

2002

An analysis of the plays of Margaret Macnamara

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE PLAYS OF
MARGARET MACNAMARA

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Louisiana State University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
The Department of Theatre

by
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December 2002

To my parents
Dr. Charles Lawson Lufkin
and the memory of
my mother, Elizabeth Mitchell Lufkin

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Abstract:

This dissertation presents Margaret Macnamara's career as a playwright and dramaturg while exploring the cultural and political context of her works. It explores the influences of the Fabian Society on Macnamara's work and places her among such leading independent theatre artists as George Bernard Shaw, Harley Granville Barker, and Nugent Monck. The political context of her work is examined as her play, *Mrs. Hodges* (1920) is compared with Shaw's *Widowers' Houses* and the theatrical context of her work is established as productions of *The Gates of the Morning* (1908) and *Our Little Fancies* (1911) are analyzed. Her plays are grouped by thematic concerns but also presented in chronological order. First, two plays that feature pacifist themes, *The Baby in the Ring* (1918) and *In Safety* (1924), from the interwar period, are analyzed for their allegorical interpretation of controversial subject matter. As Macnamara highlights women's struggles in a patriarchal system in her play, *Light-Gray or Dark?* (1920), *The Witch* (1920) and *Love-Fibs* (1920), she espouses women's rights for independence at a time when there was pressure to revert to traditional gender roles. Discussion of her adaptations of three nineteenth-century novels reveals her desire to examine the influences that impacted her Victorian childhood. Finally, her play, *Florence Nightingale* (1936) is examined for the manner in which it encompasses the social, pacifist, and feminist themes of her earlier works. This dissertation attempts to resurrect Macnamara's work and place it back into circulation in order that it might provide important information and insight for scholars of theatre and women's studies.

Introduction: Margaret Macnamara (1874-1950) British Dramatist

Margaret Macnamara was a playwright whose eighteen published plays and fourteen unfinished manuscripts reflect the concerns of a woman coming of age during the tumultuous and exciting period of early twentieth century England. Her association with George Bernard Shaw, Harley Granville Barker, Elizabeth Robins, Annie Horniman, and Nugent Monck attests to her centrality as a playwright in the Independent Theatre movement. Later in life, she became the Old Vic's first professional dramaturg under the directorship of Tyrone Guthrie which began a friendship that lasted her lifetime. This dissertation reintegrates this important playwright into the annals of theatrical history.

One could say that Macnamara was a woman on the cusp of a new era, given the New Woman concept as well as the overt measures taken by the suffragettes. Having had a traditional Victorian upbringing, Macnamara's challenge was to embrace the revolutionary ideology of the present along with the opportunities it presented for her and other young women. Macnamara became a founding member of the Women's Institute of Henfield, Sussex, which adopted the political values of the Fabian Socialists. Through her involvement in the organization, she became acquainted with such notables as Elizabeth Robins, George Bernard Shaw, Harley Granville Barker, and Beatrice and Sidney Webb. The vibrant activism of the organization's members must have inspired all of its associates to contribute their best efforts to the many causes espoused by the group.

While Beatrice Webb was writing detailed and thorough documentation of London's slums to display her antipathy for the excesses of capitalism, Macnamara began to incorporate her newly developed feminist, pacifist, and socialist concerns into drama. Perhaps she followed Shaw's lead into the realm of drama as expression of ideology. In fact, George Bernard Shaw strongly encouraged Macnamara's efforts as a playwright, and later helped to support and produce her works for the stage. The Women's Theatre collection at the University of Bristol contains several letters from Shaw to Macnamara.

Besides feminism and social justice issues, pacifism remained one of Macnamara's primary concerns. Perhaps as a result of witnessing two world wars during her lifetime, Macnamara developed an abiding interest in the origins of conflict. Within her plays, she examines the interaction between everyday individuals as a microcosmic representation of larger world conflict. She incorporated Quaker ideology into one play, especially the Friends' notion that all persons possess an inner light as well as some inherent knowledge of God and consequent equality to others.

Socialist concerns for humane living conditions also surface frequently in her works. She writes plays about the housing concerns in England and working class women's efforts to provide adequate living conditions for their children. In one play, she utilizes slapstick comedic devices to portray the cramped living quarters of a family. Macnamara's ability to blend passionate ideology with lively dialogue,

complex plot structure, as well as rich characterization demonstrates her remarkable craftsmanship as a theatrical artist.

Feminist concerns abound in all of her works, but she particularly addresses the double standard and women's subordinate position to men. She also questions the notion of accepted truths. Like Caryl Churchill, she seeks to empower women by giving them the ability to redefine themselves. While not providing answers, she invites women and men to embark upon new adventures, forge new identities, and acquire new definitions of their world. She incorporated many of these feminist ideals within her adaptations of Victorian novelists: Jane Austen, George Eliot, and Elizabeth Gaskell. Her play about the life of Nightingale can be seen as a culmination of her talents and abilities as a playwright.

An overview of Macnamara's contributions to early twentieth century British drama should be acknowledged before proceeding to biographical information about the playwright. Margaret Macnamara (1874-1950) participated in the growth of the Independent Theatre movement that had been inaugurated by J. T. Grein in 1891 and developed further by George Vedrenne, Harley Granville-Barker, and George Bernard Shaw among others. These leaders evidenced a commitment to advancing the style and subject matter of theatrical arts in England to coincide with the turn of the century's progressive ambiance. Since Shaw had long maintained an interest in, and support of, women's issues, it is likely that he sought opportunities to bring feminist perspectives to the forefront of public awareness.

Since Macnamara had not yet established a name or reputation in the field, her submissions of plays to the Incorporated Stage Society, an adjunct of the Fabian Society, would have had to stand on their own merit. Shaw personally sponsored a production of her play about religious fanaticism and hypocrisy entitled, *The Gates of the Morning* in 1908. Provincial theatres followed the example of the Royal Court in producing experimental drama. In 1911, Annie Horniman chose Macnamara's *Our Little Fancies* for production. In 1923, Nugent Monck's Maddermarket Theatre in Norwich successfully ran Macnamara's *Wives and Daughters*, an adaptation of Elizabeth Gaskell's novel of the same name. It must be noted that her Jane Austen adaptation earned an annuity for Macnamara and has even been produced by theatre companies in the United States.

As critics have since observed about Macnamara's work, the lively dialogue that she so artfully composed readily engages readers or listeners. In addition, her drama never fails to incorporate subject matter of topical relevance for the early twentieth century intellectual mind. She addressed issues in popular debate at the time such as: science versus religion, heredity versus environment, capitalism versus socialism, pacifism versus the necessity of defense, and feminism versus traditional notions of womanhood. Macnamara demonstrated great skill in presenting varied aspects of a character or situation and then reconciling the antithetical aspects into a unified whole. In correlation with the Hegelian dialectic, Macnamara shows how oppositional forces can act as a means of integrating disparate issues. Yet, the playwright adds a further dimension to Hegel's paradigm by proposing that a

resolution of conflicting issues relies upon the sustenance of viable relationships.

Macnamara's decided emphasis upon interpersonal associations as representative of larger social frameworks serves almost as a trademark of her work. While her plays could easily be classified as "dramas of ideas," she nevertheless transcends this designation by her manner of breathing life into characters and situations.

The playwright's material is now part of the Women's Theatre Collection at the University of Bristol, England, which was established in 1990 to provide a record of women's contributions in the areas of acting, directing, playwriting, design, management, or research. The process of obtaining appropriate placement for Macnamara's papers holds its own drama. In her last will and testament, Macnamara appointed her niece, Sylvia Legge, as the executor and trustee of her estate. In this same document, she specified that the Incorporated Society of Authors should be given the authority to handle her copyrighted works after her demise. She granted them the right to use their "own discretion with due care" when entering contracts regarding the publication or performance of her works. Macnamara also indicated that any royalties from such agreements be forwarded to Sylvia Legge. Without promotional efforts or personal attention to the matter by the playwright herself, most of her work fell out of publication shortly after her death in 1950.

As Sylvia Legge advanced in age, she began to realize the importance of her responsibility in finding appropriate placement for the collection of valuable materials at her disposal. During the 1980s, Ms. Legge contacted several organizations but remained unable to stir viable interest in her aunt's work. A letter

from a representative of the Covent Garden Theatre Museum, an ancillary of the British Museum, expressed interest in obtaining only the letters written by George Bernard Shaw. However, Ms. Legge did not think it wise to separate these rare documents from the rest of the collection. Finally, she was able to obtain appropriate placement at the newly established special collections for women's theatre at the University of Bristol. Ms. Legge hoped that the placement of the papers at this location would grant theatre scholars and practitioners accessibility to this momentous body of work. I hope to fulfill Ms. Legge's aspiration to restore Macnamara's work to the realm of public discourse once again with the realization that her work stands as a legacy for the many obscured voices of women during these years of transition from Victorianism to modernity.

A Short Biography

When Margaret Mary Mack (later changed to Macnamara by the playwright) was born in 1874, Victorian ideals had been fully integrated into British life. With England's leadership in industrialization, they obtained a prominent position of world power. Still, many British people protested the depersonalization and exploitation that coincided with mass production. As the new century unfolded, the British gradually relinquished their status in the world as colonized subjects protested their rule. At home, women petitioned for the right to vote and laborers demanded a stronger voice. As potent weapons of mass destruction were put to use in two world wars, British philosophers, writers, poets, and artists expressed their disillusionment. Thus, Macnamara wrote at a time when the world showed palpable growing pains.

Therefore, it seems natural that her drama emphasizes the necessity of sustaining a sense of personal identity in the face of oppressive circumstances.

It is important to establish background information about the playwright's life before embarking upon an analysis of her works. Therefore, a summary written by Helen Whittle, a librarian and researcher of Sussex County, England, is transcribed here as received. As a means of providing further information from the source material at the Bristol Collection, Ms. Whittle's research has been combined with information obtained from that collection to compose a narrative of Macnamara's life.

