pair leaves no stone unturned as the play examines all aspects of their relationship, from their physical connectedness to their psychic communication. In her own estimation, Portia surmises that their bond's intimacy derives from their souls' being connected: "Cem ouha tha womb howldin' hands...whin God war handin' ouh souls, he musta got mine an' Gabriel's mixed up, aither that or he gev us jus the wan awtane us an ud wint inta tha Belmont river wud him" (258-259). Here, Portia perpetuates the Yoruban belief that one soul exists in a set of twins. In the Yoruban culture, because the surviving twin is not expected to live with half a soul, a wooden figurine, an *ibeji*, is carved in the image of the deceased twin (Schwartz 72).

When Portia's parents visit to celebrate her thirtieth birthday, they chastise her for her perpetual foul mood and encourage her to cheer up and enjoy the day. Portia tries in vain throughout the play to explain her depth of loss, which she measures as the loss of half of her soul: "He woulda bin thirty today aswell...sometimes ah thinche on'y half a'me is left, tha worst half" (258). Portia's guilt
seems to exist on two levels: she feels guilty for not saving Gabriel, and this guilt is compounded by the guilt she feels for not joining her twin in death. Portia confides to her friend Maggie May that all events in her life have revolved around the day Gabriel died: she uses that day as a reference point for her state of happiness or unhappiness, completeness or amputation. Portia again tries to communicate her sense of loss to Maggie May by describing how the twin bond permeates every aspect of each twin’s being, even to the twin’s soul: “ah don’ know if anawan realizes whah ud is ta be a twin, everthin’s synchronized, tha way ya thinche, the way ya move, tha way ya speache, tha blinkin’ a’yar eyes, tha blood in yar veins moves be unison” (293).

Even Portia’s choice of husband was dictated by her search for another soul-mate, as she explains that she did not marry Raphael because she loves him or ever will, but because of “hees name, a angel’s name, sem as Gabriel, an’ ah though’ be osmosis or jus’ pure wishin’ tha’ wan’d tache an’ tha’ qualihies a th’ other. Buh Raphael is noh Gabriel an’ never will be” (258). Furthermore, Portia explains to her father, Sly, that the reason she has carried on an affair with Damus for sixteen years is because he knew
Gabriel: Portia tries to re-connect with her twin through the living.

Even as children, the twins understood the uniqueness of their bond, and they were aware that no one else could fathom their relationship. Portia confides to Maggie May that as young children, they saved odds and ends (crayons, a jar of money, clothespins) for they planned to run away to create and live in a world away from everyone (247). She explains that “in this box we puh everthin’ for whin we’d be free an’ big...we war goin’ ta travel tha whole worldt me an’ him” (247). After Portia drowns herself, Damus recalls a story which attests to the twins’ endeavors to escape their world and find a new one solely intended for them. As he recounts, on a school field trip as children, both of them turned up missing, and they were found in a rowboat by themselves, five miles out to sea. When asked where they were going, they replied, “Anawheer, ‘jus anwheer thah’s noh here” (275). Portia again laments their thwarted endeavors to find a place for their souls at the play’s end to her mother: “We jus’ wanted our own worldt wheer nowan buh us existed an’ we damn near had ud until you chem alon’ an tore us asunder” (302). Marianne, the twins’ mother, most keenly understands the twins’ connection as she recognizes that although Gabriel is dead, his soul remains coupled with
Portia’s: “Chem ouha tha womb clutchin’ yar leg an’ he’s still clutchin’ ud from wherever he is” (301). Marianne’s statement recalls the Yoruban belief that one of the twins is actually an earth-bound counterpart from the metaphysical world believed to exist for every Yoruba (Elniski 48). The aforementioned *ibeji* are most powerful and dangerous when ignored, for when the *ibeji* is being neglected, so is the sky-bonded connection between twins which Marianne mentions (Schwartz 72).

Perhaps the most spectacularized facet of the twin bond is the twins’ uncanny ability to communicate, often without words. Carr’s twins have the ability to communicate psychically and have done so since their birth. Portia and Gabriel have also developed their own language, a phenomenon known as autonomous language. The twins’ mother was frightened by the twins’ mental link, especially their exclusive language and “unnatural ways an’ stupid games and’ privahe med up language thah none chould understand’ barrin’ yeerselves! Savages! Thah’s whah yees war! Savages!” (301-302). The twins’ deviation from Lacan’s language that speaks the speaker distresses the users of the language pre-coded by society. Or, as Lacan is interpreted by Mellard, “Since the language that constitutes the subject is imposed upon the child by others, the subject itself is a
construction fashioned only in relation to otherness, to the Other" (186). In Lacan's own words, "The subject is spoken rather than speaking" (71). Despite their youth, Portia and Gabriel detected their mother's misgivings about their forms of communication. Near play's end, Portia lashes out at her mother and asks her, "Why chouldn' ya a' jus' lavin' us in pace! Me an Gabriel! We warnd'nt doin' natin'! Why'd ya have ta sever us! Allas spyin' on us! Interferin wud our games!" (301). Portia clearly resents her mother's anxieties which prompt her attempts to mold the twins into her expectations.

Marianne is joined in her suspicions regarding the twins' forms of communication by numerous others. After Portia drowns herself, Damus and Fintan, who fancy themselves to be Portia's lovers, discuss the twins' relationship, and Damus notes their eerily parallel thinking patterns: "wan thin' ah allas found strange abouh thim Scully twins. Ya'd ax thim a question an' tha'd boh answer tha sem answer ah tha sem time, exac' inflection, exac' pause, exac' everthin'" (274). Damus reveals his perplexity concerning this ability when he adds, "Ya'd put thim in different rooms, still tha sem answer" (274). Fintan, also disturbed by this ability, remembers this tendency in the twins as well. Damus' exasperation mounts when he recounts
the twins’ form of communication: as he recalls a school trip, “Portia an’ Gabriel sah up i’tha front a’tha bus in red shorts and white tay shirts. Whisperin’ ta wan another as was their wont” (274). The twins’ form of communication also disconcerts the twins’ father: “you an’ Gabriel, yees war ever unperdictable, never knew whah ye be thinkin” (262). Here, the father fuses the twins’ thought processes, as though they shared a brain, so synchronized did he perceive their communication to be.

Carr further develops the twins’ ability to communicate through the twins’ accidents and premonitions. Portia recounts to Maggie May a childhood accident in which the cemetery gates fell on Gabriel and he was rushed to the hospital because everyone believed he would die. Portia marvels at her own reactions to the accident: “Thah time tha cemetary gates fell an Gabriel, tha migh as well’ve fallen an me too, amimber ah war found unconscious aside of him, wud noh a marche an me, five feeh from wheer tha gahe fell” (293). The twins’ telepathic capabilities surface most clearly in premonitions concerning Gabriel’s death. Portia claims that she simply “knew he war goin’ ta die...noh in ana tangible way” (304). She later elaborates on the premonition of Gabriel’s death which she and Gabriel experienced simultaneously, and notes that she was listening
to him sing at Belmont chapel, and they caught each others’
eyes while he was singing:

ouha nowhere a rip a’ pain wint up me side an’
ah’m whrithin’ i’tha pew tryin’ noh ta scrame an’
ah see Gabriel i’tha balcona clutchin’ hees side
as if we war bein’ sliced from wan another liche a
scab from a livid sore, an’ don’t ax me how buh we
boh knew he’d be dead chome spring. An’ Gabriel
sang through ud all, sang for me an’ in hees song
we seen him walchin’ inta tha Belmont river; seen
me wud you an our weddin’ day; seen me sons, this
barn of a house; seen tha lane ta tha river an a
darche nigh’; grake darche aspite tha pile up a’
stars; an’ me walchin’ along tha lane carryin’ an
aul box, older an’ wiser than ah’ve ever bin; we
seen ud all Raphael down ta tha las’ detail. (308)

In this telling, Portia insists that “we” knew Gabriel would
be dead by spring, and “we” saw him walking into the river,
etc. She also explicitly states that they both experienced
a pain in their sides as though they were being physically
separated from each other.

Rather than separate them, the phenomenon of death,
coupled with Portia’s guilt, ironically serve to intensify
the bond between Carr’s twins. Gabriel and Portia had
intended to drown together when they were fifteen, but the
joint suicide went awry when Portia became afraid. She
remembers that Gabriel could not hear her calling to him to
return to the bank because of the river’s swell, and the
memory haunts her: “he turns thinkin’ ah’m ahind him an’ he
sees me standin. Hees face Maggie May, tha looche an hees
face an’ ah’m roarin’ buh no soun’ is chomin’ ouh an’ he
tries ta mache tha banche buh th'undertow do have him” (294). Portia’s drowning reunites the twins as they began in the watery womb, for the playwright designates that Portia’s body is pulled out of the same spot in the river where Gabriel drowned fifteen years prior. Portia’s willful drowning substantiates her claims that she yearns for her death, for she says “Ah’m dead Maggie May, dead an’ whah ya seen this long time be a ghost who chan’t fin’ her restin’ place” (293) and “ah pray for the time ah’ll be in the ground aside a’him” (261). Portia’s desire to die demonstrates Rank’s theory that

the frequent slaying of the double, through which the hero seeks to protect himself from the pursuits of his self, is really a suicidal act...a separation which, moreover, appears to be the precondition for every suicide. (Double 79)

When Portia fails to carry through with her suicide, guilt so overwhelms her that she ultimately chooses to join her twin in his death some fifteen years after the fact.

The twins’ ability to communicate continues, in fact, improves, after Gabriel’s death. The twins’ family and friends agree that Gabriel’s most remarkable quality was his singing voice, which the grandmother claims to have been “a vice liche God hessel” (264). So pronounced was Gabriel’s gift that he sang all the special masses at Belmont Chapel and he took voice lessons in Dublin twice a week. Carr’s
description of Gabriel's singing abilities recall the Celtic
legend of the children of Lir, who were two sets of twins:
one male/female pair, and one male pair. The children's
stepmother, weary of competing with the twins for her new
husband's love, transforms the children into swans and
curses them to remain as these water creatures for 900
years. Her only mercy and the twins' sole comfort is that
they retain their gift of speech and they sing like heavenly
creatures. People from all provinces of Ireland make
pilgrimages to hear these swans' mellifluous singing.
Throughout the play, Gabriel sings by the river and beckons
to Portia's soul, much as the Children of Lir were bound by
a curse to remain at watery places and sing. Gabriel's
song, like the swan song, connects the twins: the swan's
song brings comfort to the swans and to others, while
Gabriel's song oddly comforts Portia. Portia cannot resist
this siren song, and often becomes "enraptured" (300),
listening at one point with "ear cocked, like some demented
bird" (299) as the stage directions specify. The singing
even interferes with her interactions with the living, as
she does not notice when her mother enters the room for her
birthday party, and as she is dancing at the pub, the music
switches in her mind "from Patsy Cline on the jukebox to
Gabriel taking up the song. No one notices this" (298).
Portia simultaneously yearns for and is tormented by Gabriel’s song as she believes it to be Gabriel’s method of communicating with her. As the script notes, she wakes up to the sound of Gabriel’s voice the morning after her thirtieth birthday and "it grows fainter, she strains to hear it" (283). Ultimately, after resisting Gabriel’s invitations time and again only to become more and more frustrated by her feelings of guilt and yearnings for her twin’s love, Portia succumbs to Gabriel’s beckoning. In the play’s final scene, Portia “Gets box. Lets herself out the door. Gone. Gabriel’s voice comes over. We see her standing by the bank of the Belmont River” (309). One might contend that Portia only imagines Gabriel’s voice, but several characters insist on having heard his voice by the river: “Aul Mahon sweers he heared him, an’ he chomin’ home ater a night’s poachin’” (206).

Gabriel and Portia further communicate at the river and through the river. Carr’s use of water throughout the play (Belmont River and the twins’ rowing out to sea to find their own world) again resonates the Irish twin myth of the Children of Lir, for the twin-swans are bound by their curse to inhabit Lake Darvra for 300 years, then the Sea of Moyle for another three centuries, and finally, the Western Sea for 300 years. Also, Portia’s statement that "ah pray for
the time ah’ll be in the ground aside a’him” (261) recalls
the Lir myth in that Finola, the female swan-twin, designs
the configuration in which she and her brothers are to be
buried. Finola’s body is to be at the center, while her
brothers will surround her, providing a visual
representation of how the boys sought shelter under her
wings in their lifetimes. Portia tells Maggie May that she
has never been on holiday and will probably never go on
holiday because leaving the river, and therefore, Gabriel,
would kill her. This statement recalls Rank’s writings
about the superstitions associated with water: “Savages
believe that the soul is embodied in the image reproduced by
glass, water, portrait, or by a shadow” (Double 65). Also,
one might recall that according to Yoruban beliefs, ibeji
are dangerous when ignored, and Portia’s guilt may lead her
to fear that Gabriel will exact revenge on her if she
abandons him.

Portia insists that she experiences Gabriel, her soul-
mate, through the river and everything in the valley. When
her father suggests that she forget about Gabriel, she
reasons, “how can ya forgeh somewan who’s everwhere.
There’s noh a stone, a fince, a corner of ana a’ your forty
fields that don’t resemble Gabriel” (261). Portia even
suggests that Gabriel speaks through the animals: “Hees name
is in tha mouths a’ tha starlin’s thah swoops over Belmont hill, tha cows bellow for him from tha barn an frosty winter nights” (261).

The twins’ communication is also accomplished through dreams, perhaps brought on by Portia’s overwhelming sense of guilt. On her birthday, Portia tells her mother of dreaming that Gabriel visited her for dinner and after the meal, Gabriel got up to leave, as he did not want to infringe on her private time with Raphael. Portia responded by inviting Gabriel to stay the weekend, for “ud’s me Portia, yar twin, don’ be polihe, there’s no nade wud me” (258). Gabriel accepted the invitation, and Portia was so happy that her “heart blows open an’ stars fall ouha me chest” (258).

Portia’s encounters with Gabriel extend beyond the dream world: she claims to have interacted with his ghost at the bank of the river. When Maggie May questions Portia about her musty old box, Portia reminds her that Gabriel drowned while holding the box. She continues, saying that she sat by the river the night before and heard the water sloshing over something and looked down and “though ah seen a hand” (246). Maggie May fails to believe the story, but Portia persists, saying that she waded into the river and she felt “somethin’ clutchin’ me leg” (246). Maggie May
proposes that she rubbed against sedge or an eel, but Portia insists that "This war no eel, he’s chome bache ta geh me, an’ ah was strugglin’ wud him, los’ me balance, wint under for a few seconds, he tryin’ ta tache tha box offa me, buh ah fough’ wud him, cem up wud tha box" (246-247). This encounter disturbs Portia, and she confides to Maggie May that she is "vera afraid" (247). Portia’s interactions with Gabriel’s metaphysical presence do not end here, for she often talks to Gabriel and expects a response. At one point with her mother present, Portia hysterically cries out to Gabriel, "Oh Gabriel ya had no righ’ ta discard me so, ta floah me an tha worldt as if ah war a ball a’ flotsam, ya had no righ’" (259). Near the play’s end, Raphael and Portia argue, and, suddenly, Portia runs out of the house to the river, where the stage directions note that she “senses him” (286). Portia then shouts at Gabriel, “Chan’t ya lave me alone or prisint yarsalf afore me! Is heaven noh so lovela ater all?” (286). Portia continues this tirade a moment before her speech evolves into a conversation with her dead brother: “D’ya miss me ater all?...Whah’s ud liche... Gabriel” (286). In her tone, one can almost conjure Gabriel’s answer, but Damus, previously unobserved, emerges and goads her: “Talchin’ ta tha dead now Coughlan?” (286).
The intimate connection between Portia and Gabriel which allows for an exclusive language and psychic communication both in life and beyond the grave may have its roots in the twins' sexual connections. Rank writes of this concept in some communities, in that some have the idea that twins have the power of self-creation, which is "substantiated by the belief that twins of opposite sex can accomplish the sexual act in the womb before they are born, thereby transgressing the severe tabu of exogamy, for which one of them was usually killed after birth" (Psychology 92). Portia confesses to Raphael that she and Gabriel had sexual relations which originated in their mother's belly:

Me an' Gabriel med love all tha time, down be tha Belmont river among tha swale...from th'age a'five...well thah's as far bache as ah chan amember anaways, but ah'm sure we war lovers afore we war born. Times ah close me eyes an' ah fale a rush a'waher 'roun me, an' above we hare tha thumpin' a' me mother’s heart, in front of us tha soft blubber of her belly, an' we're atwined, hees fooh an me head, mine an hees foetal arm, an' we don' know which of us be th'other an' we don't want ta, an' tha waher swells 'roun' our ears an' all tha world be Portia an' Gabriel packed for ever in a tigh' hoh womb, where there's no brathin', no thinkin', no seein', on'y darcheness an' heart drums an' touch. (307)

The unnatural sexual relations between Gabriel and Portia may have been preordained by their parents' unnatural relationship, for their parents shared a father. Maggie May explains this tidbit of family history: "Marianne an' Sly is

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brother an sister. Sem father, different mothers, born
ithin a montha wan another" (297).

Portia's sexual involvement with Gabriel affects many
other aspects of her life. As has already been established,
Portia chose Raphael as a husband because she hoped he would
become like Gabriel. Portia tells her husband that her
affair with Damus began when she was fifteen, and on one
occasion, "Gabriel seen an' never spoche ta me ater" (307).
Gabriel expresses his depth of jealousy when he drowns
himself within the year. Furthermore, when Portia ends her
affair with Damus, she says that she has always "found sex
to be a greah let down" and that she would rather "sih be
tha Belmont river for five sechonds than have you or ana
other man aside a' me in bed" (287). Here, Portia blatantly
states that she prefers her sexual memories of the deceased
Gabriel to her present encounters with living men. Damus
recognizes the intimate connection between the twins when he
says that he has loved her despite her "runnin' bacheards
an' forrards atwane ma an' Raphael an yar twin" and he
perceives that she believes she belongs with her twin, for
he advises her to "Go to yar twin, ah hope he won't be there
so you migh' learn thah heaven war here, noh there, for tha
tachin'" (289).
These twins' identities entwine to the extent that even their genders become confused. Each twin assumes characteristics of the opposite gender, advancing Portia's belief that God gave the twins only one soul (a belief she shares with the Yorubas): they are seemingly one being. Interestingly, although the twins are male and female, they apparently could not be distinguished one from the other until they reached adolescence. Portia thrills at this knowledge, for she asks her mother if they were alike, and her mother replies, “couldn’ tell yees apart i’ tha cradle” (258). This occurrence recalls Rank’s writings concerning ancient beliefs about twins. Portia and Gabriel, who, until adolescence, belonged to a sort of neuter gender, bear out Rank’s report that “twins were considered self-created, not revived from the spirit of the dead, but generated through their own magic power, apart even from the mother” (Psychology 91). This belief suggests a oneness in terms of gender: each twin harbors the reproductive capabilities of both male and female genders, almost becoming, therefore, hermaphroditic. When Damus recalls the school trip when Portia and Gabriel were found at sea, he remarks that even then, others “still chan’t tell wan a’ thim from th’other” (274).
According to Damus, Gabriel “Lookt liche a girl” (273), and Fintan adds that he “Sang liche wan too” (274). Furthermore, Gabriel did not take on his father’s mantle even though the family’s livelihood relied on farming. Sly notes that he “war never hard an tha lad! Never! Leh him do whaever he wanted whin ah should a‘bin whippin’ him inta shape for tha farm” (280). Instead, Sly drove Gabriel to Dublin “for hees singin’ lessons in tha hay sason, whin tha chows was chalvin, whin there war more than enough worche ta be done ah home” (280).

Portia, conversely, takes on characteristics of the male gender. In a sense, Portia’s larger size indicates her to be the male member of this twin pair. According to Portia, when they were adolescents, Gabriel was “small for hees age, ah’d long outgrown him” (308). Portia’s assimilation of male traits has arguably extinguished her desire for motherhood. Portia insists that she bore her children when she was too young (age seventeen), but she never developed a desire to mother, for she tells Raphael that “Y’ave yar three sons now so ya behher mine thim acause ah chan’t love thim Raphael, ah’m jus noh able” (268).

Portia regards mothering as an activity so foreign to her that she fears she will kill her children, and “Their toys becomes weapons for me ta hurt thim wud, givin’ thim a bath
is a place wheer ah chould drown thim” (284). Finally, Portia assumes a markedly masculine ability when she expresses a desire to rape her mother.