Ms. Whittle's account begins as follows:

Before Patricia asked me to help with research for this project I must confess that I had never heard of Margaret Macnamara, or of Elizabeth Robins and the group of literary ladies centred on the Heyfield area of Sussex. Margaret Mary Macnamara was baptised 30 August 1874 at Worth, Sussex, the eldest child of James Andrew Mack and his wife Margaret [nee Norris]. The search for further information and background detail was a fascinating but also at times frustrating one as, one by one, the "facts" with which we had been provided, proved to be, at best, inaccurate and at worst, highly misleading. One of the first "facts" to bite the dust was Margaret's "Irishness." We had been told that a local resident remembered Miss MacNamara as being "very Irish, riding round Henfield on a bicycle dressed all in green." Margaret may well have done so, but any claim to an Irish identity was purely the product of her [very evident] imagination. Set against the background of the turbulent situation in Ireland at the time however [c1911-1925 - the height of the fight for Irish independence] it is easy to see why she might choose to cloak herself in this identity, especially in the context of her friendship with George Bernard Shaw and his circle (Letter from Helen Whittle, February 2002).

Whittle refers to a reference that can be found in Angela V. John's published

biography of pre-eminent actress and established playwright, Elizabeth Robins. In

Professor John's book, *Elizabeth Robins: Staging a Life, 1862-1956*, she conveys how

Robins became acquainted with Margaret Macnamara. As a respite from the clamour

of London life, Robins purchased a small estate called Backsettown in Henfield, Sussex. Apparently, Robins showed her characteristic leadership role in the small community by serving as the president of the local Women's Institute (WI). At the same time, Margaret Macnamara and her sister, Helena Mack, were active participants in the local organization where Macnamara acted as recording secretary. After an interview with an elderly resident that remembered Macnamara as a friend of Robins, Professor John provides the following insight about the playwright:

One Henfield woman recalls her as always dressed in emerald green and riding a green bicycle and she preferred to be known as Margaret Macnamara. As secretary of the Henfield WI and an ardent believer that 'Nothing short of the Socialist Revolution is really worth working for', she was keen for the Institute to become politicised. It was rumoured locally that it was anyway a Ladies Socialist Club! (John, 204)

In contrast with Ms. Whittle's sense of resolution about this matter, I still believe it is likely that Irish ancestry may be found in generations previous to the ones as yet uncovered by research. Since Gaelic names were often Anglicised as families migrated to England and sought the easiest means of assimilation, a name like Macnamara could have easily been shortened to Mack. Unless the playwright chose the name randomly as an authorial pseudonym, it seems logical that Macnamara would have been chosen as a way of reviving a family name especially since the choice also held political significance. Still, this matter requires further genealogical research.

In the next portion of the narrative, Ms. Whittle summarizes the data gleaned from birth certificates, death records, marriage licenses, and census data as she writes:

Margaret's early home life must have been a turbulent one. James Andrew and his wife went on to have five more children - Andrew Arthur [baptised 2 Jan 1875, Worth], Nora Elizabeth [baptised 5 May 1878, Worth], Helena Norris [born c 1880, South Stoneham, Hampshire], Kathleen Sophia [born c 1882, Sevenoaks, Kent] and Maude Agnes [born c. 1884, Sevenoaks, Kent]. Where their money came from, it is difficult to tell. James Andrew is described in the Baptismal Register as a "Gentleman" and on his Marriage Certificate as "Esquire" and on the various Census entries as "Living on own means" or "Independent" but his background is, at best, obscure and his family does not appear in any of the standard reference works such as Walford's County Families or Burke's Landed Gentry. Moreover the family did not have a settled home, moving from Worth [c.1874 to c.1878], to South Stoneham [c.1880], to Sevenoaks [c.1881 to c.1884], to Brighton, Sussex [c.1891-c.1894] to Partridge Green, Sussex [c.1913]. There may have been other homes in between. At the time of the 1891 Census they were at Brighton, living at Gloucester Place in the fashionable Steyne area, with a household which boasted a ladies' maid, cook, housemaid and parlourmaid. Ten years earlier [at Sevenoaks] the household had included "only" two general servants and a nursemaid. Family stories indicate that James Andrew lived life to the fullest, playing cricket for the county, riding as Master of Foxhounds for the Crawley and Horsham Hunt and competing in a Point to Point [steeplechase] at the age of 65 or 70 [as he died at the age of 66 it was presumably the former!] Tragedy struck in 1913. James Andrew died aged 66 leaving the respectable sum of £11,180/8/3d, reduced after payment of debts to £3/598/0/8d. Just three months later Margaret [his wife] also died, her estate a much reduced £854/15/3d, indicating that James Andrew had also bequeathed considerable problems. Margaret had to care for both parents towards the end and later, with the help of sister Helena, also had to cope with at least two of her elderly aunts (Letter from Helen Whittle, February, 2002).

The fact that the Mack name could not be found among Walford's or Burke's listings of the time and still carries the title of 'Esquire', further indicates that her father's ancestry may not have been English. Once again, I believe that the dramatist's choice of a pen name so close to her family name, in correlation with her boasting an Irish heritage, may indicate more than a vivid use of imagination.

As she put the word out that she would like to add all the information she could find before depositing the material, Sylvia Legge received several letters from

relatives that conveyed all of their knowledge about family life or background information. According to one relative's recollection of parents' conversations, she remembers hearing that her grandparents' income had been derived from a substantial inheritance left to Margaret Mack (the playwright's mother). As corroborated by Helen Whittle's collected data, the family seems to have lived fairly well throughout most of their lives. Another letter indicates that James (the playwright's father) supplemented the family income with woodworking and furniture making. Apparently, James sold a great many pieces of finely handcrafted furniture to appreciative friends and relatives.

Barbara, a relative of the family, details the events surrounding the loss of the family's pension fund. (Letter to Sylvia Legge, December 30, 1983) A solicitor and "friend" of the family reportedly took the liberty of borrowing large sums of money without first obtaining permission, and subsequently used it for his own investment purposes. Ultimately, he proved unable to restore it as purportedly intended. This substantial loss of resources naturally took a great toll upon the family. As for the father's response to this incident, he proved unable to show the strength of resolution to prosecute the individual for his misappropriation of their funds and was thus unable to retrieve compensation. Related to this event perhaps, MacNamara's parents lived the latter part of their lives as serious alcoholics.

On the lighter side of family life, another relative details one of those often-repeated tales that, at first look, holds value only for the amusement it offers to family members. Yet, the story provides helpful insight about the parents' relationship and

background. Furthermore, the anecdote offers a hint about the kind of humor that the family enjoyed during gatherings as sentimental stories of the past were shared. As the story goes, James Mack was compelled to wait several years before he could officially court Margaret Norris since she was several years his senior. When invited to the Norris home for dinner finally, he revealed his tendency to sometimes act in an overly ostentatious manner. After a shepherd's pie and large two-pound steak was placed upon the table, the girls each requested a piece of the pie. When his turn came instead of answering, young James pulled out a large blade from his holster and chopped the large steak in half with a violent show of force. Of course, the young women at the table had to make a great effort to stifle their giggles. Yet, everyone further observed the young guest pick up half of the steak with his fork and drop it upon his plate. As if this action did not show enough flamboyance, he then made a flippant comment about splitting a cherry in half if it was meant to be shared. After being kicked forcefully under the table by his betrothed, he began to realize the foolishness of his actions. For their part, the Norris girls could no longer restrain their laughter. The story ended with the humorous manner in which James later sought consolation from his sweetheart for the large bruise upon his shin, yet was offered no sympathy. Although minor in nature, this recollection holds value for conveying something about the personality traits of each of Macnamara's parents and their marital relationship.

Margaret Norris Mack is described as being rather authoritative towards her husband. On the other hand, she could easily be moved to amusement at his antics

against her better inclinations. To coincide with her preoccupation about the family's reputation, she was said to have forbidden any discussion of her husband's alcoholism. Showing a propensity for weakness in the face of overwhelming responsibilities, she often relegated household and childcare duties to her oldest daughter and namesake, Margaret. Later in life, Helena Mack shared this burden with her older sister.

Given her mother's inclinations to fluctuate between demonstrations of impotence and unyielding authority, Macnamara apparently responded with resentment to this reversal of roles. After an aunt offered to send one of the girls to university, Macnamara was passed over for that chance since it was agreed by all that her services were too badly needed at home. The dramatist reportedly remarked of this incident later in life with hints of bitterness. Relatives recall that Macnamara knew that her duty to the family had often been taken for granted. Since she and Helena had been left with the responsibility of caring for their elderly parents, her expression of feeling must have held some basis in fact. In correspondence to this matter, Macnamara felt that her dreams had too often been postponed. The following excerpt from Ms. Whittle's summary coincides with information obtained from the relatives' letters:

Helena Norris Mack, the only daughter to attend University, courtesy of her aunt Anne Elizabeth Mack, remained in Henfield, unmarried, also displaying literary aspirations, writing and producing plays for the local Women's Institute until her death in 19?. Margaret remained bitter that she had been passed over for this opportunity to further her education, apparently as her aunt seems to have felt that it was her duty to remain at home and care for her younger siblings. Helena seems to have been a "safe pair of hands," acting as

Executrix or Administrator for the estates of a considerable number of her aunts as well as her mother.

My research has revealed little of the subsequent lives of Kathleen or Maude although both subsequently married and produced children. It is not within the scope of this project to follow up on their lives. Margaret's mother, Margaret Norris, was born in Liverpool in 1845, the daughter of Edward Norris and his wife, Sophie. Edward, his father Adam, and other members of the Norris family were all members of the legal profession, although his grandfather, John Norris had been a [presumably successful] maltster at Rufford, Lancashire. Edward died at the comparatively young age of forty-nine leaving an estate which grew from a modest £450 at his death to £2,000 two years later. His wife is not named in his Will which suggests that she predeceased him and young Margaret may have been sent to live with relatives in the South of England as her marriage to James Andrew took place at Mells, Somerset, a considerable distance both from Lancashire and Sussex (Letter from Helen Whittle, February, 2002).