The anxiety experienced by those surrounding this pair of twins is stunningly apparent. Almost every character in the play speaks of the twins’ peculiar natures, their perceived madness, or their otherworldly origin. Furthermore, the language used to describe these qualities oozes with venom. This tendency to denigrate the twins is particularly disturbing because those engaging in such activity include a husband, lovers, parents, and friends, who represent those closest to the twins.

Various characters in the play that make comments about the twins’ peculiarity do so primarily because these speakers lack an understanding of the twins’ bond and Portia’s severe sense of loss. Marianne reprimands her daughter for crying out to Gabriel on her birthday, saying, “Tha’s enough a’tha! If yar father hares ya! Control yarself! If ya passed yar day liche ana normal woman there’d be none a’this!” (259). Later, Marianne articulates her failure to understand the twins when she screams, “Ah don’t know wheer ah goh you an Gabriel buh ah’ll tell ya this ah wish if ye’d never bin born” (303). Raphael, disturbed by Portia’s explanation of the twins’ joint
premonition of Gabriel’s death, asks, “Whah? Seen whah? A’ya drunche or whah Portia?” (308). Raphael fails to detect Portia’s desire for him to understand her grief and her bond with Gabriel. Raphael therefore ascribes this telling of a premonition to her oddity. Portia’s lover Damus chooses less than loving words upon Portia’s death: “Strange bird allas...Portia Coughlan...That twin too” (273). Portia’s friend Stacia later concurs with this diagnosis, saying that Portia is a “bih odd” (297).

The twins’ peculiarity is sometimes perceived as madness. Damus accuses Portia of instability, saying, “An mebbe yar an eegit, cracked as yar twin” (251). The twins’ father also muses about Portia’s mental state after she insists that she sees Gabriel in the river and the land: “ah do wonder be thah ghirl stable at all” (261). During one of their arguments, Raphael asks Portia, “An whah sourta’ logic is that?” to which Portia replies, “Me own, th’on’y logic ah knows” (285). Maggie May jumps on the bandwagon for proclaiming the twins mad: “Gabriel Scully war insane from too much inbreedin’” (298). Marianne repeatedly questions the twins’ stability, and at one point diagnoses Gabriel as neurotic: “Gabriel war fierce difficult, over-sensitive, obsessed wud hees self an’ you” (300). Later, Marianne flatly tells Portia, “Yar noh righ’ i’tha’ head,” (301), and
later reiterates her stance, saying, "Yar crazier than yar twin an' he war' a demon" (303).

These peculiarities, most disturbingly, raise comments suggesting that the twins are otherworldly creatures. This attitude recalls the superstitious beliefs associated with twins among certain Yoruba ethnic groups, in which, in ancient times, twins were killed at birth and buried at a crossroads, for these locations were thought to be domains of evil. Euba explains this belief: "the road, like the marketplace, is a world that attracts people from all walks of life, and where accident is no respecter of wealth or status" (89). Sly describes his own son as "that unnatural childt that shamed me an' yar mother so" (261) and later as "some little outchaste from hell" (280). Blaize, too, suspects otherworldly forces at work in the twins: "There's a divil in thah Jiyce blood, was in Gabriel, an ud's in Portia too" (262-263). Stacia recalls that Portia was a "demon of a childt" (297), and Marianne explores different labels for her children, variously calling them "goblin" (301), "savages" (302) and "demon" (303).

In the play's final image, Carr indicates that her troubled protagonist has at last come to terms with her guilt and grief, for as Portia is seen standing at the banks of the Belmont river, Gabriel is also seen. One imagines
that the twins are finally rejoined in a kinder world, one to which Gabriel has seen fit to invite her on numerous occasions for fifteen years.

In Mark Handley’s *Idioglossia*, the choice of protagonist echoes Carr’s. Both are women and singletons coping, or trying to cope, with the loss of a twin. The commonalities between the women, however, are few. Carr’s protagonist, Nell, seems more at peace with her loss than Portia, but, like Portia, Nell has developed methods of continuing her relationship with her twin. Handley’s play also delves more deeply into society’s fascination with twin language, and he uses this idea to frame Nell’s relationship with her deceased soul-mate.

At the heart of the play is the notion of being alone: through the character of Nell, Handley suggests how one may survive this sadness. Despite the intrusions of those around her, Nell preserves her bond with her deceased twin, along with their shared world and routines. In doing so, she holds on to her happiness, unlike those around her, particularly Jake, who are unable to cope with being alone.

In *Idioglossia*, a “wild woman,” Nell, has been discovered living alone in a cabin in the Ozark mountains. Nell sparks interest in the scientific community, and a psychologist, T. C., and a linguist, Claude, determine to
examine Nell and her unknown language, which she seems to have developed on her own. Later, it is discovered that Nell developed the language with her twin, Ellen, who died as a child and is entombed in a wooden trunk on which Nell sleeps. T. C. engages the assistance of a fellow psychologist, Jake, to approach Nell and interact with her in the cabin which she never leaves. Through their interactions, Jake falls in love with Nell and introduces Nell to Shakespeare and sex. T. C. believes Nell should leave the cabin and try to function in the "real" world. Jake initially disagrees with this suggestion, but later concurs when he falls in love with Nell. Ultimately, Nell declines Jake's invitation to start a new life with him and determines that she will spend the rest of her days inside the cabin with her memories of Ellen and her mother. Claude agrees to stay with Nell and serve as her custodian.

Nell combats loneliness by preserving a world for herself and Ellen in a room of her home, and this room serves as the arena for the scientists' observations and diagnoses. The room carries such intimacy for Nell and Ellen that the encroachers cannot disturb their communication, despite the outsiders' frequent unannounced visits and installation of a video camera in Nell's room. Although T. C. insists that Nell's "room is ten by ten."
That is not a world" (19), Jake immediately senses the world that this room houses. Jake describes his first encounter with the room as overpowering him: “I felt myself slipping, as if the floor was tilting away from me. You drop a bag of marbles in there and I’ll tell you right where you find them: puddled around her body” (17). Jake also understands Nell’s identity to be inextricably linked with the room, as he tells T. C. that she cannot have experienced Nell through the video camera: she is only “looking in” but “not living it. There’s something lost in the translation” (31). The bond between Nell and Ellen so permeates their world in this room that Jake, seemingly incapable of an intense emotional relationship, somehow detects it, and he tells T. C., “We’re missing something. There’s a crucial fact that makes her what she is, and we’re not seeing it” (31).

Nell’s rituals in the room assist Jake in discovering the missing link, i.e., Ellen. These rituals physicalize Nell’s communication with her twin. Nell eats all of her meals in the middle of the floor in front of a mirror, but before she eats, she offers her food to her reflection. The first time Jake observes this, the stage directions dictate that Nell “covers her face with the palm of her hand and bows to her reflection as if to say: ‘thank you so much for offering, but no’, then eats the oatmeal with her fingers”
This ritual bears a striking similarity to the aforementioned practices observed by Yorubas whose twins have died. At the twin's death, an *ibeji*, or carved wooden image, is fashioned in the likeness of the deceased twin. This figurine is then fed, clothed, and washed much as the surviving twin is tended (Elniski 48). Nell's interactions with the mirror further resonate with Rank's recounting of the myth of Narcissus. Rank notes that a late version of the tale relates that

Narcissus became inconsolable after the death of his twin sister, who resembled him completely in clothing and appearance, until he viewed his reflection; and, although he knew that he saw only his shadow, he still felt a certain assuagement of his affection's grief. (Double 68)

Furthermore, Nell sleeps on a wooden trunk, and Jake discovers that this trunk encases the mummified Ellen. Much of Nell's day is spent pacing a well-worn pattern in the floor. The significance of this ritual lies in Nell's explanation of the floor. She insists that for her, Ellen's soul saturates the floor: "Reckon Jay Kay see the thousan' Ellen inna floor?" (55).

Throughout his play, Handley juxtaposes Nell's experiences against those of Jake to elucidate his theme of being alone. In Handley's description of Nell, he notes that "when watching her, one gets the queer feeling that one's view of the world is incomplete, slightly skewed" (2).
This is certainly the impression T. C. has when she explains to Jake that "There is something about this woman...that I cannot understand. I think you might be able to" (9). Here, T. C. unknowingly diagnoses Jake and Nell with the same difficulty: they are both coping with being alone. Perhaps Nell seems odd because she combats being alone in such an unusual way. Jake's initial impression of her room reflects this, as he suggests he is the one who is psychotic, and in her room, he feels "insanely out of place" (18). Later, he confesses that he has never been so alone as when he is in her room: the intimacy between Nell and Ellen is so apparent that he feels excluded by the twins' closeness. The twins' connection dictates Nell's response to Jake's invitation to find a new world with him: Nell opts to remain within her present and past world rather than to accept Jake as a new soul-mate who has not learned to truly connect with others.

Nell's secret language, or as Handley terms it, her "Nellish," serves as the source of fascination for these scientists and as Nell's primary connection to her twin. One might also contend that this language generates anxiety in the scientists as they endeavor in many ways to squelch this language. The scientists immediately try to communicate with Nell through English instead of trying to
learn her language. Furthermore, they try to force her to become a member of their society by teaching her to count, exposing her to the writings of William Shakespeare, and suggesting she leave her world for the "real" world.

The scientists' fear of this language which does not conform to Lacan's formula of the language speaking the speaker becomes evident at numerous points in the play. First, T. C. tries to deny the legitimacy of Nellish as a language, calling it "gibberish" (20). Claude dismisses this appraisal and suggests that "Nell is so at ease speaking alone; she has no need for discourse. I have a feeling it's her own language, hers alone" (23). Jake's reply complies with Lacan's ideas concerning language: "That's not possible. A language can't develop without interaction" (23). This statement resonates Lacan's notion that "What I seek in speech is the response of the other. What constitutes me as a subject is my question" (Ecrits 86). Ultimately, the scientists accept this language as the twins' creation: Claude notes that a hair or DNA sample is not needed to prove that Ellen and Nell are twins, as "The language could not have developed so completely without the kind of interaction found between twins" (42). Claude discerns and appreciates the outstanding abilities of this twin pair, as she remarks, "If
her sister had lived, they might have developed a new algebra or written high tragedy” (43). Jake, too, develops an awareness of the language’s power, and he, more violently than the other scientists, expresses his fear of the language. After Nell has declined Jake’s offer to help her explore a new world, Jake storms into her room and says, “I came to teach you a new word. The word is rape. Do you know about rape?” (88). Jake continues this tantrum but ultimately succumbs to the power of Nell’s language and her efforts to protect her bond with Ellen: “You have only yourself to feed on and you grow stronger. You fast and grow fatter. I gorge and I die” (89). Nell’s language heals him in a sense, for she advises him, “You mus’ not say thin’s you do not unnerstan’,” (89) and she then recites a sonnet she improvises in Nellish after Jake has pleaded with her to leave with him. The stage directions note, “The words have calmed Jake” (90).

Claude’s remark that Nell “has no need for discourse” (23) indicates a failure to recognize that the life of Nellish depends upon Nell’s use of the language to communicate with her dead twin: she uses her extraordinary bond with her twin to interact with Ellen beyond the grave. Ellen is, in fact, very much alive for Nell, as she tells Jake that Ellen does not live in the trunk, but in her mind
(77). When Jake invites Nell to leave her world to explore a new one with him she responds by walking “around the room and pointing out where the persons that people her world have lived” and she concludes that they are there “Always. Nell is not alone” (72). Nell also tries to explain Ellen’s existence in Nell’s soul when she reveals Ellen in the trunk and recites scripture: “Jesus said unto her: Dur am surrekshun anna lie. He that believeth in meh, tho he war dad, ye’shall he lie. Anna whos’lieth an’ belie shall die nah” (38). Furthermore, Nell tries to explain to Jake, who believes that the scientists have destroyed her language, that the language she shares with Ellen lives on because of her relationship with her twin: “There being no finish to Nellish” (76). Most revelatory of the twins’ form of communication is Nell’s insistence that she tell T. C. that she will never leave her cabin in Nellish. T. C. worries that Claude might not translate accurately, and Nell explains that “It is important I am sayin’ the right sayin’. Tis less important that you hear” (80). Nell indicates that this explanation is intended not for T. C.’s ears, but for those of Ellen: Nell wants to insure that Ellen hears and understands that she is not leaving their world and abandoning her twin.
The difference between Portia and Nell’s coping with the death of their twins may be attributed to the surviving twin’s employment of the autonomous language developed by the twin pair. Portia lives a tormented existence because she is caught between two worlds: she tries to exist in both places. Portia’s painful existence is a result of her abandoning the language she shared with Gabriel: she has chosen to live in the real world and use society’s language. Nell, on the other hand, does not need the speech which speaks the speaker, as she is happy with the language she and Ellen developed. Nell is at peace because she has kept her world with Ellen pure by keeping “Nellish” alive.

The twin bond arguably signifies the defining element of the twin relationship. This link is believed to be a link unparalleled in any other type of relationship, and the interest generated by twins may be attributed to the often peculiar nature of the twin bond. Carr and Handley each suggest that this bond enables twins to perpetuate their relationship in spite of death, and each playwright explores numerous means of communication available to twin pairs. Paula Vogel and Terrence McNally, like other playwrights discussed herein, explore another facet of the twin bond and suggest that the connection unique to twins has its source in the twins’ sexualities.
CHAPTER FIVE: TWINS AND THEIR SEXUALITIES

The portrayal of the twin bond presented by Carr and Handley suggests a closeness which defies even death. Paula Vogel and Terrence McNally choose twin characters as protagonists, but unlike Carr and Handley's characters, these twins are alienated from each other. Vogel gives the twin bond a new perspective with the suggestion of sexual tension between her female twins, while McNally uses his male twins to increase awareness of the threat of AIDS and how that disease and each of the twin's homosexuality has affected their relationship and their role in society.

In *The Mineola Twins*, Paula Vogel chooses as her subject unrequited love: in particular, she writes of unfulfilled love and sexual desire between a pair of female twins. Myra, the "bad" twin, and Myrna, the "good" twin, are physically identical, excluding one respect: Myrna has large breasts while Myra is flat-chested. Myra spends her life pursuing her twin sexually, while Myrna expends her energy avoiding Myra's advances and her own impulses. The hatred and anxiety which develops between these twins results from their mutual unrequited love. The play provides three snapshots of the twins' lives, beginning with the twins' high school years, followed by their early adulthood, and ending with their middle adulthood. In their

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high school years, Myra has sex with Myrna’s fiancee, Jim, arguably in an attempt to vicariously sleep with Myrna through her fiancee, or, to sabotage her twin’s engagement so that Myrna will choose her as a life partner. In the twins’ early adulthood, Myra robs a bank and Myrna withdraws money for her fugitive twin. Along with this bag of money Myrna sends a sock she found at the hotel when Myra slept with Jim. It is conceivable that Myra intentionally left her sock behind as a sort of invitation to her twin, but Myrna rejects this proposal by returning the sock. Myrna underlines her rejection of Myra’s proposal by sending a message that upon receipt of this money Myra is to change her name and face. Much to Myrna’s chagrin, Kenny, her son, idolizes Myra. But, Myrna uses Kenny to deliver the money and he remains with Myra for a few days. Troubled by Myra’s influence on her son, Myrna tracks her twin and arrives at Myra’s hideout with two federal agents. Myrna’s involving the feds who imprison Myra for five years points to Myrna’s plotting to destroy her twin and, therefore, Myra’s advances toward her. Weary of being rejected by her twin, Myra takes on a lesbian lover following her incarceration. In a revelatory conversation with Ben, Myra’s son, Myrna asks about the nature of her twin’s lesbian relationship. Here, one perceives Myrna’s jealousy and her impulses to relent to
her desires for her twin. This perception becomes justified in one of the play’s final scenes in which Myrna kisses Sarah, Myra’s lover. Myrna’s kissing Sarah mirrors Myra’s sleeping with Jim: each twin tries to connect with the other through the twin’s current lover.

Vogel intersperses dream sequences crucial to the play’s subject throughout the play: a brief description of each sequence will facilitate understanding of the play’s direction. In Dream Sequence Number One which begins the play, Myra dreams her high school is under nuclear attack, and Myra is told by an inner voice to find her sister, whom she discovers hiding in a stairwell. With this dream, Myra’s pursuit of Myrna is established, as well as her desire to protect her twin. Myrna’s rejection of her twin’s advances is established in Dream Sequence Number Two, as Myrna dreams that she murders Myra. In Dream Sequence Number Three, Myrna dreams of a nuclear raid as did Myra in Dream Sequence Number One. Here, Myrna dreams of Myra’s warning Myrna to go outside to the nuclear shelter and she dreams that the twins agree to take care of each other. Here, Myrna senses Myra’s desire to pursue and protect her. In Dream Sequence Number Four, which the twins share, the twins are teenagers again and Myra crosses the twins’ bedroom to Myrna’s bed and Myrna kisses Myra on the mouth.
In this final sequence, Myra continues to pursue her twin and at last, in the play’s final moments, Myrna relents to her impulses and fulfills her desires.

The Mineola Twins at first glance appears to conform to the formulas employed in numerous other plays employing twins as protagonists. This play with a “sketch comedy aesthetic,” as one critic notes, relies on many of the same devices employed by Shakespeare in his plays concerning twins, Pitt in The Twins, and Carlo Goldoni in The Venetian Twins. The devices of mistaken identity, the good versus the evil twin, rivalry over a birthright, and the twins’ psychic connection, all serve to lighten Vogel’s weighty message. Vogel, however, makes her mark with these twins because her treatment engages a new twist. Here, the anxiety experienced by those surrounding the twins transfers to the twins themselves. The anxiety resides between and within the twins themselves, and Vogel attributes the warped nature of their bond to their sexual desire for each other, a property prescribed by Rank as characteristic of many doubles.

With her notion that Myra and Myrna subliminally desire each other, Vogel perpetuates beliefs held in Bali, where each twin is labelled the “betrothed” and the pair is perceived as lovers. Likewise, in India, twins are despised
because they are believed to have sexual relations in the womb (Lash 82). Throughout the play, one senses a mutual fear between the twins derived from sexual tension. Myrna attributes her distance from Myra to her fear of her twin: "I really wish we could be closer...but she...scares me. There's something...evil in her. I get scared when...I look into her eyes" (106). In the twins' final joint dream, Myra confesses to Myrna that "I wish we could be closer," then wakens and "sits bolt upright in terror" and explains to her lover her fear that "I feel like I'm being watched. Like she can hear every word I'm saying" (186). Both Myra and Myrna are seemingly ignorant of the source of their anxiety concerning this relationship, but Vogel provides a storehouse of intimations which guide the audience to make the diagnosis for the twins.

Through her staging conventions, Vogel not-so-subtly hints at the sexual tension between Myra and Myrna: in her opening remarks, the playwright requires that "With the single exception of Sarah, all the characters should be played in a constant state of high hormonal excitement" (96). Furthermore, Vogel chooses as the twins' differentiating physical characteristic the size of their bosoms: Myrna is "stacked," while Myra is "identical to Myrna, except in the chestal region" (96). Vogel continues
these sexually-themed stage practices with her suggestion that Sarah (Myra's lover) and Jim (Myrna's fiancee) be played by a single actress. With this direction, Vogel plants seeds of lesbian tendencies in each of the twins as both Myra and Myrna become sexually involved with Jim in their teenage years during the development of their sexual identities. The Broadway production of The Mineola Twins capitalized upon this motif, extending the practice of cross-gender casting to the roles of the twins' sons, Kenny and Ben, who were each played by the same actress.

More apparent evidence supporting the twins' mutual sexual desire resides in the twins' actions. During their teenage years, Myrna becomes engaged to Jim and resolves not to consummate their relationship until their wedding night. Frustrated, Jim meets Myra, reputed as a slut, and they have sex at a sleazy motel. Myra's having sex with Jim could be interpreted as Myra's attempt to sleep vicariously with Myrna. One might further argue that Myra sleeps with Jim to sabotage her twin's marriage so that she will have an opportunity to have intercourse with Myrna. In a telling line, as Myra leaves the motel through a window to avoid Myrna, she asks Jim to "Kiss Her Good Night for me" (127). Finally, one might perceive Myra's taking on a lesbian lover as a substitute for the unrequited love of her twin.
Myrna’s desire for Myra emerges more subtly. In a conversation with Jim, Myrna asks about rumors concerning Myra’s sex life, and later, she jokes about Myra’s promiscuity: “The football captain? I think...he’s already scored a touchdown at my sister’s goalpost” and of the captain of the wrestling team, “Myra was pinned on the mat in round one!” (108). Myrna’s curiosity and conceivable jealousy of her twin’s sexual activity continues into her adulthood as she asks Ben to tell her about Myra’s relationship with Sarah: “Which one is the man? My money’s on Myra” (162). Myrna justifies her line of questioning by saying that as a Christian radio talk show host, she should be knowledgeable about what goes on in lesbians’ beds. With her next idea, Myrna communicates her latent desire and denial of impulses: “Of course, it’s all academic—I’m not going to go out and do any firsthand research” (163). In the play’s final moments, Myrna conducts field research by kissing Sarah, again presenting the possibility that Myrna is using her twin’s lover as a substitute to fulfill her sexual desire for her twin.