As indicated by the courtship incident of his youth, Macnamara's father, James Andrew, could vacillate from a display of arrogance to a show of sheepish humility within a brief space of time. His children remembered their father as a rather benevolent dictator and a typical Victorian patriarch. In letters from relatives, they recall feeling anxious around him since he often acted unpredictably. Although he was often gregarious and enjoyed the spectacular, he could just as suddenly become harsh and exacting. Throughout his life, he associated any negative experiences as a sign of his ultimate condemnation by God. During his childhood, an outspoken relative typified the Victorian view of God's lurking desire to punish and condemn sinners in her comment that James Andrew's many illness must be a sign that he was not one of God's Elect. For the rest of his life, he struggled with that concern and in latter years, it became rather an obsession. For instance, he attributed his continual battle with asthma to God's vengeance.

His children had memories of a hunched, red-faced figure gasping desperately for breath while firmly grasping at the kitchen table until his fingers turned blue. However, he refused to see a doctor because any negative report about his health might confirm his worst fears. Due to his background, James Mack fought any adversity with the same kind of fierce desperation that an average person reserves for crises. While he vehemently denied that he believed his aunt's prediction, his frequent references to the incident served as a sign of his preoccupation with the event. His inner torment surfaced in frequent outbursts of anger and surrender to alcoholism. It must have been distressing to remain committed to silence about the family's problems. Even as adults, the family secrets were kept as such for the sake of maintaining their reputation in the community.

In the next section of Ms. Whittle's summary, she conveys information about the branch of the family to which Margaret's legacy and inheritance had been bestowed. Macnamara's sister, Norah Mack Legge, and her children, must have shown the strongest support and interest in their aunt and thus won her loyalty and affection:

The siblings must have been diverse characters. Norah went on to make what seems to have been a highly respectable marriage to Sir Walter Legge. Margaret must have been particularly close to this branch of the family as, in her Will 31 January 1934, Norah's children were prominent among the beneficiaries and, in due course, Sylvia May Legge, Norah's daughter, was her Executrix. Whether there was a cooling of this relationship or whether she later grew closer to her other siblings' families, by a first Codicil dated 5 May 1940 she left a small legacy to sister Maude and by a second Codicil dated 19 Jan 1949 she switched the residue of her estate from Sylvia [who nevertheless remained a substantial beneficiary and Executrix] to her sister Kathleen or, in

default, to Maude's daughter Nancy (Letter from Helen Whittle, February, 2002).

The following excerpt from Ms. Whittle's summary contains information about the only male among Margaret's siblings, Andrew Arthur Mack. In some ways, the information Ms. Whittle has obtained conflicts with relatives' reports of Arthur:

Andrew Arthur had received a good education at Aldenham Grammar in Hertfordshire, possibly by scholarship, and went on to study at Christ's College, Oxford. He worked for many years as a teacher in Buenos Aires before serving with distinction in WWI achieving the rank of Sergeant Major in the Royal Army Service Corps, attached to the Royal Army Medical Corps and being decorated with the Distinguished Conduct Medal and the Croix de Guerre for service on the Western Front in Belgium where he was wounded twice. From family information he must have had a troubled life and the impression given is of a "black sheep" who squandered money and relationships. The record however gives a somewhat different impression - possibly a classic case of someone who has "disappointed" his family but consequently proved his worth in other ways (Letter from Helen Whittle, February 2002).

When referring to Arthur, relatives surmise that the father's dread of damnation and inclination to show anger had the most serious implications for his only son, Arthur. Although his wife tended to lavish her son with attention, James apparently found more fault with Arthur than any of his other children and apparently extended his fear of inherent condemnation to him. Since Arthur showed tendencies to be impetuous and erratic like his father, James' harsh manner of disciplining his son was explained as an aspiration to beat the devil out of him (Letter from Barbara to Sylvia Legge, December 30, 1982). As Ms. Whittle indicates, reports about Arthur leave us with an enigmatic picture of him, at best. Idolized by his sisters for his handsome good looks, quick wit, and congenial nature, he showed a talent for entertaining

others with imaginative stories. Yet, his father interpreted Arthur's love for telling stories as an ominous sign of his inherent evil and deceitfulness.

Showing recklessness, Arthur left the family with a debt of eight thousand pounds from his stay at Cambridge University. A letter of conciliation, from Macnamara to the university, offers to pay the amount in installments. Even though Macnamara discouraged her brother's return home because of the conflict engendered, he continued to write cheerful letters from abroad to the family while teaching in the "Argentine." One of his pupils later remembered him to the family as an enthralling teacher who walked about the countryside with a pipe hanging upside down from his mouth and two dogs following at his heels. Apparently, Arthur returned to England for a short time in order to serve in an ambulance brigade during World War I. During his short stay in England, a relative reports knowledge of him marrying the daughter of an innkeeper, yet he returned to the Argentine without much further correspondence with his young wife. According to relatives, this woman later came forward to say that a portion of Arthur's inheritance should be given her and the family compensated her justly – another instance of the family's settling of Arthur's debts. He was believed to have died in the 1930s from unknown causes, relatives recall hearing of some disease or condition contracted abroad. It was Macnamara who arranged to have his ashes brought back to England to be placed near her parents' graves.

As Ms. Whittle indicates below, information about MacNamara, as an adult, forms only a fragmented picture of her life:

The initial information I had received was that Margaret was from Henfield, Sussex. She certainly lived there, on and off, for many years. In a Directory of 1899 there is a "Miss Mack" listed at Shiprods, a large farm north of the town. This "Miss Mack" was presumably James Andrew's sister, Anne Elizabeth, who was living with the family at both Sevenoaks and Brighton. Family information and other sources indicate that she may have run a school from this property. Margaret herself lived for a considerable number of years at Quin, now Lydde Hill, also north of the town and only a short distance from Shiprods. This was also a large farmhouse and, even if rented by the Mack family, would have required a large income to maintain. Both James Andrew's sisters appear to have also had access to considerable sums of money. When Sarah Harriett died in 1918 she left £19,000, an enormous sum for a single lady at that time. In the early 1920s Margaret, in correspondence, mentions that she is considering taking a flat in London for herself and her adopted daughter, Irene. Whether she ever did so or not, she continued to maintain a home in Heyfield, writing from both London and Heyfield throughout the 1920s. Her Probate indicates that by the time of her death in 1950 she had moved to Hassocks, Sussex and from there to Hurstpierpoint, also Sussex, where she died. Her estate was a mere £450 indicating that her expenses had long outstripped her earnings (Letter from Helen Whitfield, February, 2002).

Although we have found no corroborating evidence, she must have lived in London for at least a short time prior to World War I. From Shaw's letters to the playwright, it can be surmised that Macnamara and Shaw had formed a congenial working relationship. From the themes and style of her drama, it is apparent that Shaw had a decided influence upon her. Furthermore, Macnamara's abiding interest in social and political issues probably stemmed from her positive association with Fabian idealists. As World War I started, Macnamara remained motivated to write plays to be produced at gatherings of the Henfield WI (Women's Institute). Elizabeth Robins' lively presence in the community must have provided a further impetus for the playwright to pursue her interest in theatre.

Research reveals only fragmentary information about the latter part of Macnamara's life. From letters written by the playwright to Elizabeth Robins during the 1920s, we obtain some information about her life. In one such correspondence, she mentions looking for a flat in London. She also refers to her adopted daughter, Irene, in letters to Robins during this period of time. Unfortunately, Irene's last name is not known and thus there has been great difficulty in tracing information about her. No adoption papers have been found. Macnamara describes Irene's enjoyment in helping to build a set for a production in Henfield. In another letter to Robins, she casually mentions a night as chaperone with Irene and her fiancée, yet indicates a sense of uncertainty regarding the young man's personality or character. In yet another correspondence, she speaks of Irene's pursuit of a job in London with concern. The tone of the letter indicates that Macnamara had established a strong bond with her adopted daughter. Subsequently then, Irene's suicide, over the break of her engagement, must have been heart-wrenching to MacNamara. In another letter to Robins, she describes the events surrounding the incident as possible subject matter for a new drama. She expresses the hope of bringing some good from the tragedy. Protecting Irene's name even after her demise, she only uses the letter *I* when speaking about her adopted daughter to Robins as if encrypting her references to the incident.

An article in *The Times* announces Macnamara's appointment as Honorary Research Secretary of the Old Vic on September 16, 1933. Her work at the Old Vic apparently complemented Tyrone Guthrie's approach to directing as she aided his

innovative efforts by interpreting the play's themes. As one of England's first professional dramaturgs, she conducted detailed historical research and gathered information about previous directorial approaches in order that Guthrie would have a plethora of information to draw from. After Guthrie departed England to take a position in Canada, chatty correspondence between Macnamara and Guthrie indicates their continued friendship. The bulk of their correspondence relates to MacNamara's last and most ambitious work, *Florence Nightingale*. Nightingale's death in 1910 rekindled the public's appreciation of her contributions and inspired the imagination of many writers. MacNamara's play about the life and career of the famed Crimean War nurse was based upon careful research and a meticulous effort to render the historical into art.

Various theatre managers expressed interest in producing *Florence Nightingale*, yet the timing seemed wrong. One account indicates that Sybil Thorndike had agreed to play the leading role. Unfortunately, numerous delays led to an unfortunate turn of events. While negotiations to produce Macnamara's play were taking place, Captain Reginald Berkeley, a screen and radio writer for the BBC, had his version of the Nightingale story, *The Lady with the Lamp*, accepted for production on the West End. Dame Edith Evans played the role of Florence Nightingale for Berkeley's rendition of the Nightingale story and the play had a successful run. Shaw came forth in Macnamara's life again as advisor to recommend that she put her play aside for a few years. In the mean time, new information about Nightingale came to light in a newly published book about the Crimean War nurse. As always a

meticulous gatherer of information, Macnamara proceeded to begin a radical revision of the script. By this time however, Macnamara had also become discouraged in her efforts to promote the work and was failing in health. In spite of Tyrone Guthrie's assistance in reshaping the work during the 1940s, the final draft of the revised version is located in the Bristol Collection in a somewhat incoherent state from its numerous reworkings. Yet, the original version once again shows evidence of Macnamara's penchant for writing vivid dialogue. In a letter from Norman Marshall, he compares her play to Berkeley's West End production and favors Macnamara's work praising especially her method of integrating humor into the drama more naturally, in contrast with Berkeley's use of humor as comic relief. Other producers wrote positive letters as well but, for one reason or another, were not ready to stage the drama.

In a way, the Nightingale incident epitomizes Macnamara's professional life. In every endeavor, success seemed just out of reach. Perhaps she internalized her father's sense of impending doom and unwittingly sabotaged her chances for success. On the other hand, she found a way to transcend the common tendency to remain preoccupied with self by maintaining a focus upon social causes. Her belief in the power of theatre as a visionary and conceptual tool strengthened her resolve to move ever forward.

Macnamara's life story is important to her work as a dramatist. Her Victorian upbringing with alternately strict and irresponsible parents may have caused a sense

of insecurity. In her dramas, she often writes about the importance of parental influence upon children. The fact that she was overlooked for an education while her brother and younger sister, who both showed less intellectual potential, were chosen perhaps contributed to her feminist sympathies. As Macnamara became rather housebound when she was stuck being the caretaker for elderly parents and younger siblings, she missed out on many opportunities that life may have afforded her. The theme of isolation and missed opportunities often shows up in her dramas. In her later life as a single woman, she experienced society's prejudices and mistrust of that designation. She often features single women who struggle against society's mores in her dramas. Her involvement with Fabian socialism shows in her dramatic treatment of such social themes as housing shortages, inadequate facilities, long work hours, and the marginalization of society's poor.

Macnamara and the New Woman

Macnamara truly could be defined as a woman on the cusp. In Edwardian England, roles for women were expanding rapidly, creating a strong contrast between women's roles in Victorian and Edwardian England. It was not really until 1897, when several feminist groups merged to form the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, that the women's movement showed significant momentum. Some members of this organization became impatient with the passivity and indecision often shown by the leaders of this group and broke off from it, forming the Women's Social and Political Union in 1903. Led by the Pankhursts, these suffragettes soon became infamous for their bizarre and daring methods of protest.

Window-breaking, boycotting, picketing organizations that discriminated against women and other sensationalist tactics were employed. One woman rushed into a Parliament meeting and chained herself to the podium so that she would have a chance to speak. Women were arrested for starving themselves and forcibly fed, and in 1913, one dedicated suffragette hurled herself in front of racing horses at Epsom Downs. Such events were widely publicized in England and drew both sympathy and scorn for the cause.

During Edward VII's reign from 1901 to 1910, public display by women of England became more frenzied and forceful. Activists for the women's cause had never before demonstrated such a fierce determination. The passionate debate that had seemed to erupt so forcefully during the first decade of the twentieth century had actually been planted over a century earlier. Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) had advanced the argument that women were endowed with the same reasoning capacities as men and should therefore not suffer subjection. Influenced by Enlightenment thought, Wollstonecraft believed that the human's power of reasoning would naturally develop as civilization progressed, and that women should be educated so as to advance with the times. In her treatise, Wollstonecraft applied Enlightenment rhetoric to the feminist cause. Despite her cogent arguments, however, the Victorian era promoted a traditional understanding of women.¹ In the face of prevailing conservatism, such liberal theorists as John

¹ Books listed in bibliography provide detailed accounts of the lives of Victorian women. Authors to consult are: Sally Alexander's *Becoming A Woman* (1995), Nancy Boyd's *Three Victorian Women Who Changed Their*

Stuart Mill presented ideas that contested the status quo. Mill's famous essay, "On the Subjection of Women," published in 1869, became a handbook for 19th century feminists. Mill's ability to link the feminist cause to the popular nineteenth century tenet of individualism contributed to the success of his work (Carlisle, 206). His argument challenged the self-righteous stance of Victorian moralists and their beliefs that the society that they lived in was by far the best created by mankind. (Carlisle, 207). Mill's writing, along with that of others who were sensitive to the shortcomings of Victorian society, highlighted the connection between the plight of women and the marginalization of the poor. (Carlisle, 86) Social conditions in Victorian England were notoriously oppressive for the working sector, of which lower class women were a significant part (Carlisle, 161). The effects of the country's surging industrialism were well-documented by Charles Dickens, the most well-known author of nineteenth-century England, whose novels depicted the suffering of the poor and the indignities of workhouse life in a realistic and heart-wrenching manner. Furthermore, Henry Mayhew reported on the social condition of London slums as one of the founding editors of *Punch Magazine*.

Victorian literature and drama often conveyed a desire for creating an ideal world, even though major figures of the era declared that they were already experiencing one. Threads of romanticism, melodrama, adventure, and escapism can be found in most literature, where evil plays a part, but good prevails with a happy

World (1982), Vera Brittain's *Lady Into Woman* (1953), Deborah Gorham's *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* (1982), Phillipa Levine's *Feminist Lives in Victorian Britain* (1990), Sheila Jeffries' *The Spinster and Her Enemies* (1985), and Helen Heineman's *Restless Angels* (1983).

ending. Even after the Theatre Regulations Act officially ended the monopolies of the two major venues in 1843, the most notable changes in nineteenth century theatre occurred within the realm of presentation and acting style rather than within the domain of dramatic literature. Because dramatic literature remained under the scrutiny of the Lord Chamberlain, progressive and experimental literature evolved slowly. Even if writers presented the downside of Victorian living, their happy endings or quick resolutions reflect the pressure from the Lord Chamberlain's censorship.

Despite the fact that changes were taking place for the women of Victorian society, the emphasis on their roles as wives and mothers remained paramount. Victoria was extremely religious and her devotion characterized nineteenth-century English culture and its widespread advocacy of traditional beliefs. For women, "goodness" could only be achieved within domestic roles, and women who strayed from the conventional were demonized. For many women, this surreal angelic image of femininity was difficult to fulfill and fostered feelings of inadequacy. The intensity of the gender conflict escalated as the new century began. Perhaps feminist activists drew their cause to the forefront partially in response to the more relaxed ambiance of Edward's reign. With the Liberal Party's rise to power during this decade, the women's movement was afforded more credence. As feminist activists consolidated their efforts, they naturally became more sophisticated in expression of their views and recognized as valid by a greater percentage of the general public. Although most women remained within conventional roles, concrete measures had been taken for the

expansion of opportunities for women. As the new century began, the average women probably looked at the women's cause with apprehension as well as interest.

Feminist Dramatists of the Early Twentieth Century

Many of the prominent women dramatists of the same time period were either prominent actresses or recognized leaders of the feminist movement. For instance, Elizabeth Robins wrote *Votes for Women!* in 1907. As Sheila Stowell explains, this drama was an "intentionally, politicized 'tract' which initiated a series of formal experiments by sister playwrights to renegotiate existing genres." Robins utilized theatre as a forum for the feminist cause and her efforts were followed by other women writers such as Inez Bensusan and Gertrude Vaughn. Bensusan's play *The Apple* (1909) and Vaughn's *Woman with the Pack* (1911) showed women's lives as rife with hardship, harassment, and economic dependence as they coped in a world dominated by men. During these years, a handful of important dramas ridiculed the arguments of anti-suffragists. Women playwrights such as Evelyn Glover's (*A Chat with Mrs. Chicky*) and Cicely Hamilton's (*How the Vote Was Won*) responded with overt propaganda pieces championing the suffrage cause.

Hamilton was a particularly able spokesperson for the women's cause. Her *Pageant of Great Women*, 1909, brought the efforts and accomplishments of England's notable women before the public. Hamilton is remembered for her ability to present feminist issues in an articulate and convincing manner. She also was one of the first to term herself a "feminist" rather than a "suffragist." She believed that the appellation

was important since “feminism” indicated all areas of women’s lives whereas “suffragists” were generally thought of only in regards to winning the vote.

Hamilton’s dramas treated broad and complex issues such as the institution of marriage, rather than addressing strictly political issues. In *Diana of Dobson’s* (1908) and *Marriage as a Trade* (1909), Hamilton sought to counteract the overly romanticized view of marriage impressed upon young women and thus presented marital life in a more realistic and practical manner.

Elizabeth Baker and Githa Sowerby were important women dramatists who addressed the grim realities of women’s working conditions in a patriarchal and capitalistic society. Stowell notes the significance of Baker’s and Sowerby’s leading characters in that they “challenge the inevitability of such an order through the refusal of their heroines to submit to prescribed domestic roles” (4). In Baker’s drama, *Chains* (1909) and Sowerby’s *Rutherford and Son* (1912), audience members are presented with the terrible realities of working class life in early twentieth century England. Baker and Sowerby show the impact of broader social and economic constructs upon women’s lives.

Despite all of their efforts and talents, none of these women writers obtained the prestige and widespread recognition of their male counterparts. Women’s issues were mainly popularized by men of the day. When one considers the “New Drama” (of which Ibsen’s plays were the prototypes), Harley Granville Barker and George Bernard Shaw stand at the forefront of our minds. Shaw and Barker’s efforts to have women’s plays produced and to present feminist issues in their own works indicates

their sincere support of the women's cause. Although their efforts were certainly commendable, their work perpetuated the tradition of presenting female characters from a male point of view. Furthermore, belief in male intellectual superiority was so pervasive that most people were convinced that male writers could present women and their issues better than women themselves. Female dramatists who dared to step forward were often ridiculed or resented for their progressive ideas. Many of the works of female dramatists fell into obscurity partly because the dramas often centered upon topical issues of the times and also because they had never obtained the prominence that they merited in the first place. Macnamara had entered the right circle of influence when she joined the Fabian Society because, unlike many other women, she received support and encouragement for her work from Shaw and his associates.