Vogel’s revelation of her protagonists’ true feelings largely emerges from the dream sequences, and as many of the dreams’ events are premonitions, Vogel toys with the twins’ ability to communicate psychically. Further explanation of
the anxiety between Myra and Myrna emerges in their psychic connectedness. Vogel expresses this connection through joint dreams and something she terms "The Voice." As Vogel explains, words in the script which appear in boldface are spoken by "the voice that the sisters hear in their dreams...Either brainwashing or subliminal seduction, this voice is the way the sisters talk to each other. In dreams" (97). The Voice is not strictly employed in the dream sequences: it is also used during the main plotline. Vogel's stage directions reveal the dreamers' interrelatedness: "Myra in Mineola Dreaming of Myrna in Mineola Dreaming of Myra" (183). These joint dreams terrorize the twins, as Myra insists to Sarah after experiencing the final dream that "I feel like I'm being watched. Like she can hear every word I'm saying" (186). Myrna also senses Myra's relentless pursuit of her through these dreams: "Myra tracks me down and...and...I can't remember" (106). Even in her dreams, Myrna avoids her twin's advances, as the context suggests that Myra somehow takes advantage of Myrna in the dream, an occurrence which Myrna refuses to recall. The twins' dreams always entail cataclysmic occurrences which speak to the twins' disturbed relationship. Dream Sequence Number One features Myra in homeroom during a nuclear holocaust in which she witnesses
gruesome deaths and hides at the bottom of the stairwell and hears Myra as the Voice say, “I’m Coming, Myrna. I’m Coming...to Find...You” (101). In the second dream sequence, an occurrence which is seemingly more cataclysmic than nuclear war occurs, for Myra crosses over to Myrna’s bed, and Myrna kisses her. After this dream, Myra admits to Sarah that she is terrified because she feels Myrna watching her, but Sarah comforts her: “Your sister doesn’t have that kind of power” (186). Ultimately, Vogel disproves Sarah’s statement, for the play ends with the playing of Doris Day’s “I’ll See You in my Dreams” (187).

The dreams further convey Myra’s latent and subsequent open sexual desire for her twin, and therefore embody Lacan’s desire of the other: “man’s desire finds its meaning in the desire of the other” (58). Dream Sequence Number One subtly reveals Myra’s desire:

I knew that at the bottom of the stairwell, I would find my twin sister Myrna, hiding from me. Curled up in a little O, her back to me. Just like Old Times in the Womb. A Little O trying to float away from me...She could hear me breathe. Her soft throat, trying not to swallow. She could taste my saliva. And I said, ‘I’m coming, Myrna. I’m Coming...to Find...You.’ (100-101)

Dream Sequence Number Four blatantly reveals Myra’s desire for Myrna, for Myra dreams that she goes over to Myrna’s bed and Myrna kisses her on the mouth. Further evidence which points to sexual desire between the twins appears in the
twins' need for psychotherapy. Each of the twins has, at one point, received psychological advising, perhaps to cope with her unconsummated relationship with her twin. Myrna's treatment, apparently drastic, included electric shock therapy and an extended stay in a psychiatric ward, and at points in the play she has "strange comatose seizures" (132) which she describes as a "residual effect of the...therapy I had" (133). Interestingly, Myra and their mother committed Myrna to the hospital. Myra's treatment is less severe, but also signals distress as a result of her strained relationship with Myrna, for she and Sarah attend couple counseling. Perhaps she and Sarah encounter difficulties because Sarah is not Myrna and can never be a substitute for Myra's twin.

Vogel strangely entwines the twins sexually through their offspring: each twin believes her son to be the true son of her twin. Myra states that she has "borne my sister's son" (176) and Myrna likewise believes that Kenny belongs to Myra. The sons themselves concur with this notion, as Kenny says to Myra, "You were supposed to be my real mother; it was all some kind of mistake--she's not my real mother" (154). Ben idolizes Myrna, telling her "Thank you for all you're doing. You're nothing like my mother" (166). Vogel may be suggesting that the twins have somehow,
through their bond, impregnated each other. Myra guesses at this mystery as she says to Kenny, "You’re my brave, smart nephew. How you can be my sister’s son is one of those mysteries of genetics" (146).

Myrna’s homophobia and her fear of her sexual attraction to her twin precipitate her homicidal tendencies. Myrna openly expresses her homophobia on her conservative radio talk show: "I think there’s a special room in hell for sinners just filled with women who have to ‘kiss’ each other for eternity" (163). Myrna’s homophobia surfaces again when she fears for her son’s sexual orientation, cautioning him, "I don’t like to hear the word ‘mauve’ in your mouth. Only boys who grow up to be interior decorators use words like ‘mauve’" (140). When explaining to Ben his mother’s lesbianism, Myrna spouts, "I think we choose our way—I think willpower and the right values determine our path. Homosexuality is not genetic" (160). Here, Myrna reassures herself that although the twins share identical genes, they do not share sexualities. Myrna’s homicidal tendency as connected to her homophobia is foreshadowed when Myrna discovers Jim’s having sex with Myra and she screams, "I’M GONNA KILL YOU, MYRA! I’M GONNA RIP OFF WHAT LITTLE THERE IS OF YOUR KNOCKERS, MYRA! I’M GONNA USE YOUR ITSIES FOR MY KEY CHAIN, MYRA!" (127). In Dream Sequence Number Two,
Myrna dreams of murdering Myra: "For the first time in years, my sister and I touch as I press her big toe on the trigger. We squeeze the trigger together" (144). This fantasy becomes reality when Myrna plants a bomb inside the abortion clinic which Myra operates, although Myrna does so without realizing Myra is inside. Luckily, Myra survives the blast. Vogel’s choice of vocation for Myra as an abortion clinic administrator carries significant subtext, as twins’ identities are markedly connected to their unusual birth. Myra may be perceived as endeavoring to undo the circumstances of the twins’ double birth as well as their simultaneous mirror stage and shared identities which have resulted in unrequited love and unfulfilled desire.

While Vogel principally relies upon sexual tension between her twins to propel the play’s action and define the twins’ relationship, she also employs other common devices which further explain the disturbed nature of the twins’ bond. The matter of an inheritance figures into the twins’ relations as Myrna withdraws their mother’s money and releases it to Myra when she is a fugitive. Before relinquishing the money to Kenny to deliver to Myra, Myrna relates a distorted account of The Prodigal Son myth, which culminates in a revelation of Myrna’s true feelings:

The Good Brother bided his time, and then went to the cops in the other country and turned his sorry
brother in; took the reward, and invested it...And when the prodigal son was finally released from the hoosegow, he had to be in the marketplace until the Prodigal Son finally died. And the Good Son danced and danced! (138)

This birthright motif continues with the biblical tale of Jacob and Esau, as retold by Myra. She explains that “Jacob got all the goats and sheep and cattle and loot, and quickly, he rode the hell out of town. He went on a long, long trip far across the borders. And he never came back” (151). In each of the twins’ tellings of these biblical myths, the twin corrupts the tale: Myrna denies the Prodigal Son a homecoming, and Myra deletes the joyous reunion of Jacob and Esau. Perhaps each of the twins is mourning the realization that she can never go home to her twin and live the life she desires.

Vogel also takes advantage of the twins’ identical appearances, a phenomenon which exacerbates the twins’ angst. Myrna expresses her disgust at resembling Myrna and her doubts as to their twinship when she reveals that “I’d swear someone dumped her on our doorstep if it wasn’t that we’re identical twins” (104). Perhaps Myrna subliminally wishes that Myra was not her twin because she could more acceptably become a lesbian with a woman to whom she is not related. The twins’ difference in bra sizes perplexes and troubles Myrna as a teenager, and she attempts to disown
Myra, using science as her proof: "is it scientifically possible? Wouldn’t either both of us be...you know--Or we’d both be like Iowa in the chestal region? Bloodlines... science and all that...it’s just...so strange" (111-112). Myrna’s desire to disown her twin continues into her adulthood, and after Myra robs the bank, Myrna sends a message to her via Kenny that she is to “change her name, change her hair color, and copy someone else’s face. And she’s never to be in touch with us again” (140). Myra, on the other hand, uses their identical appearances to her advantage as she pads her bra to look like Myrna when she robs the bank (131). Learning from her sister’s example, Myrna assumes her twin’s identity to perform a criminal act: she dresses in a power suit which she imagines “is exactly how Myra dresses when she networks with NOW members and Emily’s List” (171). This tendency towards deception in the twins might be explained by Rank’s notion that the double often exhibits “a powerful consciousness of guilt which forces the hero no longer to accept responsibility for certain actions of his ego, but to place it upon another ego, a double” (Double 76). In their later adulthood, each of the twins believes herself to be an upstanding and productive citizen of society. When either of the twins commits a criminal act, she accomplishes this act using her
twin's identity. Vogel also uses mistaken identity to precipitate important moments in the play, as Sarah mistakes Myrna for Myra and makes sexual advances toward her which culminate in Myrna's kissing Sarah, thereby revealing Myrna's possible tendencies toward lesbianism.

Vogel employs another age-old device when she enumerates in her character descriptions that Myrna is "The 'good' twin" and Myra is "The 'evil' twin" (96). This basic personality difference further justifies the anxiety inherent in this twin relationship. The twins' lives reflect their polarities, as Myrna is a conservative, chaste, Christian radio talk show host who self-righteously bombs an abortion clinic, while Myra sleeps with the entire football team and her twin's fiancee, becomes a lesbian, and is a political activist. Although Vogel describes Myrna as the "good" twin, she is careful to place that description in quotation marks, for Myrna's actions reveal her to be cold and narrow-minded, while the opposite may be said of Myra.

Myrna's descriptions of her sister are cruel: she believes that "the Devil rocked her cradle when Mom was out of the room," and she insists that "There's such meanness in her!" (104). Myrna's obsession with her reputation inhibits her compassion, for she implores Jim not to "let Myra ruin our good name!" (106). After Myra robs the Mineola bank in
a somewhat misguided effort to end the Vietnam War, Myrna damns her to a life in prison: “Aunt Myra will be making license plates the rest of her life...Instead of shacking up with radicals and the SDS, she’ll have to fend off hefty female inmates in the shower when she drops her soap!” (130). While Myrna is perceived by society as the “good” twin, Myra, in fact, selflessly performs charitable deeds. She keeps Kenny during Myrna’s indisposal at the psychiatric ward, she robs a bank to help end the Vietnam War, she endangers her life by running an abortion clinic, and she is an activist for NOW. These personality differences serve to alienate the twins from each other and intensify the anxiety borne of the mutual desire and unrequited love they experience. Myra equates their relationship to that of Jacob and Esau: “Twin buns. But these twin buns were as different at birth as Wonderbread and Croissants. There was bad blood between them. No one could clear up the bad blood” (150).

Love! Valour! Compassion! also takes on the sometimes angst-ridden relationship between twins, and like Myra and Myrna, the tension between McNally’s twins somehow stems from the twins’ sexualities. McNally’s play explores the intertwined relationships of eight gay men, basically four couples, over three summer holiday weekends. The play
investigates relational matters of devotion, seduction, and resistance vs. relenting to temptation. The play’s overarching thought is exclusion. Each character is somehow excluded from society, but the playwright uses the Jeckyll twins to highlight these experiences of exclusion. McNally assigns each of the characters an attribute which sets that person apart from the group. Gregory, while he has been a celebrated dancer, is now an aging choreographer who stutters. Gregory’s lover, Bobby, is blind. Ramon, also a dancer, is Puerto Rican and he and the others are sensitive about his ethnicity. Arthur and Perry are set apart in that their relationship has lasted fourteen years, while each of the other couples are involved in relatively new relationships. Also, Arthur and Perry are business men, and while they appreciate art, they are not involved in artistic professions as are their friends. Finally, Buzz is different because he is HIV positive.

Greg owns an old home away from the city and serves as host for these three weekends. Greg’s partner Bobby fascinates Ramon, an attractive and talented Puerto Rican dancer, and these two young men have an affair. Ramon attends the first weekend outing with Greg’s rehearsal pianist, John Jeckyll, who has a twin, James. Arthur and Perry have been partners for fourteen years, and are both
friends to the HIV positive Buzz. James Jeckyll, who is
dying of AIDS, phones on the first weekend and asks John for
his company because James needs to be with his twin. James,
who charms everyone, falls in love with Buzz. Buzz returns
James’ affection, while everyone hates John. Greg
volunteers all of these men to dance in tutus at an AIDS
benefit in Carnegie Hall: most agree to this and rehearse
religiously. By play’s end, James has died and John is left
alone.

While Vogel’s twins principally serve the playwright’s
comic ends, McNally employs twins for much more serious ends
in his comedy. McNally’s objective in writing this play
seems to be the devilification of the gay lifestyle and an
exposure of the exclusion of homosexuals. The playwright’s
most significant concern lies in the presentation of the
horrible nature of AIDS and its effect on these human beings
which society labels as outcasts because of their sexual
orientations. McNally utilizes his twin characters as
tangible representations of this invisible enemy known as
AIDS because society has historically harbored fears about
twins. By presenting a twin with AIDS, the audience’s shock
is amplified, as the anxiety surrounding AIDS is somehow
heightened within the framing of a twin, for the audience
already associates anxiety with the twins.
McNally's utilization of twin characters as outsiders might also be explained by Rene Girard's notion of a scapegoat. As mentioned earlier, some cultures, in an attempt to decipher the appearance and multiple birth of twins, have reasoned that twins are the result of an evil or immoral act and believe that as such, twins are sources of evil. Girard explains the practice of scapegoating thusly: the community purges itself of its sin as well as its tendency toward violence by accusing a sacrificial victim of an unforgivable sin and removing the victim. Through this ritual process, the society preserves its unity. In some areas in Africa, twins are executed symbolically: their backs are broken over a slave woman's knee, and their bodies are thrown into an underbush. The mother is then exiled from the community, and the evil which produced the twins is thereby removed from the community (Lash 12). In other areas in Africa, the twins and mother are allowed to survive, but they are cast out from society. The mother and offspring typically live with other outcast mothers and twins in "twin-towns" (Oruene 209).

McNally uses the Jeckyll twins to represent the "other" within this group of outsiders, and his required staging practices bear this out. Most importantly, the playwright designates that the roles of the Jeckyll twins are to be
played by one actor. With this stipulation, McNally excludes at least one of the twins from the rest of the group, for in those scenes which include all the characters, either James or John must be absent. This exclusion is most heartbreaking in the play's final scene in which all of the characters go skinny-dipping together with the exception of John, who delivers the play's last line apart from the others. John is aware of this exclusion as his line near the play's end suggests, "And I am all alone. That's from a song. What song? Anyway" and the stage directions note, "He sits and stares straight ahead" (130). McNally also uses various characters' lines as his mouthpiece, thereby employing these characters as a sort of Greek chorus which guides the audience's reactions to John's character. For instance, Gregory's journal is often used as narration, and as it is written material, the opinions presented therein somehow carry greater legitimacy. In this journal are numerous derogatory remarks about John. Furthermore, James, John's twin, coaches the audience concerning its perception of his twin when he appears alone on stage and says, "It's not who you think. I'm the other one. When John stops playing the piano, you can get nervous again" (69). It is interesting that James calls himself the "other one": he, too, seems to sense his exclusion.
As James and John Jeckyll represent the "other" within this group of outsiders, they consistently serve as the topic of conversation among the other characters. Though McNally does not spare James from being vilified, as will be shown later, all of the other characters especially hate John. Gregory notes to the audience in the play's opening scene that "John is sour. He wrote a musical once. No one liked it. There or here. I don't know why they brought it over" (14). With this, the playwright even withholds artistic greatness from John: audiences reject John, though he is reputed to be a wonderful pianist. Buzz also says cruel things about John when he justifies his spying on John and Ramon in their bedroom with the phrase, "It'll serve John right" (93). Perry, Buzz's accomplice in hiding in the closet and spying on John and Ramon, tells his lover, Arthur, of John's reaction upon finding him in the closet: "I don't know which was worse. His words or his saliva. Right now I can't think of anything more annihilating than being spat upon. I could feel his hate running down my face" (99). Arthur, oblivious to the insensitivity of Perry's actions, curses John and calls him a "limey motherfucker" (100). All of these comments are made when John is not present, perhaps representing how society
whispers about the gay culture when homosexuals are perceived to be out of earshot.

Finally, McNally excludes the twins merely by his portrayal of the twins’ actions. John serves as the standard of evil among this group of men: Arthur scolds Perry at one point, noting, “You’re as bad as John” (113). John actually is quite cruel: he makes fun of Gregory’s stutter (22), and he criticizes the relationship between Bobby and Gregory because Bobby, who is blind, is incapable of witnessing Gregory’s choreography, and Bobby therefore cannot appreciate his lover’s life’s work. Also, John notes of the AIDS benefit for which Gregory is choreographing a dance: “People are bloody sick of benefits, Gregory” (49). Furthermore, John is portrayed as a philanderer and disrupter of families, in that he makes advances toward Arthur, who has been Perry’s life partner for fourteen years (47). John further alienates himself from the group by being inconsiderate: among other infractions, he reads Gregory’s journal to other guests when Gregory is not present (24), he makes a phone call to London on Gregory’s bill without paying for it (42) (an action which Buzz calls to everyone’s attention) and he volunteers his dying brother to serve the others tea in his stead (67). John’s commits his most malicious deed when he discovers Perry hiding in
his closet when John and Ramon are preparing to have sex: John curses Perry, saying, "I hope you get what my brother has. I hope you die from it" (99).

The playwright, in a sense, also excludes James from the group by assigning him certain undesirable characteristics. James confesses that his relationships never last more that two or three years, and his justification for ending relationships is less-than-saintly as he notes, "Mutual lack of attention span" (84). McNally also deprives James of an honorable death, in that James takes pills at home in England to kill himself (137): the playwright does not allow James to die valiantly.

The twins' state of alienation becomes clear in the ways in which the group excludes them from shared activities. This is most evident in the Dance of the Swans which the men have agreed to perform for an AIDS benefit. Every member of the group, with the exception of the twins and Perry, participates in this activity. Perry chooses not to dance, whereas neither of the twins is able to take part. James collapses because of his failing health during one of the rehearsals and soon dies, and John never participates in the dance because he is the rehearsal pianist for the dancers.
The twins are further segregated from the group when James collapses: John rushes to his side to care for him, while Buzz, who claims to "adore" James, refuses to comfort him (133). James' death sets him further apart from the group, as he flies home to England and takes pills to kill himself. The significance of this exclusion lies in Buzz's question to Perry concerning his own death from AIDS: "Who's gonna be there when it's my turn?" (132). Perry responds, "We all will. Every one of us" (132). Just as James dies alone, John is left alone at play's end, as he, apart from all the others who are skinny-dipping together, delivers the last line of the play and "looks back at the lake...looks out to us...looks straight ahead. He doesn't move" (142).

Like Moon, Lim, Carr, Handley, and Vogel, McNally employs twin protagonists out of curiosity: his exploration of the twin relationship conforms to, and demonstrates, most of the ideas and anxieties these other playwrights have associated with their twins. McNally does not go as far as Vogel in her character descriptions to classify either the "good" twin or the "evil" twin; rather, McNally allows the other characters to flesh out this dynamic in the twins' relationship. Perry describes John as "fundamentally hateful" (14), and later responds to Bobby's request for a visual description of John by saying that John looks like
Satan (33). Arthur also assigns John an otherworldly origin, as he says that he "plays beautifully, the son of a bitch. The devil's fingers" (62). Perry's nicknames for the twins further express this dichotomy: "James the Fair and John the Foul" (65), "The Princes of Light and Darkness" (68), and "The Princes of Charm and Ugly" (125). John's shameful readings of Greg's journal confirm the truth of these nicknames. At one point, Greg writes, "Poor John. People don't like him" (67) and later he notes, "Who could not love James? We have all taken him to our hearts" (113). Perhaps McNally repeatedly clarifies the marked differences between James and John in order to express the indiscriminating nature of AIDS. By rights, if either of the twins is to have AIDS, John, and not the benevolent James, should be punished with the disease.