What unique contributions did Macnamara make to the "Woman Question," as it was called in Edwardian society? Macnamara's dramas showed distinction because she wrote of women who may have been stirred to consider their liberation but remained bound by Victorian mind set. Like any other broad social and political process, changes in the lives of women were slow and gradual. Her female characters struggle to find their place in a new world as they remain rather bound by emphasis upon the status quo but look hopefully upon the "New Woman" at the turn of the century for the possibilities she might bring.

Macnamara's Contributions

Macnamara's life and works provides invaluable insight to social historians and scholars of the theatre. Though women's consciousness remains a central theme in her plays, the subject matter of her dramas is not limited to women's lives. The personal history of the playwright reveals an activist dedicated to Fabian Socialist ideals and an accomplished writer who integrates feminist and socialist ideology into her drama. The sociological and psychological themes of her work feature conflicts and focuses on the complex process of resolution. Thus, the conflicts in her plays provide a microcosmic representation of controversies taking place in the world on a larger scale. In an era of radical social reform, Macnamara explored various tensions and obstacles to viable communication. As a pacifist who experienced the devastating effects of two world wars, she believed that continued efforts to promote social reform measures were essential for creating societies in which developing conflicts were resolved before violence occurred.

In this dissertation, I will show Macnamara's contributions to the world in six areas. Chapter One examines her political inclinations and indicates the integration of standards posed by Fabian Socialists into her drama. Chapter Two features two major play productions and shows how she achieved success early in her career. Chapter Three indicates her reasons for integrating pacifist values into her plays after experiencing Europe's devastation from the First World War. Chapter Four outlines the development of her feminist values during the suffrage era of women's political activism. Chapter Five examines her adaptations of three Victorian novels and reveals a nostalgic return to her childhood in the latter part

of Macnamara's career. Finally, Chapter Six indicates an integration of Macnamara's values with her skill as a playwright in her creation of a five-act masterpiece about the life of Florence Nightingale. The play incorporates aspects of socialism, pacifism, and feminism.

Chapter One: The Political Context of Macnamara's Drama

Margaret Macnamara adopted the Fabian Socialist cause in the early 1900s. She expressed her convictions through the writing of drama with regards to such socialist themes as: inadequate housing for the poor, the indignities that the indigent endure in society, the practices of the Poor Law of England, the church's role in the treatment of the impoverished, and the vulnerability of needy women and children. Macnamara emulated Shaw's plays of ideas as she created an intellectual focus in her dramas, yet her emphasis upon ideas did not preclude her creation of vibrant characters and dialogue. This chapter will examine the political context of Macnamara's plays and will end with a comparison of Shaw's *Widower's Houses* to Macnamara's *Mrs. Hodges* as a distinct example of the two plays' commonalities in espousing the Fabian critique of social issues.

Besides his involvement with the Independent Theatre, Shaw was a founding member of the Fabian Socialists. At a time when there were few restrictive measures upon business practices, the Fabians sought to inspire political activism against capitalists who exploited the poor in their efforts to make greater profits. The Fabians attempted to increase public awareness of these negligible customs and hence move people to action. To do so, they published rousing educational tracts that outlined the principles of socialism and provided discrete examples of the need to reform society. In these tracts, Fabian Socialists cited the unethical management of material resources by the wealthy as the cause of widespread poverty. Thus, the

Fabian Socialists were propagandists who publicized factual but spirited accounts in order to instill empathy and inspire political action.

Macnamara became acquainted with Shaw and she adopted the Socialist cause. Since she lived in Henfield, a tiny town in Sussex County, she could not have been an active member of London's Fabian Society. However, Macnamara became a founding member of the local Women's Institute (WI), an organization that began during World War I to offer assistance to victimized families. With Elizabeth Robins, who had bought a country estate near the same town, Macnamara became an officer of Henfield's Women Institute and promoted the Socialist cause in the group.

Shaw's correspondence with Macnamara evidences their relationship. He writes that "*Light-Gray or Dark* is excellent" (Letter to Macnamara, October 9, 1917), but heavily critiques a medieval, nativity play that she submitted to him telling her to "stick in plenty of music and dancing" (Letter to Macnamara, October 9, 1917). Although he finds great fault with the medieval piece, he gives it serious consideration and careful analysis, thus indicating his respect for her talent. In another letter to Macnamara, Shaw writes about the play he sponsored for production, *The Gates of the Morning*. Full of supportive advice, he warns her to be careful that nothing is softened down during production. He advises her that "your producers (the British term for directors) and actors will not see at first what is behind the mere facts of the play; and they may quite easily and innocently destroy it if you let them" (Letter to Macnamara, February 9, 1908). He concludes the letter with "You will find our people very nice, I hope, but nice people whittle things down, so hold

your own. They will be only too delighted to magnify their own job if you show no mistrust of them or of yourself and boldly trust the occasion as a great one" (Letter to Macnamara, February 9, 1908). Full of encouragement, the letter again conveys Shaw's faith in Macnamara's work.

Her admiration for George Bernard Shaw and dedication to socialist ideals is evidenced by the manner in which she incorporates Fabian Socialist themes in her plays. It is interesting to note that she makes a direct reference to Shaw in her play, *Florence Nightingale*. In Act Five, Scene one, a nurse attends the elderly Florence, and is described by Macnamara in script notes as "something of an intellectual," (94). She engages Florence in a conversation about the vicissitudes of the nursing profession. As their discussion proceeds, the nurse makes reference to George Bernard Shaw by asking Florence if she would be interested in meeting someone who "admires her beyond expression and declares that he is your spiritual son" (101). In the play, Florence declines to grant Shaw an interview so he never makes an appearance, yet the addition in the script seems quite unusual. Apparently, Macnamara felt it would enrich her characterization of Florence to show that Shaw admired those who gave their lives passionately to charitable causes. It seems that Macnamara joined with Shaw in her admiration of Nightingale's belief in giving herself wholly to the service of others. In his preface to *Misalliance*, Shaw writes:

The secret of being miserable is to have the leisure time to bother about whether you are happy or not. The cure for it is occupation, because occupation means preoccupation; and the preoccupied person is neither happy nor unhappy, but simply alive and active, which is pleasanter than any happiness until you are tired of it (Shaw, 34).

It makes sense that Shaw would have admired Florence's dedication and regarded her as a heroine in the same way that he regarded St. Joan. Macnamara shows her respect for Shaw's views by the manner in which she included this interlude in the play.

The Fabian Society

Founded in 1883, the Fabian Society was an intellectual group that was dedicated to researching and disseminating ideas about socialism to the general public. Fabian socialists sought to replace the government's economic policies of capitalism and competition with practices of socialism and cooperation. Rejecting revolutionary Marxism, the Fabians took their name from the famed Roman general, Quintus Fabius Maximus who had been nicknamed the Cunctator (the delayer) for his tendency to avoid confrontation with the formidable Carthaginian warrior, Hannibal, in the Second Punic War. Instead of attacking directly, Fabius gradually weakened the opposition by having his army follow the Carthaginians from a distance and harass their outposts. Likewise, the founders of the Fabian Society resolved to make their approach to socialism gradual. Though opposing overt rebellion, they protested against capitalistic practices in ways that were constitutional rather than revolutionary. Thus, the Fabian Socialists hoped to eventually establish a Socialist state in England.

Sidney and Beatrice Webb

Although it is not known whether Macnamara had any direct contact with the Webbs, it is important to cite their influential role in the creation of the Fabian Society that so impacted her life and writings. Sidney Webb wrote many of the Fabian tracts and he had been one of the founders and primary organizers of the Society along with Beatrice Potter (who he married in 1892), and George Bernard Shaw. He and his wife worked together as activists for social reform and recorders of the development of socialism. Together they played an influential role in England's adoption of a socialist government.

While Sidney gathered and analyzed statistical data for the group as well as eventually becoming active in British politics, his wife wrote a compelling personal account of their efforts together in a diary that later became a book entitled *My Apprenticeship* (1926) and *Our Partnership* (1948). Before she met Sidney Webb, she had already authored a book about socialism entitled *The Co-operative Movement in Great Britain* (1891). Together, the Webbs promoted the foundation of the London School of Economics and Political Science in 1895 and wrote *The History of Trade Unionism* (1894) and *Industrial Democracy* (1897). In 1913, the Webbs established a weekly periodical entitled *The New Statesman* that promoted their socialist views and still is in print today. Sidney became active in the Labour Party during World War I and was elected to Parliament in 1922 serving in Cabinet positions. He is mainly remembered for bringing life to the research branch of the Labour Party.

The Beginnings of the Fabian Society

Published in 1887, the *Basis* was a book that outlined the principles of the Fabian Society for the public. However, the group's primary method of disseminating information was through the publication of small pamphlets known as tracts. Some of the most famous of these tracts are: "Why are the Many Poor?" by W.L. Phillips and "A Manifesto" by George Bernard Shaw. After the 1889 publication of the collective tracts in a book entitled *Fabian Essays* that was edited by Shaw, the Fabian Socialists became a potent political force in British society. In 1900, members of the Fabian Society played a fundamental role in establishing the Labour Representation Committee that later became the British Labour Party in 1906. The Fabian Society maintained its independent status as an educational and research branch of the Labour Party. During the 1920s some members of the Fabian Society became a disruptive factor in the group as they expressed a desire to join forces with the Communist International. Despite their adamancy, the organization stayed on its original course. By the time the Labour Party rose to power in 1945, the Fabian Society had over five thousand members.

Reflection of Fabian Socialism in Plays

In *Light-Gray or Dark?* and *Baby in the Ring*, Macnamara addresses the rights of children. As Mrs. Bridger, in her play, *Light-Gray or Dark?*, loves her two eldest boys, she strives to keep them from having to go to the Poor Law home and hopes that they can go to a church orphanage instead since she can no longer provide for them. The play centers around the family's dread of the Poor Law. In another play, *The Gates of*

the Morning, Macnamara underscores the absurdity of the class system as Mrs. Larne pairs snobbery with religion. Her play, *Mrs. Hodges*, also deals with class concerns and the dismissal of the working class' contributions to a meeting about housing plans.