The twins' surname, Jeckyll, hints at the diametrically opposed natures of this pair: James embodies the humane Dr. Jekyll, while John takes on the evil qualities of Mr. Hyde. With this name, McNally seems to assign the twins two parts of one soul: this idea has occurred to John as he tells James, "You got the good soul. I got the bad one. Think about leaving me yours" (124). McNally propels the idea that the twins share a soul in his stipulation that the twins be played by one actor. In the twins' reconciliation
scene, James begins the scene in a chair and briefly addresses the audience, then "closes his eyes...He stands up and looks down at the chair. He is John" (124). Within the ensuing monologue, John describes their encounter: "I felt his hand on mine. Not only did I feel as if I were looking at myself...but now I was touching myself" (125). John goes on to explain how fervently he apologizes to James for his trespasses against him and how tenderly James forgives him. After this confession and blessing, John marvels, "We looked at each other in the silence. We could look at each other at last. We weren't the same person" (125). Is John implying here that as long as he went unforgiven, he, too, was dying from James' disease? The twins' first names are obviously reminiscent of the biblical James and John, sons of Zebedee, disciples of Jesus Christ. These sons of a fisherman received the title "sons of thunder" from their master, Jesus, and the turbulence this nickname recalls accurately describes the torrential relationship between the Jeckyll twins. Furthermore, the biblical James was martyred by Herod, just as James Jeckyll serves as McNally's martyr.

Aside from the good/evil twin motif, McNally also unearths the issue of twin rivalry. During the twins' reconciliation, John confesses to James the source of his resentment: "You had Mum and Dad's unconditional love and
now you have the world’s. How can I not envy that?” (124). As other playwrights have, McNally attributes this rivalry to Lacan’s Symbolic Father: the twins’ parents had room in their hearts for just one twin, and the parents chose James. McNally even toys with the twins’ identical appearances as a source of rivalry, as John notes about his resentment, “I wish I could say it’s because you’re so much better looking than me” (124). Despite the angst between them, James longs to be with his brother in his last days: as John explains after speaking with his twin on the phone, “He needs me and I don’t like him” (46). McNally uses the twins’ reconciliation, which is reminiscent of Jacob and Esau’s reunion, as a parable of forgiveness for the audience. John notes, “There have never been so many kisses, not in all the world, as when I told my brother all the wrongs I had done him and he forgave me. Nor so many tears” (125). James’ forgiveness inspires John to change: after James collapses and nears his death, John addresses the group of men who hate him, saying, “You’ve been so...There aren’t words enough. Can I give anyone a hand? I want you to like me” (140). John assesses his efforts to become more like James as he tells the audience about his own death: “I didn’t change. And I tried. At least I think I tried. I
couldn't. I just couldn’t. No one mourned me. No one tear was shed” (139).

While James and John Jeckyll may certainly be viewed as outsiders who are scorned by society, this notion of awe and/or repulsion becomes even more prominent in the workings of Burton Cohen’s *The Wedding of the Siamese Twins*, Bill Russell and Henry Krieger’s *Side Show*, and Philip Ridley’s *The Pitchfork Disney*.
CHAPTER SIX: TWINS AND THE GROTESQUE

The anxieties thus far discussed concerning twins escalate when the spotlight focuses on conjoined twins. With conjoined twins, commonly called Siamese twins, an entirely new set of anxieties emerges. In fact, society meets conjoined twins with such fear that they are often placed within the realm of the grotesque. In his preface to Cromwell, Victor Hugo defines the grotesque by setting it in opposition to the notion of the sublime: he defines the grotesque “as a glass through which to examine the sublime, as a means of contrast” (686). Furthermore, Hugo notes that the sublime represents “the soul as it is” and “the grotesque will play the part of the human animal” (687). Given society’s reaction to conjoined twins, one might argue that these afflicted beings are indeed perceived and treated not as humans with souls, but, as Hugo suggests, human animals.

The spectacle of Siamese twins partly derives from the rarity of this type of being: conjoined twins occur in only one out of 100,000 births (Schwartz 30). Aristotle’s notion of catharsis as a derivative of pity and fear may also explain society’s attraction to Siamese twins: we pity the conjoined state of these humans while fearing that we might
somehow morph into this state or love someone in this constraining condition.

Burton Cohen’s *The Wedding of the Siamese Twins* explores many of the tensions society experienced at the sight of the first highly exposed conjoined twins, Chang and Eng Bunker. Cohen suggests that society copes with these anxieties by exploiting the twins, and this notion of exploitation serves as the play’s central theme. Cohen expresses the cruelty of this exploitation through a detailed examination of the twins’ bond in which he highlights the challenges conjoined twins face, struggles which society often overlooks. Cohen’s juxtaposition of the twins’ desire for independence against their needing each other presents the twins’ greatest hardship.

Act One begins at an exhibition featuring the twins, and after the performance, the twins discuss their yearnings for a holiday. The twins take a vacation and settle in Wilkesboro, North Carolina, where they are well-liked and begin to court a neighboring farmer’s daughters. Their proposals of marriage to the Yates girls are met with opposition by the Yates’ parents and the town folk. In an attempt to win the girls’ hands, Chang and Eng resolve to be separated surgically, thereby jeopardizing their lives, but Addie and Sarah discover their plans for the surgery and put
an end to them. In a touching gesture, Addie and Sarah reveal their love for the conjoined twins in public at the town square in an effort to squelch societal whispers. The Yates’ parents acquiesce, and Mr. Yates marries the couples.

Act Two opens with another “scientific” exhibition in which the sexual practices of the couples are revealed. The remainder of the act details the twins’ growing desire for independence: each of the twins now owns his own home, and the twins alternate homes every three days. The Bunkers have twenty-one children all told, two of whom are deaf and mute. In a disturbing scene, Chang, now alcoholically dependent, brandishes a knife and threatens to sever the joining band of flesh at their chest, since doctors have advised them that if one of the twins dies, a separation operation must be performed immediately. At the scene’s end, Chang suffers a stroke, and the playwright continues his examination of the twins’ hardships by focusing on their struggle to reformulate their strategy for walking. Chang later develops bronchitis, and after he and Eng return to bed after sitting by the fire to ease Chang’s breathing, he dies, and Eng follows his brother in death that night. In the closing scene, the Yates sisters agree to live with each other for a while, for they admit that their grief is eased while they are together.
The most apparent source of anxiety concerning conjoined twins resides in their abnormal appearance. The word most frequently used to describe Chang and Eng in this play is "freaks." The twins' estimations of themselves support Robert Bogdan's notion that "'freak' has become a metaphor for estrangement, alienation, marginality, the dark side of the human experience" (2). The twins have been conditioned to think of themselves in this manner, as Chang suggests, "I don't know what we are or where we belong" and Eng provides his brother with an answer, saying, "We're freaks. We belong everywhere" (9). While the twins' friend, Dr. James Callaway, hesitates to call the twins freaks, Chang hastens to inform him of the value of the label: "It's as good a word as any, Jim. We've lived with it all our lives. You don't have to shy away from it. After all, if it weren't true, we never would've come as far as we have" (16). Even Eng's girlfriend, Sally, who is hesitant to marry the conjoined twin, argues that the twins are "peculiar" (23) and are "like two flies stuck together on fly paper" (22). Later, Sally changes her tune when she supports Adelaide's speech at the town square in which she states that they will not tolerate any "whisperin' behind hands about no—YELLOW DEVILS OR FISH-EYED FREAK LOVERS!" (31).
Cohen continues his sermon against society's jaw-dropping when he exposes society's uncontrollable curiosity about the twins. The twins have been on display since an early age, and as Eng phrases it, forced to "tap dance, tell your life story, and look contented" (14). When the Bunkers' farms fail to produce a profitable crop, the twins are forced to devise a new source of entertainment for the masses, and the public responds to the exhibition of their sexual practices. The announcer feebly disguises the purpose of the exhibit when he notes of their twenty-one children, "speculation as to how this was accomplished has reached considerable proportion, in the interest of SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION--the Bunkers have decided to give an UNPRECEDENTED glimpse into the workings" (40). Society's curiosity continues to torment the twins even after their deaths. Addie and Sally remark that the expenses they incurred from burying the twins in a walnut coffin surrounded by a tin box and a wooden crate puts them at ease. Furthermore, they agree as to the wisdom of the decision to bury them in the cellar for safe keeping: "At least no one can get at 'em...All that clamorin' for the bodies unnerved me real bad" (67). One wonders what ulterior motives the scientists harbored in their requests for the twins' bodies: perhaps they wanted to perform such
extensive autopsies that no trace of the abnormality of the conjoined twins would remain.

Ironically, the vocation which society chooses for the twins as freaks somehow serves to exacerbate society's anxiety concerning the twins. While often tired of being in the spotlight, Chang and Eng are careful "Not to forget them pryin' eyes come equipped with open purses. The money's been good" (13). The twins' friend, Dr. Callaway, seems a trifle jealous of their success: "When I invited y'all I never dreamed you'd want to invest in a farm and slaves and all. It's real surprisin!" (15). Dr. Callaway also seems to want the twins to leave their farms and continue touring: "Seeing as how you're from Siam and have travelled so much I'd have thought you'd feel hemmed in here" (15). The announcer at the sexual positions exhibition submits to the audience that because "you have paid a goodly sum for this--COMMAND PERFORMANCE--it is only fitting and proper that you get your money's worth" (41). The announcer seems to be reminding the twins and their wives that if they are to earn their money, they must submit themselves to the will of the public, namely, the twins' and their wives' humiliation. With this introduction, the barker invests the public, rather than the twins, with power, thereby displacing the public's anxiety.
Cohen also probes the twins' anxiety concerning their bond: this anxiety, in fact, is central to the twins' relationship. The twins discuss their sharing bodily reactions and functions: when they are to be introduced to the Yates girls, Chang is so nervous that Eng complains that "You're givin' me the tremors too, will you cut it out?" (17). When the twins become older, Eng remarks that Chang's alcoholism is irritating him: "I'm beginnin' to feel some of the effects of the liquor" (48). Chang and Eng share a rectum (but have fully separate viscera), and Chang fantasizes about releasing gas by himself: "I dreamt I farted. Oh, how deliciously private! No one smelled it, commented on it, or even knew of it--so I was still a gentleman" (10). Eng conversely expresses his fear of not sharing bodily functions through his dream in which he sneezes and "no one heard it. I waited for someone to say 'God bless you'--but it never came. I had to bless myself, but it was not enough. I became afraid and felt a cold wind blow across me" (10). The twins' physical bond also presents a problem for Chang, who insists that he is tired of carrying Eng because "I've dragged you through life. Around the corners and up the hills" (57).

The twins' aggravation concerning their physical connection surfaces most frequently in their comments
expressing their mutual desire for independence. With his detailed portrayal of the twins' hardships, the playwright shakes his finger at society for its exploitation of these challenged humans. The twins consult various doctors throughout the play about the feasibility of being separated by removing the band that connects their sternums. This discussion first occurs when the Yates' parents refuse to bless the twins' union with their daughters. Chang always initiates these conversations, and he cajoles Eng, saying, "If the operation works you won't ever be dragged anywhere you don't wanna' be again. You won't HAVE to marry Sally or anyone else for that matter. You can fly like a bird" (33). Twenty-five years later, the twins continue to mull the possibility of being separated. Cohen interestingly allows the twins to finish each others' thoughts, as Eng says, "just once I'd like..." and Chang replies, "To go off by myself. Run away. Be my own person" (52). Later in the sequence, Chang dreams of having "No...ties. Why, I could" and Eng completes his thought with "Stay up all night and play poker" (52). This fantasy is short-lived, however, as Eng wonders, "What is it like to be alone? To sit in a room...alone. Silence. Emptiness...We need each other too much, that's the scary part. I often think...what'll I do if he dies?" (53). Cohen comments on the conjoined twins'
spectacularity when he calls for "one of their old posters. They have torn it carefully so that they are separated" (53). In the scene which follows, Chang thrills at the idea of their independence, and wants to "fly beyond the sun!" (54). Eng relents to this suggestion, but asks for Chang to hold his hand, but Chang refuses: "No more...holding! No more attachments and nothing to keep me down anymore!" (54). Throughout the scene, Eng expresses his need for time to acclimate to their new found freedom, while Chang only wants "to put some space between us!" because he realizes that in this state, "WE DO AS WE PLEASE!" (55).

An idea closely associated with the twins’ desire for independence emerges in the topic of death. Their physical bond dictates the twins’ death and therefore serves as a source of frustration between them. The doctors have advised the Bunkers that upon the occasion of either of the twins’ death, a separation operation is mandatory for the surviving twin’s well-being (56). After learning this, Chang becomes intoxicated by the possibility of being completely independent and assured of privacy that he produces a knife and proclaims, "DIE, YOU BASTARD, SO I CAN HAVE MY OPERATION!" (58). Chang repeatedly initiates conversations about being separated, and Eng consistently expresses trepidation at the prospect of being left alone.
Eng asks Chang if “I end up crippled or...gone, while you go skippin’ down the lane--that don’t mean anything to you?” and Chang coldly replies, “Those are the breaks. We EACH take a chance” (45). In Eng’s most vulnerable state, he asks for Chang’s real feelings about him: “You would just leave me...like that?” and Chang flatly states, “I wouldn’t just LEAVE YOU any way--I would just LEAVE! What happens when I TAKE MY LEAVE is you’ve got your life and I’ve got mine...SOMEPLACE ELSE!” (46). Ironically, upon Eng’s death, Chang dies along with him, and as Addie explains, he died “so he could keep his brother company in that great good forever” (66).

The nature of the twin bond has been established in previous chapters as a source of societal anxiety, as well as a source of anxiety for the twins themselves. With Siamese twins, this bond takes on another meaning: the twins are physically bonded to each other and are literally inseparable. Society’s reactions to Chang and Eng’s physical bond is motivated by curiosity and fear: in a misguided effort to understand its fear of the abnormal, society exploits the twins’ hardships to entertain itself. In the play’s opening scene, an announcer preparing the audience for the grotesque sight of the conjoined twins notes that “gentlemen are free to hold their wives’ hands
and women who are in a family way need not fear that their offspring will become contorted" (5). The script calls for voices offstage to shout after the description of the twins' bond, "BREASTBONE TO BREASTBONE?! DISGUSTING!" (6).

As has been established, society's preoccupation with and exploitation of the conjoined twins extends to the twins' sexual practices. Cohen thoroughly examines this curiosity, both from the twins' perspectives and from society's viewpoint. The twins never express any sense of awkwardness or lack of fulfillment concerning their sexual practices. In a recollection concerning their first sexual encounter which involved two prostitutes, Chang recalls that "we decided it must be peculiar to be just one person alone in a room with just one woman, doin' it" and Eng concurs with, "Yep. Real lonely makin'" (63). However, their proclivities change when they get married. Each twin removes himself psychologically via a method they call the "disappear," allowing his twin to have sex privately with his wife. Eng calls this method their "most sacred code of honor" (64).

The twins are polite but frank when they inform Dr. Callaway of their intentions to court the Yates girls and he dissuades their advances, noting that "around here that's like plowin' a field. They gotta be real regular cows"
(16). The twins reassure the doctor, saying, “We got all the equipment to plow the field. So what if there’s a little rubber band holdin’ the gears together” (16). Dr. Callaway’s interest in the twins’ sex lives continues even after their marriage to the Yates girls, as he remarks that the “happy couples went off to Trap Hill Farm where Chang and Eng had built...the widest bed in all of North Carolina and maybe...North America!” (39). David Yates also exhibits concern about the twins’ sexual activities, as he expresses his reservations about blessing their marriages to his daughters. He bluntly asks them, “You want families. How’re you gonna have ‘em?” (37), and when the twins assure him that they are capable of fulfilling the duties needed, he becomes troubled: “Are you askin’ me to let my daughters take part in some kind of four-way...diddly-do party?” (37). Mr. Yates ultimately agrees to the marriage after Mrs. Yates reasons that “there ain’t no better icin’ for cake than a BIG bowl of money!” (38). Even the Bunkers’ in-laws exploit the twins.

Society’s curiosity about the twins’ sex lives becomes flagrant at the beginning of Act Two when, under the guise of “scientific investigation,” the twins and their wives are publicly exhibited on a platform simulating a bed, in an effort to elucidate the logistics of their sexual practices.
The announcer calls for "Nuptial position number one!" and the stage directions note that "Addie lies on the board face up," she and Eng are blindfolded, and "Chang lies on top of her and Eng is forced to lie on his side. Addie moves her head so it can be seen" (41). Nuptial position number two is then requested and Sally takes her place and is blindfolded. Throughout this process, the announcer asks those individuals not involved in the sexual partnering about his or her thoughts, and the individual reports something completely unrelated to bedroom matters, as the announcer self-righteously reminds the audience that "this demonstration is in the interest of scientific enlightenment" (42).

Cohen's development of the relationship between the twins and their wives highlights the awkwardness and difficulty of conjoined twinship and serves as a lesson for society in terms of its reaction to Siamese twins. Upon the twins' initial visit to the Yates' home, Mrs. Yates foreshadows some of the difficulties these couples will encounter when she admonishes her girls, "Make sure you don't stare at 'em" (19). Addie, however, attributes her attraction to Chang to his conjoined nature: "Chang makes me feel all tingly with his foreignness and differentness" (22). Addie further exhibits her love for Chang when she
risks her reputation by addressing the town folk on the square and publicly confesses her love for Chang. Near play’s end, however, Addie’s love somehow changes as she has grown weary of the oddity of her union with Chang and has seemingly become one of the conjoined twins as she confesses to Chang that “Sometimes all I want is to be exactly like everyone else. I guess I can’t tell anymore where one of us ends and the other begins—and it makes my clothes too tight” (50).

Sally’s feelings about Eng evolve in a fashion that mirrors the changes in Addie’s feelings. At first Sally expresses her hesitation to marry Eng, explaining that she does not want to become part of a “walkin’ barn dance” (38). Later, however, when she realizes she genuinely loves Eng, she insists he not jeopardize his life with a separation operation because “I want you just as you are” (34). Furthermore, Sally twice characterizes her union with Eng as a heavenly blessing rather than a curse. On the town square with Addie, Sally is at first reluctant to express her feelings, but she later bursts into tears and proclaims, “These here are tears of joy! That’s what they are...tears of ever-lovin’ angel-kissed joy for the happiness and...er...holiness that I am about to partake of!” (32). Later, when the twins and their wives tour the country exhibiting
their sexual practices, Sally exclaims that she is thinking "of how pleased the Heavenly Father must be at the... inventiveness of the American way" (42). Moments later, she offers a prayer asking Jesus to continue to bless the fruits of their loins, for, as she points out, they may not do things in a normal fashion, "but I hope y'all understand anyway, seein' as how your (Jesus') Momma didn't do it the regular way either" (42).

As the Yates girls develop true love for the twins, Cohen uses them as a model for society's treatment of the twins. Though both Adelaide and Sally initially view the twins as abnormal creatures, they learn with open hearts of the twins' humanity. Cohen uses the Yates girls and their relationships with the twins to heighten the audience's awareness of the bond between Chang and Eng. When Chang expresses concern that Eng's love for Sally does not equal his love for Addie, Eng suggests to Chang that "Love between TWO people never balances equal, so how in hell're we ever gonna find a FOUR-way deal that balances the scales North, East, South AND West!" (25). Cohen's staging of the twins' proposal to the Yates girls evidences the notion that all four of these people are connected. Chang says, "Adelaide Yates, I would be most exuberantly proud if you would consent to be my wife. Sally Yates, I gotta ask
you too, on account of I’m comin’ as part of a package deal” (27). Eng likewise proposes to both of the girls. Just as this audience is interested in the question of shared pleasure, Chang also questions Eng about this: “When Addie and me was havin’ sex, did you ever get your jollies from it?” (64). Eng insists that he would never violate the “disappear,” as it constitutes the “very basis upon which our entire lives together was built” (64). The bond among all four of these people is reinforced when Chang proposes that the twins be surgically separated. Eng reminds him that “it ain’t just you and me under the knife anymore. When we climb on that operatin’ table now, Addie and Sally and all the brood join us!” (44).