Nearly all of Macnamara's plays address feminist concerns as related to socialism. *The Witch* deals directly with women who take out society's prejudices against another woman amongst them. In *Love-Fibs*, Macnamara addresses the double-standard and the tendency of men to subjugate women. In *Baby in the Ring*, the rights of a mother are pitted against the rights of the State. In *Light-Gray or Dark?* traditional practices are questioned along with all accepted notions of "truth". Finally, a wife stands up to her husband's browbeating as she confronts him directly in *The Gates of the Morning*. Thus, feminist themes are evoked in most of Macnamara's plays in a way that reiterates Shaw's decree in Fabian Tract No. 2 (The Manifesto) that women should enjoy equal rights.

The Fabian Tracts

Macnamara did not have to participate directly in the group to have been one of the many people that was influenced by the publication of the Fabian Tracts. In Tract No. 1 entitled, "Why Are The Many Poor?" the author, W. L. Phillips, establishes the pattern of the subsequent treatises as he combines socialist ideology with examples of practical application. The tract begins with provocative and dramatic statements or questions that draw the reader's attention and interest. The

following quote illustrates the introduction of ideas that would have been startling to the reader but should have also proved enlightening:

We live in a competitive society with Capital in the hands of individuals. What are the results? A few are very rich, some well off, the MAJORITY IN POVERTY, and a vast number in misery. Is this a just and wise system, worthy of humanity? Can we or can we not improve it? (Fabian Tract No.1).

Fabian Tract No. 2, written by George Bernard Shaw, was issued as a manifesto and warrants full reproduction for its expository value:

A Manifesto

The Fabians are associated for the purpose of spreading the following opinions held by them, and discussing their practical consequences.

That, under existing circumstances, wealth cannot be enjoyed without dishonour, or foregone without misery.

That it is the duty of each member of the State to provide for his or her wants by his or her own Labour.

That a life interest in the Land and Capital of the nation is the birth-right of every individual born within its confines and that access to this birth-right should not depend upon the will of any private person other than the person seeking it.

That the most striking result of our present system of farming out the national Land and Capital to private individuals has been the division of Society into hostile classes, with large appetites and no dinner at one extreme and large dinner and no appetites at the other.

That the practice of entrusting the Land of the nation to private persons in the hope that they will make the best of it has been discredited by the consistency with which they have made the worst of it: and that the Nationalization of the Land in some form is a public duty.

That the pretensions of Capitalism to encourage Invention and to distribute its benefits in the fairest way attainable, have been discredited by the experience of the nineteenth century.

That, under the existing system of leaving the National Industry to organize itself, Competition has the effect of rendering adulteration, dishonest dealing, and inhumanity compulsory.

That since Competition among producers admittedly secures the public the most satisfactory products, the State should compete with all its might in every department of production.

That such restraints upon Free Competition as the penalties for infringing the Postal monopoly, and the withdrawal of workhouse and prison labour from the markets, should be abolished.

That no branch of Industry should be carried on at a profit by the central administration.

That the Public Revenue should be raised by a direct Tax: and that the most central administration should have no legal power to hold back for the replenishment of the Public Treasury any portion of the proceeds of the Industries administered by them.

That the State should compete with private individuals-especially with parents in providing happy homes for children so that every child may have a refuge from the tyranny or neglect of its natural custodians.

That Men no longer need special political privileges to protect them against Women: and the sexes should henceforth enjoy equal rights.

That no individual should enjoy any Privilege in consideration of services rendered to the State by his or her parents or other relations.

That the State should secure a liberal education and an equal share in the National Industry to each of its units.

That the established Government has no more right to call itself the State than the smoke of London has to call itself the weather.

That we had rather face a Civil War than such another country of suffering as the present one has been (Fabian Tract No. 2).

Macnamara's drama strongly reflects many of the tenets established in "The Manifesto". In *Our Little Fancies* and *Light-Gray or Dark?*, she protests the indignities of the poor and reiterates the desire of each person to be honored and respected. In both of these plays, Macnamara protests the brutal environment of the workhouse. In her plays, she protests various aspects of the Poor Law's workhouse system for degrading the poor even though they supply the people with food, clothing, and shelter.

In "The Manifesto", Shaw provides a prelude of what Fabian Socialism is about. Like Shaw and other contemporary playwrights, Macnamara brings these social problems to life. In several of her plays for instances, she indicates that

laundresses experience health problems that stem from their work. Fabian Tract No. 112 entitled "Life in the Laundry" addresses the conditions for laundries that include unsanitary workplaces and excessive and irregular hours of employment (13). If laundries were under laws of factories, it would result in better conditions for workers such as specified meal times and regulated hours of employment (13). Some of the dangerous conditions that are listed for laundry workers are: standing in bacteria-laden water due to lack of proper drainage, breathing in noxious fumes as they work in enclosed rooms with gas irons, and coping with the discomfort of working in rooms of extremely high temperatures and steam-filled air (3). After reading this tract, it becomes more understandable that the older women in Macnamara's plays complain of health problems after working as laundresses.

Fabian Tract No. 54 entitled "The Humanizing of the Poor Law" provides important background information about a frequent theme that Macnamara uses in her plays, and that is the dread of Poor Law institutions. The writer of the tract gives the origin of the Poor Law system which proves enlightening:

From 1536 Parliament attempted to cope with the problem by enacting that voluntary alms should be collection in each parish for the purpose of relieving the impotent poor. Every preacher, parson, vicar, and curate as well in their sermons, collections, bidding of the beads as in the time of confession, and the making of the wills is to exhort, move, stir, and provoke people to be liberal for the relief of the impotent (Fabian Tract, No. 54).

Then, the writer cites the institution of workhouses in 1697 by John Carey of Bristol, England (Fabian Tract No. 54).

Further historical data reveals that in 1835, powers were given to the Poor Law Commissions to make and issue rules for the workhouses. As part of that plan, the Board of Guardians was established for the local administration of such regulations. The following quote from the tract indicates the guidelines for the grant of relief to the poor specifying that Guardians may provide relief to the poor but should not consider it part of their duty to prevent destitution or rehabilitate the lives of the indigent, "They are to relieve paupers and not to assist the poor. They can only expend money for the provision of food, clothing, lodging, and medical attendance for the pauper" (Fabian Tract No. 54).

In several of Macnamara's plays, the characters express a dread of the indignities of the workhouse. In Tract No. 54, the writer addresses the "hatred of the workhouse" by its inhabitants and admits that "the inhumanity of the early part of the 19th century would not be tolerated by public opinion to-day" (8). The tract then implies that inhumane treatment is still given as suggested by the importance placed upon hiring caretakers that treat their charges well. The tract reads: "No alteration of the law, no substitution of "shall" for "may", in the Local Government Board's regulations will abolish harshness and inhumanity"(8). Therefore, the tract indicates that those entrusted with the care of the poor should be carefully selected and monitored to insure that they do not exhibit prejudice against the poor. In Macnamara's *Our Little Fancies*, the elderly Daniel Fayres is horrified by the workhouse and grieves for his friends as they cope with the dreariness of the setting and isolation from the outside world.

Tract No. 54 also addresses the Poor Law's treatment of the aged and disabled. The tract proposes an instatement of pensions for the elderly who can still take care of themselves as an alternative to the workhouse. For those who have an infirmity that prevents them from taking care of themselves, the writer of the tract recommends that they use the cottage-home system started by the Guardians of West Derby in Liverpool as an example of a better alternative (10). In Macnamara's drama, the elderly are placed together with the insane and criminal. Furthermore, the Poor Law residence has a high, thick wall that prevents any access or contact with the outside world.

In *Light-Gray or Dark?*, Macnamara refers to a caring mother's fear of the workhouse for two of her children that she can no longer provide for. In Tract No. 54, the needs of orphaned or abandoned children are designated as insufficient. The treatise declares that the Poor Law has been negligible in its care of children and should, if at all possible, keep them free from the taint of the workhouse by placing them with individual families and supervising their subsequent care. The writer of the tract indicates that, under the present system, grouping so many children together for residency and schooling leads to the epidemic of disease, social and behavioral problems among the children, and inadequate education (11).

Tract No. 54 indicates the inefficient administration of the Poor law as the condition of the buildings is cited as the first case in point:

Some buildings are so bad that they have been condemned as unsanitary even by our not too squeamish or active local authorities. In many cases the drains

are hopelessly bad, the lavatory and closet accommodation is grossly inadequate, and the danger from fire is great (15).

The tract provides an image of the workhouse as it describes how it is managed: "The same building often contains aged men and women, epileptics and lunatics, able-bodied of both sexes, and a sprinkling of children" (15). Finally, the tract speaks of over-crowding in some workhouses: "The wards are over-crowded with beds; and in one notorious instance twenty-nine men in one ward and three women in another had, and may still have, to find their night quarters on the floor" (15).

Providing an image of how dismal these places were for the inmates, the tract further indicates that "little or no thought seems to be given to the decoration of the wards," (15). Suggestions for a more appealing atmosphere are written as follows:

A great improvement can be made by the introduction of a larger number of colored and other pictures, and the removal of some of the superfluous Scripture texts and mottoes, often of a far from comforting character, which seems to be the clerical notion of adornment of the walls (15).

In this description of the workhouse quarters, one obtains a greater understanding of the dread that the characters of Macnamara's plays express in reference to the workhouse. Furthermore, the descriptions of the Scripture sayings upon the walls indicate that a punishing form of religion, which places blame upon the poor for their circumstances, is prevalent in the workhouses. Altogether, the writers of these tracts paint a frightening picture of life there. Therefore, it is no wonder that the socially-conscious Fabians sought reform of the Poor Law and that playwrights like Macnamara featured characters who feared and loathed the prospect of the workhouse.

Nearly all of Macnamara's plays deal with the detriments of social isolation and the antipathy towards the poor by the wealthy. In Fabian Tract No. 69, Sidney Webb writes of "The Difficulties of Individualism" in a capitalistic society and praises Socialists for their research into the process of social organization and restructuring. He indicates how collective efforts work better than individual endeavors for society as a whole. Webb asserts that, in the present capitalist system, it is not always the most brilliant individual who excels but the most opportunistic. He states that a well-ordered society can never be possible in the midst of the conflict that occurs when the exploited multitudes protest against the privileged few of private interests. Hence, socialism should be regarded as a practical solution for a nation who wishes to develop consciously regulated coordination rather than internecine competition.

In Tract No. 69, he states that " the production and distribution of wealth, like any other public function cannot safely be entrusted to the unfettered freedom of individuals, but needs to be organized and controlled for the benefit of the whole community" (5). Finding fault with the takeover of small business by large enterprises, he states that one only has to look at the horrific working conditions to bear witness to the greed involved in the abuse of workers for the sake of attaining a greater profit. He explains that the poor have been demoralized by their poverty in a wealthy world and thus their potential for creativity has been thwarted. Webb indicates that the lower class population tends to become accustomed to their reduced state and pass their misfortune to succeeding generations. Finally, Webb cites the immorality of letting other human beings suffer.

In Fabian Tract No. 101, a series of authors address housing problems in a seven-part essay. In several of Macnamara's plays, the characters encounter a shortage or inadequacy of housing. In *Our Little Fancies*, the young couple states that there are no more cottages available in the area. Therefore, the older people are forced to face a future in the workhouse and give up their cottage for the younger couple. In *Mrs. Hodges*, inadequate space in working class houses is parodied. In *Light-Gray or Dark?*, two adults and five children share a two-room tenement apartment in London. Therefore, this tract shows the basis for Macnamara's reference to housing problems in her plays.

Clement Edwards, the author of the first essay of Fabian Tract No. 101 entitled "Bad Housing in Rural Districts", begins by saying that the information in his report is based upon his firsthand observations and research that was done when he served as Special Commissioner for the *Daily News*. He explains that his assigned task was to investigate and write about the conditions of laborers' housing in the southern and western parts of England. Edwards found that most of the cottages were in dire need of repair and specifies that "this particularly applies to the thatched huts, of which I came across a large number. Many of them are literally unfit to sty pigs in"(3). Edwards proposes that "the straw had been put on in such a skill-less manner that the term "thatching" could really not be justified"(3). He describes that layers of rotting straw were "reeking with moisture", had "morbid growths of vegetation" and sometimes had "gaping entrances to rat burrows"(3).

In further description of these cottages, he says that the walls were so irregular that poor ventilation was inevitable (4). In his description of windows, he explains how the word could not apply to pane-less holes that were often patched with rags, paper, or books to block light (4). The cottages usually have earthen floors and a bedroom is no more than a loft (4). Finally, he asserts that if the conditions of decay and disrepair of the cottages were not bad enough that the overcrowding made them abominable and led to more inhumane living conditions. Some cottages had two families and others had lodgers in addition to large families (4). He writes, "In one part of Wiltshire alone, during my necessarily brief enquiry, I came across fifteen instances where more than five people are occupying one small bedroom, ten cases where more than six, eight more than ten, and one where eleven people – mother, father, and nine children, eldest a girl of fifteen – are sleeping in a single bedroom" (4).

Constance Cochrane begins Section Two, "Laborers' Cottages", by explaining that she wrote letters to 101 rural districts to inquire about their housing. Replies indicated that no cottages were available, and that many families needed homes and overcrowding of cottages had become a serious problem. She quotes a clergyman's wife from Devonshire who writes, "The people in a condemned cottage cannot move because there is not a vacant house. More cottages are sadly needed" (7). She quotes a lady from Wiltshire who wrote, "A great dearth of cottages here; in some cases people can't marry because there are no cottages" (8). As mentioned before, the young couple in *Our Little Fancies* faces the difficulties of having no available cottage to live in and therefore must live in the home of the older folks when married.

In Section Three of Fabian Tract 101 that is entitled “The Facts as to Urban Overcrowding”, Dr. Edward Bowmaker reports on the evils of overcrowding in city dwellings as a public scandal (10). After citing the health hazards that it causes to children living in urban tenements, Bowmaker asks, “Are the benefits of a free and ample education to be wasted to the community through a lack of stamina inbred in the children of our artisan classes and fostered by the cursed conditions under which they are reared?” (14). Citing the costs of hospitals, workhouses, asylums, and jails, he poses that money could be saved by providing better conditions to raise children. As cited before, the characters of Macnamara’s *Light-Gray or Dark?* struggle with the difficulties of overcrowded living conditions.

George Bernard Shaw

Of the Fabian Socialists, George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) became the most influential to the world and to Macnamara. His wit brought sparkle to subjects that many people would have considered unpleasant or tiresome if not presented so entertainingly. As he exploded many of the traditions and illusions of the Victorian age, he stimulated a generation with new ideas. He wrote on philosophy, sociology, science, education, religion, music, politics, and theatre with wit and charm and thereby succeeded in bringing controversial issues into the awareness of common people. Robert F. Whitman calls Shaw’s mind “agile, multifaceted, and elusive” and quotes from Beatrice Webb, who referred to him as a “sprite” for the “mercurial quality” of his thought patterns (30).

Shaw exerted a profound impact upon the development of drama as he ridiculed the old-fashioned dramaturgy in favor of presenting plays of ideas instead of using contrived play constructions. The English theatre of the nineteenth century had relied upon melodrama and the well-made play structure of Scribe and Sardou but Shaw introduced a drama of greater nuance and complexity. Replacing hackneyed situations and stock characters with complex turns of events and subtleties of characterizations, his dramas showed a marked departure from the conventions of his time. Shaw favored Ibsen's presentation of radical ideas and paved the way for a new kind of theatre in England.

Shaw has often been cited for contradicting himself but he recognized the paradoxical aspects of life and people. In his plays, he wanted the reader or audience member to draw their own truths as he presented every angle to a situation. Shaw liked to confound the expectations of audience members as he created characters that defied categorization. He often underscores their habits of self-deception so that audience members can recognize similar tendencies to deceive themselves. As Robert Whitman asserts:

It is not the self-indulgence that Shaw despises and fears, however, but the self-delusion. He felt it was suicidal for man to indulge his proclivity for making a virtue of his weaknesses, for glamorizing his instincts, for flattering his laziness, and idealizing what is comfortable" (35).

Just as his words are paradoxical, so his characters are too because Shaw enjoyed the play of oppositional forces.

Shaw's early plays were influenced by his friend, William Archer, who was known for his translation and promotion of Ibsen's plays in England. However, their attempt to write plays together proved disastrous. As Shaw later remarked, "It was my deliberate and unaccountable disregard of the rules of the art of play construction that revolted him" (qtd. in Marker, 103). In Shaw's early plays, he already indicated the course which he was taking as a playwright – "toward a more organic, dialectical, musical form of composition focused squarely on a 'conflict of unsettled ideals' (103). Shaw later referred disparagingly to Sardou's well-made play construction that Archer advocated as "Sardoodlism".

Widowers' Houses

The title of *Widowers' Houses* is taken from the Gospel of Matthew 23:14 with its reference to "the greater damnation' which Jesus calls down on Pharisees and hypocrites who 'devoured widowers' houses'" (Marker, 103). Shaw expressed the hope that his play would point out the transgression of all who shrugged off poverty as if it were a useless problem that they could do nothing about. He wanted audience members to see themselves in such characters as Sartorius, Harry Trench, and Blanche, and to recognize their part in contributing to such problems by ignoring them.

Shaw's plays of idea were a new kind of drama in which none of the characters could be regarded as either villains or heroes and all contained elements of contradiction. For example, Sartorius' slumlord activities should have made him a villain except for the fact that he was a caring father to his daughter, Blanche, and had

reconciled himself to his business practices by rather convincing arguments.

Although Harry Trench is introduced as a sensitive and idealistic young man, he inevitably joins Sartorius in his notorious schemes after becoming convinced that there is no help for the poor. Although Blanche appears to be treacherous and manipulative, she surprises audience members too by representing all who have ever sought all of the pleasure or benefits that life has to offer.

The play begins as Harry Trench, who just graduated from medical school, and his friend, William de Burgh Cokane, enjoy a beer while on holiday in Germany. As they sit in the hotel garden on the Rhine, they notice Blanche, a young woman that Trench had flirted with recently on a river cruise. Cokane leaves his friend alone with Blanche and they soon begin a romantic conversation that ends with a kiss.

Surprisingly, Blanche asks, "But when shall we marry?" The second act begins at the home of Blanche and her father, Sartorius, as business is being conducted between himself and his proprietor or manager, Lickcheese. In the office, we see shelves lined with fancy leather books that appear to have never been opened. With the books upon the shelf, there is an indication of "nouveau riche" or wealth recently acquired. Obviously, Sartorius is not well-educated nor does he come from the established gentry. He is a self-made man and one that upper classes would disdain. His shelves are lined with books that have never been opened because he has them for ornamentation to make a good impression on visitors. His marginal status makes him wonder if Harry Trench's family will accept his daughter if they marry. Thus, he

has asked Harry to furnish him a letter saying that she would be welcomed by his family and treated well.

At this point, Lickcheese, whom Frederick J. Marker describes as an “unctuous, melancholy rent-collector of Dickensian format”, brings news to Sartorius of the necessity of fixing a broken staircase in one of the tenement dwellings (108). Marker’s distinction of Lickcheese’s “Dickensian format” comes from his being a rather lower-class dandy similar to the street-wise artful dodger of *Oliver*. After giving a report that he spent twenty-four shillings to have the staircase repaired, Sartorius promptly fires him and thus provides the audience with insight into his capacity for callousness. Out of anger, Lickcheese finds the naïve Trench alone and tells him about the nature of Sartorius’ business and the kind of family that he would be marrying into.