Like his use of the Yates girls which repeatedly highlights the twins’ connectedness, Cohen utilizes the Yates’ mother to remind the audience continually of the theme of the abnormal and how society should treat those who are unusual. Cohen notes in the stage directions that Nancy Yates is “Padded to be very fat” (4). When Addie endeavors to convince Sally to marry Eng, she uses her mother as a parallel for Eng and Chang, saying, “Momma don’t look like anyone else we ever saw. Do you love her any less because of it?” (23). Cohen allows some of the town folk to ridicule Mrs. Yates’ size when the girls publicly announce
their intentions to marry Chang and Eng. The girls defend their mother, saying, "NOW YOU JUST LEAVE MY MOMMA OUT OF THIS! SHE AIN'T GRAZIN' NOWHERE!" and "That is a right nasty thing to say about our Momma" (31, 32). Cohen also alerts the audience to the disabilities of two of the twins' children during a scene where the twins, their wives, and eighteen of their children are photographed. Adelaide asks one of the kids to "use sign language to get Louise Emeline and Jesse Lafayette a little closer. I don't like to have 'em pushed around without knowin' what's goin' on. Bein' deaf and dumb ain't no fun" (51). This last phrase recapitulates Cohen's message, in that society should not bully the Siamese twins, considering that they face enough difficulty.

Side Show likewise showcases twins subjected to a lifetime of public exposure. Like The Wedding of the Siamese Twins, Side Show, with play and lyrics by Bill Russell and music by Henry Krieger, takes as its central characters a pair of conjoined twins in the entertainment business who become victims of exploitation.

When the play opens, Violet and Daisy Hilton are members of the Mid-Way troupe, a traveling freak show. Terry Connor, a scout for acts suitable for vaudeville, becomes interested in the Hilton twins and after
choreographer Buddy Foster refines the twins’ song and dance act, Terry agrees to become their agent, but not without a fight from the malevolent Boss of the Mid-Way. The twins reluctantly leave their friends at the Mid-Way and submit themselves to Terry’s direction. Daisy, who longs for fame, becomes enamored of Terry, and Violet, who desires a husband and family, falls in love with Buddy. The gentlemen detect signs of love and return their affection only to appease the money-making act. Buddy ultimately proposes to Violet and Terry arranges the wedding as a publicity stunt: the couple is to be wed on the fifty-yard line at the Cotton Bowl as part of the Texas Centennial Celebration. While attending the state fair, Terry, Buddy, Daisy and Violet ride through the Tunnel of Love, and Buddy refuses to touch Violet while Terry becomes overwhelmed by his passion and ravages Daisy. Buddy recognizes that his love for Violet is not strong enough to withstand societal gossip, and he cancels the wedding. Daisy, hungry for the spotlight, proposes to Terry. He replies that making love to her was not the behavior of a normal man, and Daisy retracts her proposal. To save his reputation, Buddy agrees to carry out the ceremony with the twins. The twins, in turn, go through with the stunt to secure a movie offer from Tod Browning of MGM for a film entitled Freaks.
Side Show and The Wedding of the Siamese Twins each feature conjoined twins in the protagonists' roles, and the messages of the two works coincide at many levels. But, while Cohen emphasizes the humanity of Chang and Eng, Russell and Krieger take this mission a step farther: they implore the audience members to empathize with the state of Daisy and Violet. Side Show forces the audience members into the twins' positions by presenting the twins' lives from numerous perspectives and immersing the audience in the twins' very hearts and souls. As a musical which is almost entirely sung, Side Show employs its pensive lyrics and emotional music to reach the audience's heart.

This musical's title, perhaps more than any of the works heretofore discussed, carries marked significance in terms of the play's meaning. The term "side show" indicates an attraction which is offered in addition to the main exhibition, usually a circus. Clearly, this is a fitting title in terms of the girls' beginning at the Mid-Way. But, one must consider that after the twins leave the Mid-Way, they, in fact, become the central act, the real crowd-pleaser. The twins leave the Mid-Way in Act One, Scene Six, four scenes before intermission. Therefore, the twins are the main attraction throughout the entire second act and
almost half of Act One. So, why have the playwrights thus named this work?

The playwrights' point is that the twins never truly become the main attraction because neither the viewers nor Buddy and Terry ever really see them as human beings: they are always viewed as freaks. This perspective originates in the audiences' fear of the conjoined twins, the anxieties which stem from perceptions associated with twins' sexualities. Perhaps the wives in the audience fear that their husbands might be seduced by the sexual combinations such abnormality affords. Conversely, the husbands may fear these twins will seduce them to be unfaithful to their wives. In reaction to these fears, the audience classifies the twins as freaks to set them apart from respectable society. If the twins are relegated to a stage well away from the audience, they exist in a realm apart, and only the two of them cannot, therefore, present a threat to the audience.

The writers use Buddy and Terry in a fashion similar to Cohen's Addie and Sally: as those closest to the twins, they represent society's perception and treatment of the twins. Sally and Addie are somewhat valorized and serve as a model for society's behavior toward the twins. Contrarily, Buddy and Terry commit cardinal sins by exploiting the twins'
feelings for money and by failing to recognize the persons within this conjoined body.

Buddy and Terry's opportunism is made especially despicable by the writers' exposure of the Hilton girls' tender hearts: they are consumed by their dreams of romantic love. Daisy and Violet publish their feelings for Terry and Buddy almost immediately. Great pains are taken to show the female's perspective on the state of being conjoined, and accordingly, emphasis is placed on the girls' longing for love. After the twins' first public performance with Terry as their agent, Buddy and Terry kiss Daisy and Violet as a reward, and Daisy delights in this action: "If we always get kisses, I'll try even harder," to which Terry replies, "Kisses are a tiny reward," and Violet informs him, "Not for us" (59). The twins' desire for love is accompanied by feelings of doubt and unrequited love, as Daisy notes, "Could we bend the laws of nature?/Could a lion love a lamb?/Who could see beyond this surface?/Who will love me as I am?" (66). Later, Violet shares Daisy's doubts as they sing together, "Who would want to join this madness?/Who will be part of my circus?/Who will love me as I am?" (67). Russell and Krieger's exploration of the girls' innermost feelings extend even into Daisy's private thoughts as the thoughts appear to Terry. As Terry thinks of Daisy, she
says, "A mind is very private/We often meet in mine/Let me show you what we do there/The way we kiss/The way we intertwine" (81).

The Hilton twins' lives differ from those of other twins, including Chang and Eng, in that they are maliciously exploited by everyone around them, most notably, their various managers. While Chang and Eng gained control of their own business affairs, Violet and Daisy's feminine gender dictated that they be managed by males, lest lecherous male patrons take advantage of the attractive young women. The girls begin their career with the "help" of the Boss of the Mid-Way, whom Jake, one of the girls' friends and the "cannibal king" calls "that mean old money-grubbin' gin guzzlin' name-callin' devil" (33). The Boss lives up to this description by assigning various labels to the Hiltons, including "dogs," "freaks," "monsters," and "playthings" (24). The Boss resists the girls' leaving his establishment in order to be managed by Terry, but he ultimately concedes. While the Boss was often cruel to the girls, Terry and Buddy might be construed as even more brutal in their dealings with the girls, for they toy with the girls' hearts and dreams. Buddy and Terry initially appear to have noble intentions, as Buddy explains to Daisy and Violet when he first meets them that they "need a more
dignified show” and “You deserve a better life/No more worry, no more strife” (22). Very soon, however, these intentions become clouded by Terry’s ulterior motives of gaining the spotlight and earning a dollar.

Buddy detects Violet’s feelings for him almost immediately: “I’m more concerned with some personal questions/I swear I did not invite/I think Violet’s sweet on me/...Daisy mentions you with glee/I think we’re getting more/than we bargained for” (35). Terry suggests upon learning of the girls’ affection that he and Buddy send the girls flowers, but Buddy resists, citing such behavior as inappropriate. Terry then launches an attack against this obstacle between himself and his fame, saying, “They’ll try to hook you/But you don’t have to bite,” and his comments soon devolve into lewdness: “I’ve seen things/I’ve tried things/But never a twosome” (36). Not yet subject to Terry’s manipulative powers, Buddy retaliates, saying “I’m not interested in that” and Terry rebuts, “Then close your eyes. Just a little joke” (36). Buddy continues to defend the girls with “It’s no joking matter” (36).

Buddy’s chivalry soon wanes when he hears Terry appeal to Daisy’s dreams in order to convince the girls to leave the Mid-Way. Forearmed with knowledge of Daisy’s yearning for fame, Terry baits her with “Wait till you see/Your names
on the marquee/All the way from Frisco to Dallas/Some day you will play the Palace" (46). Buddy follows Terry's lead and appeals to Violet's desire for romantic love: "Don't you fret/We're with you heart and soul" (46). Once the twins have captured the headlines on national newspapers, Buddy and Terry's romantic tendencies toward the girls taper off, and Daisy and Violet are not oblivious to this change.

Violet asks Buddy, "Remember when the compliments/came with kisses?" and Daisy joins her with "Not any more/People might talk" (70). Buddy weakly defends his actions with "That's not fair/the tabloids keep trying/to link you to us/Why add fuel to the fire?" (70). Buddy is unable to conceal his change of heart when he persuades Violet to meet the cream of New York society. When she explains her hesitation saying "People point and stare", he offers little comfort: "But this crowd does it with flair" (71). With this response, Buddy indicates his transfer of devotion from Violet to his own glorification and fortune.

Buddy becomes so preoccupied with his new found fame that he confuses his love for the limelight with his affection for Violet, and he proposes to her. Terry interprets this as a way of placating Violet and congratulates Buddy: "Brilliant move, Buddy...it's the story of the year--the decade!" (79). Although Buddy insists that
he truly loves Violet, his true colors shine when he later confides to Terry that his new fame is “an unexpected benefit/which I admit I really like” and “This is my chance/to do something important/to be remembered/to make a big splash” (88). Terry advises and admonishes Buddy “To keep this on track/keep playing your part/keep Violet content/keep the happy couple happy” (89). Terry and Buddy’s opportunistic motives become evident when Buddy announces to Violet that their wedding has been scheduled as the grand finale of the Texas Centennial Celebration. Terry can scarcely contain his delight: “in front of thousands of people. You’ll be on every front page in the country” (93). Buddy’s compassion triumphs over his greed when he confesses to Violet that his love for her is not strong enough and he therefore will not proceed with the wedding. Terry, crazed by the lure of the spotlight, insists, “Buddy, get a hold of yourself!...Daisy, talk to her. Damn it! This wedding is going to happen!” (105). Like Violet, Daisy’s heart does not escape this publicity stunt and Buddy and Terry’s exploitation unscathed. When she proposes to Terry in an attempt to salvage the wedding, Terry’s statement that his making love to her was “not the behavior of a normal guy” reveals the shallowness of his feelings for her, for not
even his desire to preserve his reputation as a producer can compel him to wed Daisy (107).

The public also ignores the feelings of the Hilton twins and is likewise guilty of exploiting the girls as a means to their own ends. Members of the press shamelessly exploit the Hiltons when they first discover the twins. Prior to a press conference with the twins, the reporters greatly anticipate the girls' arrival as "this story will win us cigars" (60). When the reporters question the Hiltons, their interrogations are less than polite. The first questions are somewhat expected as they revolve around the possibility of the twins' being separated, but the questions soon become more personal when they ask how and where the twins sleep. Ultimately, the questions become hurtful and accusatory when they ask if the girls share their bed with their managers and other male attendees, and the ugliest blow is dealt when the male members of the twins' entourage are asked, "So none of you has interest/in a double-header?" (63). The reporters smell blood and ask if they want children, or "will you always be virgins?" (64) and if not, "How would that work?" (65).

Later, when the twins consent to attend the party in New York, a sort of "coming out" party for the girls, this elite group, purportedly the city's creme de la creme,
treats the girls with as little respect as did the reporters. One guest jibes, "Don't you want to be normal?" (74). The girls are further exploited at the Texas Centennial Celebration, as the mementos sold in commemoration of their wedding are demeaning. One hawker cries, "In honor of the twins/double hot dogs joined in the bun/get 'em hot/two for one" (101), while another hawker sells two-headed twin masks.

Naturally, the Hiltons' physical connection serves to shock and disgust their patrons, but the writers also use this bond to enlighten the audience concerning the girls' separateness. In the production notes, the writers justify their reasons for never physically connecting the actors playing the twins by velcro, corsets, or any other costume piece: "This allowed the audience to participate in creating the twins' connection with their collective imagination" (5). This practice resonates interestingly with Bogdan's statement that "'freak' is a frame of mind, a set of practices, a way of thinking about and presenting people. It is the enactment of a tradition, the performance of a stylized presentation" (3). Regarding the twins' physical connection, one must also consider that on three occasions, the script calls for the actors to be physically separate, perhaps in an effort to preserve the twins' individual
identities. When the girls first appear, "Daisy and Violet face front, connect, pivot Upstage and enter the tent, now conjoined at the hip" (10). At play's end, the stage directions prescribe that "Daisy and Violet split apart and sit" (112). Most telling is the staging of Daisy's appearance to Terry in his thoughts: first, she enters alone and they talk to each other, then dance. While they are dancing, Violet appears upstage, the twins rejoin at the hip, and disappear, leaving Terry alone on stage. This appearance is clearly a visible representation of the dichotomy of the twins' individuality and shared identities, especially as it concerns the matter of love.

One might venture an explanation of these physical separations as symbolic of the twins' differing plans and dreams. The girls express their opposing goals when they first meet Terry. The girls are united by one vision: as Violet notes, "I want to be like everyone else/So no one will point and stare/To walk down the street/not attracting attention/A standard response/the same as everyone wants" (20). Daisy concurs with this notion while expressing her individual dream: "I want to be like everyone else/But richer and more acclaimed/To see those who've laughed/feeling ashamed" (20). Upon hearing this, Violet quickly voices her desire so as not to be overlooked: "I'd
settle down/Never to roam/find a nice husband and home” (21). Violet further clarifies the girls’ divergent dreams, saying, “She’d like fame/I’d like serenity” (21). Through these proclamations, the audience is immediately made aware of yet another way in which the twins’ physical bond inhibits their lives and loves, thereby exacerbating the ever-present tension between them. This tension is unmistakable when the twins have become vaudeville stars and long to be alone and isolated from each other. Their feelings are expressed through a song entitled “Leave Me Alone,” and the ending lines reveal their frustration: Daisy sputters, “I hate you” and Violet replies, “So do I,” and the two shout at each other in unison, “Why don’t you leave me alone?!” (54). Immediately following this number, the scene shifts to the girls’ vaudeville routine in which they sing “We Share Everything” with lines such as “We can’t bear to be separated,” “Two Songbirds/Zero Friction/No Strong Words/Dainty Diction” (55) and “Life’s breezy/No dissension/Life’s easy/No tension” (56). The juxtaposition of these diametrically opposed emotions well expresses the twins’ mood swings and their need for compatibility: they must get along in order to survive.

At play’s end, when the girls recognize their managers’ ulterior motives, the girls realize that they rely on each
other for survival and Violet says that she is afraid of being alone, to which Daisy responds, "But you're not/You never have been" (108). In the play's most moving sequence, the girls resolve together, "I will never leave you/I will never go away/we were meant to share each moment/Beside you is where I will stay/Evermore and always/we'll be one though we're two/For I will never leave you" (109).

The twins' physical bond not only interferes with the girls' respective dreams but also complicates their feelings for their beaux. While Chang and Eng are shown to experience each others' feelings of nervousness physically when courting the Yates, Daisy and Violet seem to be empathetic of each others' romantic feelings. Daisy reveals that she can feel Violet's passion for Buddy: "When Buddy holds your hand/I tingle all over/When he pecks you on the cheek/I feel it on mine" (90). Violet, likewise, can vouch for Daisy's love for Terry when Daisy denies that she loves him, for as Violet states, "I felt love within you" (64).

Perhaps most alarming is Violet's detection of Daisy's passion in the Tunnel of Love. Violet uses Daisy's overwhelming desire as a barometer for her own feelings for Buddy: she realizes that her feelings do not reach Daisy's heights, and she therefore wavers in her commitment to Buddy. Violet foreshadows her future actions in the Tunnel
of Love: "Why don’t Buddy’s kisses feel divine/Why do
Daisy’s shivers run/up my spine/much more passion from her
side than mine/Buddy’s tame/Daisy’s aflame" (97). The
complexities inherent in this physical connection become
apparent when Violet exclaims in the Tunnel of Love, “I want
what she’s got/What I’m feeling she’s got/Everything he’s
not yet/Feeling with me/I want mine/Where is mine” (99).

The threat of death does not play as heavily in the
Hiltons’ relationship as it did in the lives of Chang and
Eng, which it drastically affected. Daisy only makes one
offhand remark about the twins’ shared mortality: when Buddy
proposes to Violet, Daisy insists, “If you don’t say yes I’m
going to have a heart attack that will kill us both” (77).
Furthermore, the twins’ psychic connection does not take
center stage as it does in Portia Coughlan or Idioglossia,
perhaps because the writers are endeavoring to heighten the
audience’s awareness and empathy concerning physically
conjoined twins. However, the Hiltons’ psychic bond is
addressed. As Chang and Eng utilize the “disappear” for
privacy, Violet and Daisy explain that they each have a
“secret place we know/where no one else can go” (19). The
twins’ psychic relationship coincides with relationships of
fully separated twins in that Daisy notes, “I’m your
shadow/I do know/what you’re thinking/I’m not deaf/I’m not
blind" (40). Just as the twins are about to enter the Cotton Bowl stadium to get married, Violet asks, “Daisy, can you hear what I’m thinking?” to which Daisy replies, “Yes, as clearly as though you spoke" (110).

The wedding publicity stunt crowns the play’s numerous intimations concerning freaks. Clearly, the twins are regarded as freaks by the public, by their managers, and even the other freaks at the Mid-Way. In the musical’s opening sequence, the Boss articulates the cause of the Hiltons’ freakishness: “their complete separation was retarded in some way—perhaps, while pregnant, their mother witnessed dogs stuck together copulating” (12). Even after the twins hit the more refined vaudeville circuit, their act’s success depends upon the presentation of their grotesqueness: in their most amusing act, the twins are introduced by “archeologists” who claim to have discovered the eighth wonder of the world.

While the twins remain joined throughout the play, the writers’ words and directions lead the audience to a realization that freakishness is not only stipulated by a physical deformity: freakishness may also be dictated by our perceptions and treatment of others. Russell and Krieger initiate this self-examination at the play’s beginning, when the company first enters “costumed as average citizens of
the 1930s,” and sits facing the audience (7). Next, “There is a moment of silence as the company and audience stare at each other” (7). With the play’s opening lines, these seemingly “normal” citizens transform into circus freaks. Softly, the music begins and the company sings “Come look at the freaks/come gape at the geeks/come examine these aberrations/their malformations/grotesque physiques/only pennies for peeks” (7). The Boss then takes over the song and members of the company become the various acts (bearded lady, cannibal king, Siamese twins) he is describing. This song is reprised as the final sequence and Daisy and Violet separate near the song’s end: with this demonstration, the writers suggest that the freaks no longer inhabit the stage but reside in the audience. The freaks’ existence depends upon the audience’s invention of the freak.

The writers also use certain interactions between characters to drive home the idea that the audience creates freaks with its perceptions and behavior toward the “freak.” In the final interaction between Daisy and Terry in which Terry insults her by saying his making love to her was not normal behavior, Daisy responds by saying, “marry you, Terry?/Not on your life/I would be crazy to be your wife/Who is the freak here” (107). Tod Browning, an MGM director, is also portrayed as a freak with a normal body, as he offers
the twins a contract for a film entitled *Freaks*. Browning threatens to withdraw the contract when the twins waver in their commitment to the Cotton Bowl wedding because he wants the publicity from this stunt to popularize his film.

According to reviews of *Side Show*'s original Broadway production, *Side Show*'s staging stimulated the audience to consider its definition of freakishness. The set's central element consisted of a unit of bleachers which was reconfigured throughout the show. At points the "freaks" would sit on these observation sites and the audience members would become the spectacle for the actors on stage. The question as to why we gape at others is posed in other ways: the spectacle of these twins, their theatricality, often takes center stage. Interestingly, both *Side Show* and *The Wedding of the Siamese Twins* feature multi-talented pairs: Chang and Eng are required to sing, dance, tell jokes and speak with a variety of accents while Violet and Daisy are required to sing and dance while remaining attached to each other without artificial connections. So, the playwrights force the audience to gape at the conjoined twins, either because they are theatrically entertaining or because they are grotesque. Either way, the audience is gaping, judging, and feeling somehow superior: the audience has been infected by the opportunism which Buddy and Terry
represent. One might argue that the audience members who paid Broadway ticket prices for *Side Show* and those who paid to see the Hilton twins in vaudeville shows were attracted by the same sense of curiosity. The motivation to exploit derives from the same sense of anxiety: where and how are they connected, how do they have sex, and how well do they walk and move together? It seems that society has not changed much, as it is not likely that the audience attended with the purpose of sympathizing with the Hilton twins' treatment at the hands of their managers and audiences.

While Cohen, Russell and Krieger employ twins to expose the exploitation of twins and to preach lessons of societal acceptance, Philip Ridley is himself guilty of exploitation, in a manner of speaking. Ridley's subject in *The Pitchfork Disney* is nightmares, and to present his horrific story, Ridley exploits his twin characters' fears. One might contend that this play owes its success to this exploitation, as Ridley seeks revenge on behalf of society: he forces his twin characters to confront and fall prey to numerous fears. Society perhaps reasons that the twins receive their due, inasmuch as twins are often portrayed as creators of nightmares rather than victims of torment. Society's appreciation of Ridley's work began with *The Pitchfork Disney*'s premiere at London's Bush Theatre in
1991, which won for Rupert Graves the Charrington Fringe Award for Best Actor for his portrayal of Presley Stray, one of Ridley's tormented twins. In 1992, the play received premieres throughout Europe. Most notably, the German production at The Deutsches Theatre ran for over two years, and during that time, 33 separate productions of the play were presented in Germany. In 1995, the Woolly Mammoth Theatre in Washington gave the play its American premiere, and the production received four Helen Hayes Awards, including Best Resident Play.

Ridley's crowd-pleaser, The Pitchfork Disney, concerns odd, naive twenty-eight-year-old twins living together in an apartment and existing on a diet of sleeping pills and chocolate. Haley, entirely dependent on her male twin, Presley, spends her life in a state of panic, and Presley placates her with sleeping pills. One night after Haley's drugs take effect, Presley invites a man he has been watching outside on the curb into their apartment. Presley tells this visitor, Cosmo Disney, of his childhood and his twinhood. Pitchfork, Cosmo's friend, arrives later, and touches Haley while she sleeps, making Presley nervous. Cosmo persuades Presley to go to the store with Pitchfork for chocolate, and although Presley is apprehensive about leaving Haley alone with Cosmo, he goes. Cosmo forces the
sleeping Haley to suck his finger until he reaches orgasm, and Presley returns and breaks Cosmo’s finger. Cosmo and Pitchfork leave, and the twins repeatedly say they are scared.

Presley and Haley Stray, like the Hilton twins and the Bunkers, are physically grotesque, but unlike conjoined twins, the Strays’ grotesque physical appearances communicate something of their mentality and lifestyle. Their character descriptions immediately hint at their weariness, brought on by relentless nightmares while both awake and sleeping. Presley is “dressed in a dirty T-shirt and jeans. He is unshaven, hair unevenly hacked very short, teeth discoloured, skin pale, dark rings beneath bloodshot eyes” (5). Haley’s description pinpoints her as Presley’s twin, as she is “wearing dirty jeans and a T-shirt. Her hair is longer, but still unevenly cut. Teeth and complexion the same as Presley’s” (5). Cosmo, an embodiment of Presley’s fears and a representative of society’s reactions to the twins, denigrates Presley because of his appearance. Cosmo says Presley’s skin is “pale and pasty,” his “eyes are pretty bloodshot” and his teeth are “rotten” (27). Cosmo expresses society’s opinion when he reveals his true feelings about Presley’s appearance, exclaiming, “What a pathetic specimen you are” and “What a waste of oxygen you
are” (60). The abnormal habits which have induced this appearance in the twins (diet of chocolate and dependence on sleeping pills) serve to outwardly express the psychological angst of this pair.

Oddly enough, though the twins are not physically conjoined, they are conjoined by their horrific nightmares and fears which they religiously relate to each other. Ridley victimizes the twins as these nightmares rule the twins’ lives: they cannot escape the power of their nightmares. Presley’s recurring nightmare consists of a nuclear holocaust which only the twins survive. Haley is bizarrely comforted by this nightmare, and she often requests that he retell the dream to calm her so she can sleep. The nightmare’s imagery is terrifying. Presley recalls that the sweets shopkeeper was “burnt to nothing. Incinerated. One flash of light and he was turned to an X-ray. And then he didn’t exist any more” (17). Haley routinely begs to hear more and Presley satisfies her request: “The whole world is a wasteland. Black sky, black earth, black nothing. Some areas are still smouldering, cooled only by the gentle snowfall” (17). Haley, often lulled to sleep by this telling, remarks, “It sounds beautiful” (17).
Haley likewise relates her recurring nightmare to Presley as her justification for not going shopping: this waking nightmare debilitates her and robs her of her freedom, as she refuses to leave their apartment. Haley claims that rabid dogs chased her into a church and she climbed a crucifix and "It felt so comforting and safe. Then a dog bit at my feet. Pulled my shoe off. My toes were bleeding. A drop of blood landed in the open mouth of the dog. It went berserk" (11). Haley continues, saying that the crucifix collapsed and a priest arrived and fired a rifle and "The seven dogs are dead. Blood oozing from holes in their skulls" (11). After this violent account, Presley agrees to do all the shopping.

Another fear which binds the twins to each other is their apprehension concerning foreigners. When Presley affixes himself to the window to observe the two strangers on the curb, Haley admonishes Presley to remember what "Mummy and Daddy said about foreigners. They’re dangerous, Presley. Dangerous and different. They beat up women and abuse children. They don’t do things the way we do. They hate us. They’d kill us if they had the chance" (22). Although Presley invites both of these strangers into their home, his conversations with them confirm the wisdom of his parents’ advice, for at play’s end he exclaims, "You were
right, Haley. We must never let anyone in. Never...No, never let anyone in. Just us” (86).

Haley’s dependence upon Presley seems to echo a commonality in bonding with the conjoined twin pairs previously observed. Presley feels compelled to protect his twin, because while both twins are paranoid and neurotic, Haley’s psychological afflictions run deeper than her brother’s. Haley’s dependence upon Presley is established early in the play as Haley chastises Presley for not telling her about the biscuits in the refrigerator when Presley calmly explains, “But you saw me put them in the fridge” and Haley whines, “I forgot. You know I need reminding” (9). Later, when Haley reminds Presley of her traumatic shopping experience, she recalls that “There was blood on my legs. You wiped it away with a tissue...You were so nice. You put your arms around me and let me suck the dummy” (10). This matter of the dummy, which Presley douses in his parents’ sleeping medicine, signals Haley’s dependence on her brother. When Haley becomes frantic about Presley’s looking out the window at the strangers, Presley grabs Haley and “forces her mouth open and throws the tablet inside. He closes her mouth, puts one hand over it until she swallows...He sits her down and tucks blankets round her” (22). When Haley does not settle down, Presley takes the
dummy to her and forces it into her mouth. She begins to suck but then takes it from her mouth and confesses that she is afraid because "So many things can burn us up through no fault of our own. There's nothing we can do to save ourselves" (24). As a last resort, Presley asks of his holocaust nightmare, "Shall I describe it again?" Haley sleepily nods and as Presley recounts the tale Haley dozes off (24). Given her psychological state, it is surprising that Haley recognizes her dependence on her brother. Insisting that her brother should come away from the window, she indicates the consequences: "They'll take you away from me. I'll be all alone. I'll have to get the shopping and talk to the postman and let the gas man in and pay electric bills" (23).

Haley's needs and fears are satisfied by Presley, who seems to recognize his dependence on his Haley's presence. When Cosmo repeatedly asks for Haley's name, Presley refuses to tell him, and he screams at Cosmo for touching her while she is asleep. Also, he becomes extremely nervous when Pitchfork picks Haley up out of the chair and dances with her. Presley is also apprehensive about leaving Haley alone with Cosmo so he can take Pitchfork to the store. Although he relents and leaves Cosmo with Haley, his suspicions prompt him to return without having been to the store, and
when he discovers that Cosmo has put his finger in her mouth to arouse himself sexually, Presley breaks Cosmo’s finger with a “sickening crack. Cosmo screams and stares at his hand” (86).

As stated in the discussion of Corpse!, Rank has explained the significance of the double as embodying “man’s eternal conflict with himself and others” (Psychology 99). Rank pinpoints this eternal conflict as “the struggle between his need for likeness and his desire for difference” (Psychology 99). Ridley likewise tackles this struggle in his twins’ desire for difference and their need for sameness. Presley fears that he and Haley do not look alike even though he forces Cosmo to admit their eyes are identical, and insists that “Mummy and Daddy said we were two peas in a pod” (40). Presley’s revelation of his homosexual tendencies in a story related to Cosmo might be interpreted as an attempt to be more like his female twin, who desires men (67). However, despite the fact that Presley fears his dissimilarity from Haley, he seems to desire it. In his final telling of the holocaust story, Presley envisions that “Everything that is me is the last of everything. I am unique” (69). Haley also seems to desire her own identity, as she asks, “Is it true, Presley, that no two snowflakes are the same?” (16). She goes on to explain
what her teacher taught her about snowflakes, in that
"'No matter how much it snows, even if it snows from now
until the end of time, every snowflake will be unique.' It
would be nice to think of that as a miracle, wouldn't it?
But it's not. It's just what happens after an apocalypse" (16).

This apocalyptic nuclear holocaust which so preoccupies
the twins might be explained by the notion that the twins
are endeavoring to create a world that will accept them
because the current world has rejected them. Presley,
author of the dream, speaks nostalgically of his time in the
womb with Haley, when they lived in their own private world.
Presley justifies the twins' identical appearances thusly:
"We were in the womb together! Two little babies in Mummy's
belly" (41). The possibility of finding romance seems never
to have been considered, for this would disrupt their
isolation and privacy: Haley explains her joy in eating
chocolate because "It releases the same chemicals into the
bloodstream. No wonder people like falling in love. What
do you think falling in love is like, Presley?" (20).
Presley's response that it is "Scary" squelches Haley's
train of thought, and she replies, "I suppose you're right"
(20). The twins' protection of their seclusion extends to
the holocaust nightmare, as Haley asks, "But Presley, if
everything is gone...that means...we’re the only ones left” (17). In the play’s final moments, after Presley breaks Cosmo’s finger, Presley apologizes to Haley for admitting encroachers into their world: “You were right, Haley. We must never let anyone in...Just us...That’s all we need, Haley. Just us” (86).

The conversations which occur between Presley and Haley somewhat explain their childlike vulnerability to their nightmares. The twins often argue, always in an infantile manner. In the play’s opening sequence, Presley calls Haley a “cheat” and Haley calls Presley “selfish” as they quarrel over their respective doles of chocolate (6). Moments later, the twins again engage in a childish argument over their sleeping pills, and Presley calls Haley “suspicious” and accuses her of sleepwalking, which she denies (13). This juvenile tendency in the twins which seems to indicate that the twins’ development was arrested might be explained by the mysterious death of their parents ten years earlier when the twins were eighteen. The twins often speak of their “Mummy and Daddy,” as Presley does when he is describing his nightmare to Haley: “the shopkeeper called Mummy ‘Mrs. Stray’ and always asked how Daddy was” (16). Later, the twins remind each other of their parents’ words in what seems to be a ritual remembrance and the twins’ only
reprieve from their terrors. Presley asks Haley, "What did Daddy always say to you?" and Haley answers, "What a good girl you are" (18). Presley continues with this memorial, saying, "And what did Mummy say to me?" and Haley recites her response of "What a good boy you are" (18). Haley adds to her statement that "Mummy and Daddy said we were the best children in the world" (18).

The often insulated and isolated world of twins made necessary by narrow-minded society members becomes magnified in these discussions of physically conjoined and psychologically abnormal twins. Cohen, Russell, and Krieger, who have chosen these twins as their protagonists, seem to be screaming for tolerance in society as a whole, whereas Ridley seems to represent society's tendencies to persecute disturbed twins. It seems remarkable that each would choose twins instead of singletons as his example of suffering and injustice.
CHAPTER SEVEN: TWINS IN FILMS OF THE 1970S, '80S AND '90S

The jarring and unusual portrayal of twins in dramatic literature of the last three decades may also be found in film: over forty films of the last thirty years have featured twin protagonists. Remarkably, twins take center stage in all manner of film genres, from horror and suspense films to comedies and action films. Filmmakers' interest in twins may be explained by the tensions generated by the appearance of double characters on film, a medium which relies upon the reproducible image for its creation. In his essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Walter Benjamin addresses film's destruction of what he terms the "aura" of a work of art. Benjamin's essay has significant implications when applied to twins in film, when he asserts that "Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be" (220). Clearly, the camera's creation of twin characters would seem to subvert the individual's singularity and unique existence.

Film's extensive use of twin protagonists preys upon the postmodern anxiety concerning the instability of selfhood more notably than do the stage plays discussed. Benjamin's notions concerning the experience of the stage
actor versus that of the film actor illuminate the anxiety inherent in the portrayal of twin characters by a singleton. He explains that the stage actor "identifies himself with the character of his role. The film actor very often is denied this opportunity. His creation is by no means all of a piece; it is composed of many separate performances" (230). The anxiety of the film actor is often exacerbated by filmmakers who employ singleton actors to portray twins. Filmmakers can utilize doubles and a split screen or a computer-controlled moving camera to create the illusion that a singleton is two identical twins. In an interview, Jeremy Irons, who portrayed the twins in the film Dead Ringers, voiced society's fears concerning its fragmented identity when he noted of his performance as the twins, "I'm willing to believe there are a lot of me" (Jaehne 27).

In six of the seven films to be discussed in this chapter, the director employs one actor to portray the dual roles. This practice embodies the postmodern concern that none of us is unique; rather, we are all reproducible. In a Dead Ringers interview, Jeremy Irons utilized Benjamin's jargon when he expressed the audience's hope of shattering the postmodern notion of fragmented selfhood: "the audience is looking for the mechanical reproduction of the twins to slip up" (Jaehne 27).
Benjamin's assertion that film actors suffer from a different type of anxiety than stage actors could, of course, be compounded for singleton actors portraying twins. He observes that "The feeling of strangeness that overcomes the actor before the camera...is basically of the same kind as the estrangement felt before one's own image in the mirror" (230). Here, Benjamin seemingly recalls Lacan's mirror stage and suggests that this estrangement resurfaces for the film actor.

With this concept of the film actor versus the stage actor in mind, let us relate to the way the film has utilized twins. Like the twin plays of the late twentieth century, the most notable twin films of the last thirty years also investigate the fears and anxieties that society experiences concerning the double: three of the films to be discussed are classified as horror films. Furthermore, the utilization of twins as scapegoats for society repeatedly becomes apparent in these films: the designation of twins as outcasts and evildoers has become acceptable not only for theatre patrons, but for the moviegoing public as well. In this chapter, a sampling of these twin films will be examined to establish the parallel treatment between plays and screenplays in terms of the nature of the twin bond,
twins' identities, twins' sexualities, as well as their fabled grotesqueness.

The films to be discussed each seem to be centrally concerned with expressing the postmodern notion of fragmented selfhood. As Hillel Schwartz explains this anxiety, twins "articulate our profound uneasiness with postmodern confusions of identities and postindustrial contusions of the 'real thing'" (21). The same anxieties with which the plays of the last thirty years concern themselves are likewise presented in the films; however, these anxieties are explored within the framing of the over-arching notion that we do not exist as individuals. Both Nell and The Double Life of Veronique investigate the lives of twinless twins, and the films conclude that because these twins have lost their soul-mates, their selfhood can never be restored. Each of these films explore twins' remarkable communication abilities, as do Handley in Idioglossia and Carr in Portia Coughlan, but this communication is not the film's principal concern. Dead Ringers and A Zed and Two Noughts, like Lim's Conpersonas, examines the idea of twins' struggle for identity. These films, however, reorient Lim's idea, in that the filmmakers indicate that there is no self apart from twinhood. Zorro, the Gay Blade and Love! Valour! Compassion! each capitalize upon McNally's depiction of
twins as outcasts within society in his stage play Love! Valour! Compassion! These films might be argued as presenting the twins as scapegoats for postmodern anxieties: these doubles who embody postmodern fears concerning selfhood are destroyed and removed from society. Brian De Palma’s Sisters employs as protagonist a formerly conjoined twin who has lost her soul-mate through a separation operation. Here, the writer explores the idea of fragmented selfhood via the anxieties expressed about twins in other films, including their shared sexualities, ability to communicate despite death, and confused identities.

Twin movies have delighted and jolted moviegoing audiences since the early days of film. Notable movie stars in dual leading roles include Bette Davis in 1946’s A Stolen Life and again in Dead Ringer (1964), Boris Karloff in 1935’s The Black Room and Olivia De Havilland in The Dark Mirror (1946). Walt Disney capitalized upon the popular appeal of twins with Hayley Mills as teenage twins in The Parent Trap (1961). Curiously, the portrayal of twins in film took a sharp turn in the direction of the tormented and demented in 1973 (just one year prior to the publication of Conpersonas) with Brian De Palma’s cult classic horror film Sisters, starring Margot Kidder.
Since the making of *Sisters*, numerous twin plays have been transformed into films, perhaps in an effort to use the highly accessible medium of film to present the anxieties associated with twins to the masses. In 1994, Mark Handley joined forces with William Nicholson and adapted his stage play, *Idioglossia*, into a screenplay entitled *Nell*. Nicholson and Handley choose as their focal point the nature of the twin bond and the depth of loneliness and emptiness experienced by twinless twins. Although *Nell* was taken from Handley's *Idioglossia*, the script underwent many changes in its conversion from stage play to screenplay. In fact, the studio originally planned to give Nicholson sole credit for the screenplay, but through an arbitration facilitated by the Dramatists Guild, Handley was awarded co-writing credit: the Guild ruled that at least one-third of the script was penned by Handley (Berson F2). A comparative analysis of the story in its two forms will offer insights in terms of the central character's sense of loss and how these two mediums (stage and film) divergently express Nell's grief and society's anxiety concerning twins' unconventional avenues of communication. Quotes taken from the films discussed in this chapter are cited by title in the bibliography.
In the film, Nell is discovered as the sole survivor of her recently deceased mother who has lived many years isolated in a cabin in the Smoky Mountains. Jerry Lovell, a local doctor, is inexplicably drawn to Nell and he protects her from being committed to a psychiatric ward, where the officials perceive her to be a "wild woman" because she speaks an unknown language. The court allows Lovell and an ambitious psychiatrist, Dr. Paula Olson, three months to observe Nell and decipher her language. During this period, Olson and Lovell learn as much about themselves as they do about Nell and her language. Nell's language is found to be a language which she developed with her twin. The doctors also discover that Nell is not mentally retarded, as Olson originally diagnosed her, but her odd behavior is actually a series of rituals which were once a part of her daily life with her twin sister, who died when the twins were five or six years old. Ultimately, the peace which Nell, Paula and Jerry have come to enjoy in the mountains is shattered by journalists, and Paula and Jerry take Nell to a psychiatric ward for her protection. Nell becomes despondent until the day of her court hearing, where she addresses the court through Jerry's interpretation and the court rules that she may remain at home in her cabin. The film's final scene occurs five years later on Nell's birthday, and among the
guests are Jerry and Paula, now happily married with a four-year-old daughter with whom Nell plays the games which she and her twin enjoyed together.

In terms of superficial changes, the names of all the principal characters except Nell experience evolution: T. C. of the original stage version becomes Paula, Jake becomes Jerry, and Ellen (Nell’s twin) becomes Mae, and there is no linguist in the film. Because there is no Claude character to volunteer to serve as Nell’s custodian at film’s end, Nell cares for herself. While this change empowers Nell and characterizes her as a bit more independent, this resolution also intensifies the reality of her loneliness: she is entirely alone in her cabin with only memories of her loved ones to sustain her. Perhaps Idioglossia’s Claude is eliminated in order to highlight Jerry as Nell’s guardian angel: throughout the film, Nell startles Jerry with sudden expressions of love by heartily embracing him and dubbing him her “ga anguh” (guardian angel). While Idioglossia’s Jake falls in love with Nell and introduces her to sex, Nell’s Jerry develops romantic feelings for Paula, and a romance buds between them. While Nell enjoys witnessing the love between Jerry and Paula, this growing affection heightens her awareness of her twin’s absence. This awareness is made obvious by a sequence of scenes in which
Paula and Jerry explain to Nell the act of love-making. In the first of these scenes, Nell places the two doctors' arms around each other and proclaims that they are "making love." The scene shifts to Nell lying alone on her bed with her arms outstretched and caressing the pillow where Mae once lay. One might also consider that Nell features a successful love story between two doctors as opposed to a short-lived affair between Nell and Jake in Idioglossia to appease a moviegoing audience's desire for an idealized love story. Also, the relationship between Paula and Jerry is portrayed as being healthier than the relationship between Idioglossia's Jerry, who is a burnt-out psychiatrist, and Nell, who is legally blind and considered a wild woman. Paula and Jerry's relationship simply seems more appealing to a commercial audience.

The camera, by virtue of its advanced technology, places the observer of this story more fully into Nell's loneliness than the stage is capable: the camera endeavors to relate the notion that Nell's selfhood died with her twin. When Nell transports herself to the time before Mae died, the camera allows the viewer a window into her experiences with Mae, whereas the Nell of Idioglossia can only tell the viewers of her twin and their bond. The camera allows for intensely poignant moments: when Nell
recalls the "chickabee" game which she and Mae played, the scene shifts from Nell in her adulthood to two five-year-old twins who lark about together. In the film's most mournful moment, Nell sits in front of a floor mirror and gestures back and forth to and from the mirror while rocking. After Nell rocks back and forth a few times and chants her ritual, Mae's hand emerges from the mirror and grasps Nell's for a moment, then disappears.

Another ritual which Nell observes in remembrance of Mae takes place at the lake in front of her cabin. Nell goes there every night, chants the chickabee rhyme, and falls back into the water. Nell performs this ritual often during the film, and for each enactment, the camera juxtaposes images of Nell alone as an adult against images of the twins as children falling into the lake and swimming together. Another significant memorial to Mae is presented through the armoire which has remained untouched since Mae's death: the twins' identical nightgowns and dresses hang undisturbed. Furthermore, Mae's body lies in the shelter of a cave which Nell occasionally visits in order to adorn the body with flowers.

Handley and Nicholson employ water as an exemplar of the twins' connectedness, much as Carr does in the staged production of Portia Coughlan. After Jerry takes Nell to
the hotel to get her away from the hospital, Nell stares at a puddle in the parking lot and envisions Mae wishing her farewell, then turning and wading into their lake until the lake consumes her body. This image establishes Nell’s belief that by joining life in the city she is abandoning her twin. The idea of water and the twins’ connection through it is most piercing in the film’s last moment. This final scene occurs on Nell’s birthday, five years after the court has ruled that she is mentally equipped to survive on her own. Paula, Jerry and their four-year-old daughter, Ruthie, are among the birthday guests, and Nell takes Ruthie to the lake to teach her the chickabee game. As Nell teaches Ruthie and she begins to play on her own, Nell chuckles along with her, then stops and stares out at the lake where she and Mae spent time together and brushes away a tear. Her depth of loneliness seems immeasurable and she appears inconsolable.

Like Handley’s play, *Nell* features a language which the twins developed between themselves. Unlike *Idioglossia*, this autonomous language does not take center stage. But, like the Nell of *Idioglossia*, Nell of the film version keeps Nellish alive, seemingly to preserve communication with Mae even after her death. Much as Nell explains in Nellish her reasons for remaining in the mountains for Ellen’s benefit
("It is important I am sayin' the right sayin'. Tis less important that you hear" (80)), so Nell of the film uses Nellish in a comparable manner. When Nell addresses the court to argue for her right to live unsupervised in the mountains, she asks Jerry to translate for her so that she can explain in Nellish her justification for remaining in the cabin. Again, Nell seems to be employing Nellish to reassure her twin that she will not abandon her and their shared world.

Krzysztof Kieslowski's 1991 film, *The Double Life of Veronique*, capitalizes upon twins' phenomenal ability to communicate in his exploration of the bond between twins who never meet. The film ascertains that because these twinless twins are forever absent from their soul-mates, their selfhood can never be complete. The somewhat nonlinear, impressionistic narrative of Kieslowski's film represents the entirely psychic relationship of his twin protagonists. They each feel disconnected, victim to a vacuum in their beings brought on by their only having seen and felt glimpses of each other. The film likewise only glances at these women and their lives, reflecting the confusion experienced by these twins and their difficulty in putting together the pieces of their sketchy relationship.
Veronique, a French woman in her twenties and Veronika, a Polish woman of the same age and appearance, each have exceptional singing voices. At the film’s beginning, Veronika travels to Krakow to visit an ailing aunt, and while there, she auditions and is chosen to be featured as a soloist with the local orchestra. Veronika periodically experiences dizziness and chest pains, but she does not seek medical attention. During her performance with the orchestra, Veronika collapses and dies. The remainder of the film focuses on Veronique, who teaches music at an elementary school. Coincidentally, she is teaching her orchestra students to play the piece which Veronika sang at her death. The day after Veronika dies, Veronique informs her voice teacher that she will no longer take lessons. Also on this day, a puppeteer performs for Veronique’s school children, and Veronique visits a cardiologist’s office, where her coronary health is assessed. Over the next several days, Veronique receives phone calls from someone who plays the recording of Veronika’s final performance, and she receives a package containing a black string which Veronika clutched at her death. Ultimately, the person sending Veronique these remnants of her lookalike’s life is revealed to be Alexandre Fabbri, whose business logo is, significantly, an angel. Alexandre and
Veronique establish a relationship, and he writes a puppet story about Veronique and her lost twin.

Through his film and the striking images employed therein, Kieslowski manipulates several notions, most notably, the bond which enables twins to overcome barriers of language and death. Furthermore, he addresses the notion that every human being has a twin, even if the twins are not of the same parentage. Each of Kieslowski’s twins confesses to her father the feeling of being bonded to someone. Veronika states, “I have a strange feeling. I feel that I’m not alone. That I’m not alone in the world.” Later, when Veronique relates to her father her inexplicable feelings of grief on the day of Veronika’s funeral, she explains, “Not long ago, I had a strange sensation. I felt that I was all alone.” Her father gives an insightful explanation: “Someone disappeared from your life.” Veronique answers, “Yes, that’s it.” Veronika and Veronique’s twinhood is further established by their similar experiences: both women have unusual yet appealing singing voices and both have coronary complications. The twins also share nervous habits: both place finger rings on their eyelids and fiddle with a glass ball decorated with stars.

While some may suggest that these are simply coincidental parallels, Kieslowski’s tale insists that the
twin bond is responsible for these similarities. Kieslowski intimates that Veronika sacrifices her life for Veronique's survival. After her death, Veronika employs psychic methods of communication and sends Alexandre as a messenger to caution her double against making the same mistakes which led to her own death. The day after Veronika dies, Veronique informs her vocal teacher that she must end her professional vocal pursuits. When her mentor demands justification for this rash behavior, Veronique replies, "I don't know. But I know that I have to stop...now." Later that day, Veronique finds her way into a cardiologist's office where her heart's health is ascertained. Veronique seems to wander blindly into both of these courses of action, but later, she explains to Alexandre that "All my life I've felt I was in two places at the same time. Here and somewhere else. It's hard to explain. But I know...I always sense what I have to do." The viewer is left to fill in the blanks for Veronique: Veronika somehow guides Veronique's steps from beyond the grave. Veronique senses Veronika's presence at one point while listening to the recording of Veronika's last performance: suddenly, she rips the headphones from her ears, sits bolt upright, and says, "Who's there?" She searches the house for the presence she senses, but finds no one. Kieslowski's suggestion that the
twins communicate psychically is further established by the notion that the twins could not have communicated through conventional language, for Veronika speaks Polish and Veronique speaks French.

Veronika seemingly employs Alexandre as an angel to watch over her twin, much as Jerry seems to be sent by Mae to protect Nell. Though Veronika has left her twin on earth, one may surmise that she has provided a substitute to ease Veronique's loss in the form of a puppeteer with whom Veronique immediately falls in love. As mentioned earlier, Alexandre somehow understands the connection between these women of different countries. He even possesses the black string Veronika manipulated during her last moments, as well as an audio recording of Veronika's final performance. Alexandre has an uncanny sensitivity to the twins' bond, as is evidenced in his building a pair of puppets which are the twins' doubles. This practice is reminiscent of the aforementioned Yoruban tradition of carving ibeji, or likenesses of deceased twins, which are intended to comfort the surviving twin. Alexandre's puppets are intended to act out a play he writes and recounts to Veronique:

November 23, 1966 was the most important moment of their lives. That day, at three in the morning, they were both born in two different cities on two different continents. They both had dark hair and brownish-green eyes. When they were both two years old and already knew how to walk one of them
burned her hand on a stove. A few days later the other one reached out to touch the stove but pulled away just in time. And yet, she could not have known that she was about to burn herself.

With this telling, Veronika communicates to her twin an explanation of their shared history, and she seems to be promising that she will ever be watching over her. With the use of this device, Kieslowski perpetuates a Yoruban belief that the firstborn protects the second-born from harm.

Kieslowski directed and, along with Krzysztof Piesiewicz, wrote the screenplay for The Double Life of Veronique. Kieslowski’s exploration of the nature of the twin bond strongly parallels Carr’s discovery of the twin bond in Portia Coughlan and Handley’s portrayal of twins in Idioglossia. In each of these works, one twin precedes the other in death: one twin seems to act as protector for the other, a sort of surveyor of the next world who prepares the way for his or her twin. This otherworldly theme continues in each of the work’s utilization of the idea of an angel. Carr’s Gabriel is remembered to have a voice like “God hesself” (264), while Alexandre, commissioned by Veronika, serves as an angel for Veronique in her loss. Like Veronique’s claim that she is always “in two places at the same time,” Portia insists that “ah cuh tha worldt in two, ther’s wud Gabriel an’ there’s withouh Gabriel an’ everythin’ ceases be thah division” (293).
Both Kieslowski and Carr also employ singing as dominant motifs: each of Kieslowski’s twins has an unusual singing voice, while Carr’s Gabriel calls to his twin through his song at the river. Finally, each of these writers insists upon the twins’ abilities to psychically communicate: though Gabriel has been dead fifteen years, Portia still senses her brother, and both Veronique and Veronika reveal their sense of each other’s presence to their fathers. Each of the twins also expresses a deep sense of loss, an emptiness which Kieslowski never satisfies, but suggests that neither of these soul-mates will ever enjoy a restored selfhood.

David Cronenberg capitalized upon some of Carr’s themes in his 1988 horror film, Dead Ringers, starring Jeremy Irons as twin gynecologists. This film also echoes the central theme taken up by Lim in Conpersonas: efforts to express individual identity outside the twin relationship lead to ruination and death. Dead Ringers shares commonalities with Portia Coughlan in the intertwining of the Mantle brothers’ identities, as this bonding extends to and depends upon their shared sexual identities.

Dead Ringers features Beverly, a withdrawn individual, and his twin, Elliot, a suave and ambitious doctor who attends social functions in Bev’s stead. The Mantle
brothers are renowned for their ground-breaking
gynecological research, and the twins use their vocation to
procure dates. The twins' resemblance is such that when
they trade sexual partners, their dates are oblivious. This
pattern of partner-sharing continues until Claire, a movie
star, enters the twins' lives. Bev falls in love with
Claire and wishes to keep her for himself, and a rift
develops between the twins which leads to Bev's becoming
dependent on barbiturates. Elly, aware that the twins'
lucrative practice will not survive without Bev, determines
to break his twin of his drug addiction. However, Elly also
succumbs to drug addiction. In a drug-induced stupor, Bev
slices open his twin's abdomen with a gynecological
instrument developed by the twins. In the play's final
moment, Bev lies in his dead brother's lap, waiting to die.

Like Conpersonas and Portia Coughlan, Dead Ringers
explores the twin pair's struggle for individual identity.
In an interview, Cronenberg discussed twins as a metaphor
for society's fears about fragmented selfhood, as he noted,
"Our uniqueness is challenged by twins...Part of our whole
understanding of freedom is our assumption that we are
individuals and that we have personalities that can evolve
and change" (Jaehne 22). The interrelatedness of the twins
symbolically represented by their identical appearances is
also reflected in their relationships with women. When Elly asks Bev about his date and sexual encounter with Claire, Bev refuses to divulge any details until the elder Elly reminds him, “Listen, you haven’t fucked her until you tell me all about it. You haven’t had any experience till I’ve had it too.” Here, Elly establishes the conflict of the film: Bev, for the first time in his life, longs to express an identity outside his twin relationship by creating a relationship with Claire which Elly does not share. The development of Bev’s relationship with Claire threatens his bond with Elly, a threat which is graphically represented by a nightmare Bev suffers. In his dream, the twins are conjoined at the stomach and Claire releases Bev from his twin’s clutches by biting through the band of flesh which unites them.

Cronenberg’s choice of Claire’s vocation seems a fitting one in terms of his subject of unstable, fragmented identities. Claire’s job as a film star makes her a sort of twin, which the camera reproduces and distributes in multiple images. Bev perhaps senses this fragmentation and is attracted to this person who is afflicted with a struggle for identity. As Benjamin elucidates, mechanical reproduction “substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence” (221). Bev’s sense of guilt concerning his
desire for an individual identity emerges when he tearily confesses to Elly, "I’ve been hiding from you. I was afraid you wouldn’t let me keep her."

Elly’s denial of Bev’s right to an identity outside the twin relationship ultimately costs Elly his life. Elly’s blurring of the twins into one being is evidenced by his requests of the twin prostitutes he engages at a hotel: one twin is to call him Elly, and he demands that the other call him Bev. Furthermore, Elly insists that Bev provide details about his sexual encounters with women, and Elly invites Bev to engage in a *menage a trois* with Elly’s girlfriend: according to Elly, Bev’s sexuality is only complete when shared with his twin. Cronenberg further reveals Elly’s mental merging of the twins’ identities with prophetic references to Chang and Eng: “Do you remember the original Siamese twins? Do you remember how they died?” Elly assures Bev that if Bev continues to use drugs and dies, Elly will also die.

Bev determines to rid himself of his tumor of a twin when Claire asks Bev why he is carrying around the gynecological instruments which he and Elly masterminded. Bev explains with his twin’s allusion: “They’re for separating Siamese twins.” Bev, obviously, does not achieve his objective through the “separation operation,” since he
follows his brother in death. But Bev’s dying fulfills Elly’s prophecy after Bev slices open his abdomen: “Don’t worry, baby brother. We’ll always be together.” Even at his dying, Elly refuses to release his tormented brother. In an interview Cronenberg expressed his vision of this film’s message for society and its angst concerning its individual identity:

I think Dead Ringers really relates to all intense relationships in which things happen that have the potential to become liberating on one level but suffocating on the other level. And I think at that point you’re talking about marriage, you’re talking about parents and children. The twins become a metaphor for all those things.

(Gleiberman 43)

Peter Greenaway’s 1985 film, A Zed and Two Noughts, shares commonalities with Dead Ringers in that both of the films feature a gruesome and strange joint suicide, the twin protagonists share sexual partners, and they merge their identities to an extreme which leads to their considering themselves to be physically conjoined. Greenaway, who wrote and directed the film (much as Cronenberg served as writer and director for Dead Ringers) reiterates Lim’s notion that the denial of one’s genuine identity leads to death. In Lim’s Conpersonas, both twins are destroyed because they have rejected their true identities. Also, Greenaway toys with the notion of the swan as representative of twins, much as Marina Carr manipulates this idea in Portia Coughlan.
A Zed and Two Noughts features Oswald and Oliver Deuce, who were born conjoined but are now separated. The twins are virtually estranged zoologists who are obsessed with the research and photography of the decay process. At the film’s opening, the twins’ wives are killed in an automobile accident when a swan flies into the windshield. The wives’ friend, Alba Bewick, survives the crash, but loses one of her legs. The twins become obsessed with Alba, incessantly questioning her about the events of the crash. The twins’ visits eventually involve sexual encounters with Alba, culminating in a menage a trois. Alba, feeling incomplete as a woman after her second leg is amputated, wills herself to die and grants the twins permission to photograph her body during its decay process. By the end of the film, the twins, who have undergone many physical changes, are almost identical. Instead of filming Alba’s decay, the two dress in a three-piece suit built for them to wear as though they were conjoined, and they lethally inject each other and pose nude in front of cameras so that their decay will be recorded for posterity. In the film’s final shot, snails have enveloped the twins’ bodies and the camera.

This grisly demise points to Greenaway’s central motif that the twins, surnamed “Deuce,” are two noughts without each other. The twins’ denial of their shared identity
merits punishment, which is meted out by a swan. With his choice for the character of the Grim Reaper, Greenaway recalls the Celtic myth of the Children of Lir, in which two sets of twins are transformed into swans by a cruel stepmother. In Greenaway's tale, this mythic twin-swan seems to purposefully kill the estranged twins' wives who have replaced the twins as life partners. Oswald and Oliver are thus rejoined and discover together the path to their destiny of shared death. Greenaway seemingly suggests that the twins must be punished for abandoning each other on two occasions. The twins, conjoined at birth, are surgically separated in their childhood. In their early adulthood, the twins marry and become psychologically and emotionally distanced from each other. Greenaway represents this distance at the film's beginning with the twins' dissimilar appearances. Oswald is dark-headed and always clad in a suit, while Oliver dresses more casually and his hair is artificially reddish blond. As the film progresses and the twins reestablish their bond, Oliver's hair becomes darker and the twins assume identical styles of dress. In one of the film's most striking images, the twins go jogging together in identical sweat suits with their legs and torsos tied together. The twins' shared identity is symbolized by the suit tailored for them to wear as though they were still
conjoined. The twins wear this suit on two occasions: first, when they are watching a film of a zebra decaying, during which one asks, "Do you think Adam was a Siamese twin?", and second, as they prepare to kill themselves.

The twins are curiously aware of the unusual nature of their bond by which Oliver qualifies himself and Oswald as "freaks and rarities." The writer suggests that for the Deuce twins, there is no self apart from the twin bond. Greenaway's grotesque portrayal of the twins' bond and identity extends to the twins' sexual lives. Before becoming sexually involved with Alba, the twins each have sex with Venus de Milo, a nymphomaniac who works at the zoo. In the film's most salient scene, the twins lie nude on either side of Alba in her bed. When Alba asks the twins to switch sides, Oswald insists, "I'm happy on the left. I know my place and I'm very comfortable in it." Alba then guesses that the twins were once conjoined and they show her their scars below the ear, at the shoulder, and along the hip and shin. The twins' sexual identities become further intertwined when Alba bears twins and alleges that one belongs to each of the Deuce twins.

Suspicions surrounding twins' sexualities manifest themselves time and again in dramatic literature and films. In the small sampling of films chosen for discussion here,
five of these seven films somehow treat the sexualities of the twin pair. *Dead Ringers* and *A Zed and Two Noughts* suggest that the twins' identities so enmesh that their sexual identities are also shared. *Sisters*, to be discussed later, features a woman who attributes the death of her conjoined twin to her husband's longing to sexually commune with her away from her conjoined twin. *Zorro, the Gay Blade* starring George Hamilton and *Love! Valour! Compassion!* starring Jason Alexander choose as their focal points the suspicions that surround the sexualities and sexual practices of twins.

*Zorro, the Gay Blade*, made in 1981, and *Love! Valour! Compassion!*, made in 1997, are the only two comedies being discussed in this chapter. Curiously, both of these films feature homosexual twins, and one or both of the twins is removed from society in each of these works. As mentioned earlier, these twins seem to represent society's desire to restore its selfhood because the twins, embodiments of the fear that none of us is unique, are destroyed or removed from society.

*Zorro, the Gay Blade* cleverly treats the Zorro folk hero by doubling the instances of mistaken identity through its employment of twins as the legendary Zorro. However, the writer, Greg Alt, makes a thought-provoking choice in
his portrayal of one of the twins as homosexual. While Bunny Wigglesworth’s homosexuality often serves as a source for punchlines, his portrayal as the “gay blade” suggests society’s tendency toward outcasting as does McNally’s stage play, *Love! Valour! Compassion!*

In Alt’s version of the folk tale, Zorro, the father of Don Diego of California and Bunny Wigglesworth of England, dies. The masked hero bequeaths his sword and cape to his sons, who he implores to protect the poor. Don Diego courageously saves peasants from oppression, but one evening, he narrowly escapes being captured by jumping from a balcony and breaks his foot. The following day, Diego’s long-lost twin brother, Bunny Wigglesworth, visits his brother while on leave from the Royal Navy. Diego insists that Bunny become Zorro while he recuperates, and Bunny agrees to do so, provided he can embellish Zorro’s disguise and use a whip, his weapon of choice. Bunny thwarts the plans of the evil alcalde and romances Diego’s girlfriend, Charlotte, until Diego’s foot heals. The alcalde sets a trap for Zorro by threatening to execute Charlotte, and of course, just before Don Diego is killed, Bunny arrives and rescues his brother. Together, the twin Zorros assist the people in imprisoning the alcalde, thereby ending the corruption in their community.
Although one may perceive the entirely frivolous nature of this film, many of the anxieties expressed concerning twins' shared sexualities and/or deviant sexual behavior surface in much of the film's humor. The ancient suspicion held in Bali and India that twins become sexually involved in the womb emerges in Bunny's hint to Diego who does not recognize him: "We were once womb-mates!" Furthermore, the twins' sexualities become a focal point in that Alt chooses their orientations as their principal differentiating characteristic. The twins' very names speak to this distinction: "Don Diego" bears a marked masculinity, while "Bunny Wigglesworth" is clearly effeminate. Furthermore, Diego's thick Spanish accent exudes machismo, while Bunny's British dialect is flowery and delivered with a lisp. These characteristics provide early hints for the audience, but no doubt remains in terms of Bunny's orientation when he responds with a marked S & M inference that he does not defend himself with a sword, but, "actually, I'm not all that bad with a whip!"

Bunny's wardrobe supports the perception that homosexual men enjoy impeccable taste in clothing. Bunny's preoccupation with garments is established early in the film when he proclaims, "I want the world to recognize Zorro the gay blade!" This recognition, he maintains, must be helped
along with flashy costumes. So, he chooses bright colors for his capes and hats, adorns them with fringe and fruit, and carries a hanky. Bunny admonishes the poor after performing a deed of bravery, “remember my friends--there is no shame in being poor, only dressing poorly!” The screen writer most clearly indicates Bunny’s sexuality as an ostracizing characteristic through the alcalde’s remarks about homosexuals. Esteban, the alcalde, tells Diego that “For the first time we have a drawing of this swishbuckler.” Later, when Esteban suspects Diego as being Zorro, he demands that he “Say something like a sissy boy, swing your hips, now flap your wrists.” Finally, when addressing Bunny who is disguised as a priest, Esteban notes, “Father, I have heard that many of your brethren are actually sissy boys.”

While the screen writer uses Bunny’s sexuality as the butt of many of the film’s jokes, he also hints that Bunny is discontented because of his sexual orientation. One evening, Bunny as Zorro appears at Charlotte’s to donate to her charity the latest tax money he has stolen from the alcalde. Charlotte confesses her love and offers herself to him, but he refuses. As he turns away and leaves alone, the viewer is jarred into a feeling of sympathy for this soul with no companion. The film’s final image again instills in the viewer a feeling of sadness for Bunny, as he rides alone
to return to England and the Navy, while the newlyweds, Diego and Charlotte, ride off into the sunset to begin a new life together.

Terrence McNally’s *Love! Valour! Compassion!* likewise presents the notion of society’s outcasting of homosexuals. Like *Idioglossia*, this play was transferred into the film medium a few years following its production on stage. Unlike Handley’s play, however, *Love! Valour! Compassion!* underwent few changes in this transfer. The original Broadway cast remains intact in the film, with the exception of Nathan Lane, who was replaced by Jason Alexander as Buzz. The script also remained intact, with the exception of some rearranging of scenes.

In terms of his use of twins as representative of outcasts within society, McNally remains constant. Although the camera is capable of tricking the eye into thinking that one actor is present as both twins simultaneously, McNally keeps one of the twins off screen except in two scenes: first, when James and John first arrive together, and finally, when James collapses at the rehearsal for the AIDS benefit.

Unfortunately, the camera dilutes McNally’s reconciliation scene between the twins. As both twins appear to be present, John does not narrate this scene as he
does in the play, and the audience, therefore, does not gain an understanding of how the twins believe they share one soul. Furthermore, the emotional impact of James’ forgiving John is lost.

Despite this change, McNally continues to employ the twins as the outcasts in this group. This is perhaps best reflected in the final shot in which the group frolics in the lake together in the moonlight as John smokes and spectates alone. Furthermore, both twins die alone, as they do in the stage version.

*Sisters*, a horror film made in 1973 from a Brian De Palma play, echoes McNally’s use of twins in that De Palma’s twins are depicted in the most grotesque fashion imaginable, and as inadmissible members of society. De Palma’s film, like *Side Show* and *The Wedding of the Siamese Twins*, suggests that society copes with its fear of conjoined twins by exploiting the pair.

*Sisters* features Danielle Blanchion, a French-Canadian model who appears on a game show along with a gentleman named Philip. Later, the viewer will understand that Danielle has recently lost her twin during an operation to separate the conjoined twins. Philip takes Danielle to dinner after the game show, and her ex-husband, Emil, interrupts their date. Philip escorts Danielle home, where
they spend the night together. The next morning, Philip overhears an argument which Danielle explains as the result of her twin sister’s jealousy of any man who spends time with Danielle. She also explains that that day is the twins’ birthday. Philip goes to the store, as Danielle requests, to refill a prescription for her, and he orders a cake for the twins. When he returns, he presents the cake to Danielle, who brutally emasculates and murders him with a butcher knife. Grace, a journalist who lives across the street, witnesses the murder. Before Grace arrives with the police, Emil and Danielle have cleaned the apartment and concealed Philip’s body in the couch. Although the police find no evidence of a murder, Grace continues her investigation by interviewing a writer for Life magazine who covered a story of the Blanchion twins’ separation operation the previous year. Grace follows Danielle and Emil to a psychiatric hospital which Emil administrates, and Emil drugs Grace when he finds her questioning patients. Emil tries to have sex with Danielle, but she refuses. Emil pleads with her, but Danielle castrates and stabs him to death with a scalpel. Danielle is implicated in the murder, but Grace, hypnotized by Emil, has no recollection of Danielle’s killing Philip or Emil.
Sisters shares commonalities with The Wedding of the Siamese Twins and Side Show in that De Palma also takes up the idea of society's exploitation of conjoined twins. In De Palma's film, this exploitation occurs at several levels. Emil exploits the Blanchion twins, Danielle and Dominique, to propel his medical career: he publicizes the upcoming complicated procedure he will perform and he films himself surgically separating the twins. Furthermore, Emil separates the twins to improve his marriage with Danielle. The public likewise exploits these conjoined girls: the Life writer recalls that each of the numerous letters received concerning the Blanchion twins' separation operation contained the same "morbid fascination." Finally, De Palma himself exploits the twins in his grotesque portrayal of this pair: De Palma examines all societal fears about twins which have been discussed here, including twins' struggle for identity, the power of the twin bond which has overcome barriers of language and death, and twins' sexualities.

De Palma first presents the twins' struggle for identity in the argument between the twins which Philip overhears. De Palma craftily leads the viewer to believe that Danielle's twin is still alive, as he films Danielle opening a door to a bedroom, and two shadows are cast on the door as Danielle disguises her voice to sound like
Dominique’s. Here, De Palma suggests that the twins not only struggled with each other for their own identity, but Danielle is torn by her efforts to express both her own identity and Dominique’s identity after her death. Danielle seems to take on Dominique’s traits, one of which is her jealousy of men attracted to Danielle. Dominique, described by doctors as the “disturbed one,” so infiltrates Danielle with her jealousy that Danielle as Dominique brutally murders two men.

The strong bond between these twins is reminiscent of the bond between Portia and Gabriel in Portia Coughlan. Like Portia, Danielle becomes so overwhelmed by guilt derived from her twin’s death that she destroys those who threaten any bond remaining between herself and her dead twin. Emil sensed this guilt in Danielle both before and after Dominique’s death:

Dominique never died for you. You kept her alive in your mind. Sometimes you even became her to reassure yourself of her existence. You could never accept the guilt, the terrible guilt for Dominique’s death. It was hard for me to accept what happened...that we could never live together as man and wife. Every time I made love to you, Dominique came back and took control of you. I did not know how to rid you of her. All I could do was give you the pills, keep you sedated and if she went away, I tried to warn you about Dominique. Dominique is dangerous for both of us.
Also like Portia, Danielle's bond with Dominique extends to their sexualities. Emil's decision to separate the girls was motivated by Dominique's stabbing Danielle in the belly with gardening shears when Danielle told her twin she was carrying Emil's child. As Danielle explains about her argument with Dominique to Philip, "She gets so angry with me when I'm with anyone except for her...first with my husband and now with you." Danielle seems to be carrying out Dominique's wishes when she kills her victims by first emasculating them.

As has been shown, society's fascination with twins has manifested itself through multifarious film genres, perhaps because the postmodern anxiety concerning selfhood is so clearly reflected in this medium. Film is seemingly more effective in its presentation of anxieties concerning selfhood because of its dependence upon the reproducible image. The stage, conversely, seems better equipped to present the wonder of the twin bond: audience members who share space with actors portraying twins should be able to sense the unusual bond between twins. Jerzy Grotowski perhaps explains this phenomenon most adeptly when he describes the actor-spectator relationship as a "perceptual, direct, 'live' communion" (19). Interestingly, playwrights and screen writers alike have voiced the same anxieties
concerning twins, including twins’ identities, the nature of the twin bond, twins’ sexualities, and twins’ connections with the grotesque. Furthermore, like playwrights, writers of diverse film genres depict the twins as scapegoats for society. Because these writers for different mediums are expressing similar orientations toward the phenomenon of twins, one may conclude that the perspectives being presented are viable representatives of society’s view of twins.
CONCLUSION

The preceding chapters have shown that today’s playwrights have employed twins in staggeringly divergent ways as vehicles for varying themes. From Paul Stephen Lim to Philip Ridley, these playwrights have consistently vented varying age-old anxieties concerning twins and other matters and have more doggedly employed the twin as representative of anxieties than did their playwriting predecessors. Paul Stephen Lim’s *Conpersonas* and Gerald Moon’s *Corpse!* each discuss the phenomenon of twins’ confused identities, a confusion which precipitates in their protagonists a rivalry which causes either one or both of the twins to meet his end. For the Ziegler twins and the Farrants, Lacan’s Symbolic Father exists in the form of a twin and is removed by the other twin who has been deprived of his mother’s attention. The plays of Marina Carr and Mark Handley each examine twins who have lost their soul-mates. Both *Portia Coughlan* and *Idioglossia* suggest that the bond between twins is such that neither death nor a language pre-coded by society can separate the twins. While plays such as *Conpersonas* and *Portia Coughlan* discuss the sometimes sexual nature of the bond between twins, Paula Vogel’s *The Mineola Twins* and Terrence McNally’s *Love! Valour! Compassion!* principally explore the sexuality of twin pairs. In Vogel’s
play, the anxiety concerning the twin relationship resides within the twin pair itself as opposed to the greater society within which the relationship occurs. Conversely, McNally uses the Jeckyll twins as outcasts within a microcosm of outsiders and extends their role even unto martyrdom. Finally, Burton Cohen’s *The Wedding of the Siamese Twins* and Bill Russell and Henry Krieger’s *Side Show* examine society’s exploitation of twins perceived to be grotesque. Cohen’s play examines the original Siamese twins’ desire for independence, thereby preying upon society’s fear of enslavement. Cohen, like Russell and Krieger, explores society’s curiosity concerning the sexual practices of conjoined twins, and *Side Show*’s twins force the audience members to examine themselves and analyze their definitions of the grotesque. Haley and Presley Stray of *The Pitchfork Disney*, while not physically conjoined, are bonded by their fears and disturbed mental states. Philip Ridley’s play exploits the psychological abnormalities of his twins in order to create his haunting work.

The twin further serves as a symbol of anxieties unrelated to the phenomenon of twins. Perhaps playwrights’ interest in twins lies simply in the twins’ physical representation of a mirror: recent playwrights have used twins to hold up a mirror to society and force the audience
to confront its fears and/or shortcomings. The 1970s playwrights, beyond their dealing with the phenomenon of twins, also express America's anxiety on the heels of the Vietnam War. In the wake of this experience, the United States entered a tumultuous era, as veterans returned to a lukewarm reception and demonstrators cursed our leaders for allowing the conflict to occur. The Vietnam War shook our identity as a nation, for it represented the first international engagement in which we failed to emerge victorious. The Watergate scandal which culminated in the resignation of President Nixon made real society's fear of being deceived: clearly, 1974's Conpersonas capitalizes upon this notion, in addition to the questioning of one's identity. Furthermore, the civil rights movements of the 1960s suggested a re-ordering of our societal hierarchy: African-Americans, women, and other groups insisted on their rights to be treated with equality. The twin plays of the 1970s, '80s and '90s seem to be a reaction to this notion, as twins seem to replace African-Americans and other entities as society's "other".

The 1980s suffered anxieties different from those of the previous ten years. One might argue that in this decade and the next, our society experienced anxiety over stewardship of our country's prosperity, as we accrued more
wealth than any other country in history. Interestingly, both Gerald Moon and Burton Cohen explore this anxiety in their twin plays, each written in the 1980s. In Moon’s *Corpse!*, a twin lusts after the privileged life his twin has earned, and he murders his twin to gain his brother’s wealth. Cohen’s *The Wedding of the Siamese Twins* highlights society’s exploitation of the original Siamese twins: perhaps Cohen is expressing society’s guilt at the prospect that America’s prosperity is derived from the exploitation of other countries, or even her own countrymen. The 1980s also saw the explosion of the AIDS crisis: Mark Handley’s 1987 play, *Idioglossia*, expresses the fear of being left behind by a loved one. Again, these playwrights are both expressing anxieties concerning twins as well as anxieties of the times in which they wrote.

The prosperity of the 1980s became the affluence of the 1990s, and society’s guilt concerning this wealth is expressed in *Side Show*, in which the central characters are exploited by society. This decade, dominated by Bill Clinton’s administration, was undoubtedly shaped by the various scandals which besieged the Clinton administration. The public perhaps subconsciously experienced guilt because of its electing a leadership fraught with scandal. This idea of guilt serves as the central subject in Marina Carr’s
1996 play Portia Coughlan. The nightmarish quality of
1997’s The Pitchfork Disney may reflect the anxiety borne of
the horrific school shootings which erupted in the mid-1970s
and ballooned in the 1990s. Paula Vogel’s 1998 play The
Mineola Twins features the subjects of unrequited love and
unconventional family units. This play perhaps expresses
society’s anxiety concerning the deterioration of the family
unit due to an escalating divorce rate. Terrence McNally’s
Love! Valour! Compassion! places twins in the position of
outcast or “other,” a position into which playwrights of the
last thirty years have steadily relegated twins. With this
assignment, McNally physicalizes the notion that twins have
become society’s punching bag for anxieties which are borne
of the phenomenon of twins, as well as those anxieties which
are completely unrelated to the notion of twins.

In its numerous forms and varieties, the fear
associated with twins drives the plays which have been
discussed in this dissertation. This study, which examines
an area of dramatic literature which heretofore has not been
explored in depth, will hopefully motivate other studies and
prove an asset to those interested in the notion of twins,
the anxiety inherent in the phenomenon of twins, and in
recent twin plays not included in this study. This study
has motivated the author to explore further the 1970s, ‘80s,
and '90s films which have concentrated on twins, and she is currently conducting research for a book on the subject. Furthermore, the author intends to write a play featuring only twin characters to be played only by twins in which several twin pairs will discuss society's notions concerning twins.

One may question whether the plays examined are helping to perpetuate the myths associated with twins or if playwrights are trying to enlighten the audience and prompt audience members to modify their perspectives concerning twins. Surprisingly, as we enter the twenty-first century, we appear to be preserving these superstitions, as twin plays and films suggest that twins are evil creatures because they enjoy a close personal bond with a soul-mate, and can often communicate with the twin without a spoken word. Furthermore, society gapes at twins who employ autonomous language or share a pair of legs, while we whisper about the possible sexual combinations twins afford.

Perhaps these statements seem incredulous and exaggerated, and one may argue that twins are no longer viewed with suspicion or used as scapegoats. Before claiming this, however, one might consider society's reactions to these plays which have spanned the last thirty years of advancing science and technology. The critical
acclaim and public acceptance which have accompanied the plays featuring the death of one or both of the twin characters confirm Rene Girard’s theory of scapegoating: twins still serve as society’s scapegoats. The twin characters employed in the plays of the last three decades seem to instigate a cathartic experience for the audience, and therefore, society. Prior to 1970, twins in dramatic literature provided comic opportunities for playwrights in terms of mistaken identity and sibling rivalry. After 1970, twins have overwhelmingly been employed as doers of evil who threaten society and deserve to be removed from the community. Society seems to be using the twins as a vehicle for transporting evil away from society. One might also argue that our sense of selfhood is restored when these doubles are eliminated. Hillel Schwartz writes of this impulse in *The Culture of the Copy*: “The more intrepid our assertions of individual presence, the more makeshift seem our identities, the less retrievable our origins” (378). Interestingly, although twins have been employed in these plays to express postmodern notions concerning selfhood, the playwrights subject their protagonists to the markedly pre-modern practice of scapegoating.

The redirection of the role of twins in plays points to a distinct problem in terms of societal anxiety. Our
society has become increasingly violent over the last three decades. America’s climbing murder rate, increasing problem of domestic violence and even road rage are symptoms of a society anxious about its increasing lack of personal safety in our urbanized society. Perhaps twins are again being placed in the role of scapegoat because society simply needs an outlet. The audience’s vicarious experience of violent acts directed at the twins assuages a degree of society’s anxiety.

Rene Girard’s notion of scapegoating as necessary for maintaining societal balance hauntingly holds true when we examine the success of these plays and films. In all but one of the films discussed in the previous chapter, one or both of the twins die violently. Most of the plays discussed here feature the violent death of one or both of the twins. In Conpersonas, both Mark and Miles shoot themselves, while Corpse’s Evelyn facilitates the murder of his twin. In fact, Rupert is bloodied twice as he is first shot by a blank. Portia Coughlan features the grisly drowning of its title character and numerous speeches detailing Gabriel’s drowning. Nell’s mummified twin Ellen is produced in Idioglossia, while The Mineola Twins’ Myra, though not killed, narrowly escapes a crispy demise when her twin blows up the abortion clinic in which Myra works. In
Love! Valour! Compassion!, James dies of AIDS alone while John dies unmourned. In The Wedding of the Siamese Twins, both of the twins die and scientists and fortune hunters alike scramble for the bodies. In The Pitchfork Disney, Pitchfork threatens both of the twins' lives, but neither twin is killed. Side Show's Violet and Daisy Hilton are the only twins discussed here who are neither threatened with death nor killed. But, one may suggest that their identities are constantly endangered or snuffed out by society's exploitation of their deformities. The critical and popular success of such shows as Corpse!, Portia Coughlan, Idioglossia (particularly in its film form as Nell), The Mineola Twins, and Love! Valour! Compassion! are established by the numerous favorable reviews and revivals each of these plays has received. Interestingly, Side Show, as the only twin play in which the twins' lives are not threatened, was popular with the critics, but was forced to close months before schedule on Broadway as a result of scanty public attendance. Conversely, Love! Valour! Compassion!, Corpse!, and The Mineola Twins enjoyed extended runs on Broadway and in London's West End, while Nell garnered praise from film critics and moviegoers. Despite objective advances, society subjectively continues to fear twins. Perhaps through studies of this nature, society will
be prompted to engage in the full cathartic experience as defined by Aristotle in his Poetics when he suggested that tragedy should be capable of “awakening pity and fear” (48). Hopefully, enlightened audience members will not be hindered by their fears, but will be moved to pity and will develop compassion for the twin’s natural place in society.

Has the device of twins been so thoroughly examined that the notion of twins is now exhausted, or is there some new frontier to be explored in which twins will serve as pioneers? Perhaps the utilization of twins in plays of the last thirty years will be modified or even abandoned as the topic of twins may be viewed as passe due to the cloning of humans which may become a reality in the next few years. If twins cease to serve as society’s scapegoat, Girard informs us that some entity must step up to fulfill that function for society. What segment of society will next serve as scapegoat?
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Playbill for *Side Show.*


“Siamese twins, for day only, the united brothers, Chang-Eng, very respectfully acquaint the ladies and gentlemen of...” Advertisement from 1837. Printed ephemera from the Metropolitan Toronto Library.


*Zorro, the Gay Blade*. Dir. Peter Mendak. CBS/Fox Video, 1981.
VITA

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DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate: Shellie O'Neal

Major Field: Theatre

Title of Dissertation: The Anxious Double: Twins in Plays of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s

Approved:

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Major Professor and Chairman

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Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

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Date of Examination:

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