Scared and disillusioned from Lickcheese’s report, Harry tells Blanche that he will consider marriage only if she promises to refuse the use of her father’s money. Not surprisingly, this news does not please Blanche who becomes outraged enough to break off their engagement. She does not understand her fiancé’s objection to her father’s money and believes that he is looking for an excuse to rid himself of her. She trembles with rage and screams at him, “You thought you could provoke me to break off the engagement: that is so like a man – to try to put the woman in the wrong. Well, you have your way: I release you” (41). After Blanche’s outburst, her father comes in and requests that she check her temper and announces that he will talk to Trench himself.

Trench becomes swayed by Sartorius' quiet confidence and line of reasoning as he says, "I am afraid, Dr. Trench, that you are a very young hand at business; and I am sorry that I forgot that for a moment or so" (45). Sartorius further reasons that, "When people are very poor, you cannot help them, no matter how much you may sympathize with them" (46). Sartorius rationalizes that his tenement housing is the "best way to provide additional houses for the homeless and to lay by a little for Blanche" (47). After explaining how the poor people would break up the timber that he used for restoration of staircases and bannisters and use it to make fires, Trench comes to sympathize with Sartorius' reasons for not making repairs. Though Trench becomes softened by Sartorius' rationalizations, Blanche now rejects him as she says that she does not want to "marry a fool" (52).

When Trench discovers that his own family has invested in Sartorius' property and that the earned interest has put him through medical school, he feels lost and ashamed. Ironically, his disillusionment leads to a sense of powerlessness and futility rather than prompting him to social action. He confesses, "Well, people who live in glass houses have no right to throw stones. But, on my honour, I never knew that my house was glass until you pointed it out. I beg your pardon" (48). In this scene, Shaw indicates the guilt of everyone who turned their back upon the squalor of the poor's living conditions while benefiting from their labor. As Cokane, Trench's friend, declares that this little discussion has made him quite hungry, Trench moodily declares that it has taken his appetite away. Though Trench has learned that he and

his family are part of Sartorius' slumlord scheme, he still has difficulty reconciling himself to this news.

Marker describes the final part of the play well as he uses the terms that indicate the organic and musical style of playwriting that Shaw prided himself upon: "The final movement of the play is a grotesque and vigorous scherzo that recapitulates the main themes in dissonant and even strident tones" (109). The ideals of each character come into direct conflict in a cacophonous climax. As the action escalates to a climax in melodrama, the tension of Shaw's play rises by the clash of ideals.

Four months later, Blanche sits alone in the parlor with her father when two unexpected visitors arrive. First, Lickcheese arrives and has been surprisingly transformed into a wealthy man by a new business enterprise he has masterminded. Shaw describes Lickcheese's appearance in script notes, "The change in his appearance is dazzling. He is in evening dress, with an overcoat lined throughout with furs presenting all the hues of the tiger. His shirt is fastened at the breast with a single diamond stud" (56). As the description indicates his acquisition of wealth, Shaw shows how he stands back and enjoys the satisfaction of everyone's surprise at his transformation.

As Lickcheese and her father move into the next room to talk business, Blanche gets hold of a government report that describes her father as a slum landlord. When she later confronts her father about this account, the ever-composed and calm Sartorius answers by saying, "It's a curious thing, Blanche, that the Parliamentary

gentlemen who write such books as these, should be so ignorant of practical business." As he pities their denunciation of him, he explains to Blanche, "If we made the houses any better, the rents would have to be raised so much that the poor people would be unable to pay, and would be thrown homeless on the streets" (62). After hearing his explanation, Blanche turns her disdain upon the destitute, "Oh, I hate the poor. At least, I hate those dirty, drunken, disreputable people who live like pigs" (68).

As she speaks, she likely shares the hidden sentiments of many audience members. She articulates the position that many people might take but remain unwilling to admit. As Sartorius speaks of his mother who thought herself rich when she stood over a wash-tub and made fifteen shillings a week, he reprimands his daughter for her lack of appreciation for his accomplishments. Blanche admits, "I hate the idea of such things. I don't want to know about them. I love you because you brought me up to something better. I should hate you if you did not" (63).

The highest pitch of the musical climax of the play occurs as Trench and Cokane suddenly appear. As they hear of Lickcheese's new business proposal, Trench considers his plan halfheartedly. As he encounters Blanche once again, she greets him with anger, "You have the meanness to come into this house again" (71). When he turns to leave, her behavior takes another surprising turn. Shaw describes her actions in the script notes as she moves closer to Harry Trench, "For a moment they stand face to face, quite close to one another, she provocative, taunting, half defying, half inviting him to advance, in a flush of undisguised animal excitement"

(71). After she confronts him with his rejection of her father and his money, she suddenly starts to soften and thus captivates his affection once again. As she tears him down verbally, she moves closer and closer to him and finally crushes him in a passionate embrace. When the other three men suddenly appear, Trench responds to their inquiry without hesitation as he looks at Blanche, "I'll stand in, compensation or no compensation" (73). Thus, he proves himself to be like many others who will stand their ground until their own desires have been thwarted. Shaw shows how Trench easily compromises for the sake of obtaining what he wants and the play thus ends.

Shaw once held a clerkship in Dublin in which he was required to collect rent money from slum dwellers (Davis, 39). As Davis points out, many impoverished women became prostitutes in order to pay their rent. In relation to this play, they did so that Sartorius' rather vulgar daughter could become a lady (39). Shaw's play thus makes bitter commentary upon the greed behind the complacency of society in which many suffer for the benefit of a few (39). As Trench's friend Cokane says in the play, "The love of money is the root of all evil," to which Lickcheese answers, "Yes sir; and we'd all like to have the tree growing in our garden" (35). Shaw makes the point that many will cite the sinfulness of exploiting others until their own welfare or status is threatened by such an admission.

According to Davis, Shaw had been inspired to write Fabian Tract No. Three, "To Provident Landlords and Capitalists", after reading a penny pamphlet put out by Christian missionary, Andrew Mearns, in 1883 entitled "The Bitter Cry of Outcast

London”(38). In the pamphlet, Mearns speaks of the appalling conditions in which the poor live and states that “the information given does not refer to a few selected cases. Instead, it reveals the state of things which is found in house after house, court after court, street after street,” in the slums where “the vilest practices are looked upon with the most matter-of-fact indifference” (qtd.in Davis, 41). His description of the slums warrants reproduction for its graphic detail:

To get into them you have to penetrate courts reeking with poisonous and malodorous gases arising from accumulations of sewage and refuse scattered in all directions and often flowing beneath your feet. ...You have to ascend rotten staircases, which threaten to give way beneath every step... Walls and ceilings are black with the accretions of filth which have gathered upon them through long years of neglect. It is exuding through cracks in the boards overhead; it is running down the walls, it is everywhere (qtd. in Davis, 38).

Shaw’s play *Widowers’ Houses* was inspired by this pamphlet as well as his previous experience as a rent collector in Dublin. How painful it must have been for a young man to have to collect money from those living under such strenuous circumstances! Obviously, it made an indelible impression upon young Shaw as he addressed the issue in sections of his novel, *An Unsocial Socialist* (1883) and his first published drama *Widowers’ Houses* (1886), as well as Fabian Tract No. 3.

The expose’ of the tract reveals Shaw’s wit with its attention-getting opening, but its message is serious and foreboding as he writes:

To Provident Landlords and Capitalists: A Suggestion and a Warning. The Fabian Society, having in view the advance of Socialism in England, and the threatened subversion of the powers hitherto exercised by the private proprietors that the establishment of Socialism in England means nothing less than the compulsion of all members of the upper class, without regard to sex or condition, to work for their own living. In such a state of things, not even noble or royal birth would enable a delicately nurtured lady to obtain the most

menial service from a vulgar person without suffering the humiliation of rendering an equivalent service in exchange (Fabian Tract, No. 3).

When Lickcheese bitterly answers Trench's questions about the tenement housing owned by Sartorius, he tells how Sartorius started up his business: "Every few hundred pounds he could scrape together he bought old houses with—houses that you wouldn't hardly look at without holding your nose," (35) Lickcheese then challenges Trench and Cokane: "You come down with me to Robbins's row; and I'll show you a soil and a death-rate, so I will! And mind you, it's me that make it pay him so well. Catch him going down to collect his own rents! Not likely! (35).

But Shaw even redeems Sartorius as he presents his point of view to his prospective son-in-law, "My young friend, these poor people do not know how to live in proper dwellings: they would wreck them in a week. You doubt me: try it for yourself" (46). In Shaw's play, it is hard to know whom to blame. Audience members can only blame themselves for showing the same kind of complacency and tendency to rationalize their behavior as Sartorius. Instead of creating Manicheanistic characters of good or evil, Shaw disseminates the blame upon everyone who is either actively or passively complicit in such schemes.

Mrs. Hodges

In Macnamara's drama, *Mrs. Hodges*, the playwright presents a situation in which housing is an issue and does so in the same satiric manner as Shaw though with more ribald humor. Like Shaw, Macnamara intimates that everyone shares the responsibility for allowing such conditions to exist. As Macnamara's play opens,

county board members meet to decide upon housing plans for cottages to be built for working-class families. During the play, characters refer to Housing Circular No. 40 which must have been a local statute. Though I have been unable to find a record of this local advisory, I will quote from a national law that addresses the same kinds of issues in 1919:

Housing (Additional Powers); to make further provision for the better housing of the people, to authorize the acquisition of land for the development of garden cities or for the purposes of town planning schemes, and to make further provision with respect to the borrowing powers of public authorities and bodies and with respect to the securities issued by them. (1919 Volume of British Statutes, Chapter 99).

Thus it is easy to determine that inadequate housing was a problem in the counties as well as the cities of England during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century from Fabian tract descriptions and this law.

The play's initial setting is an ordinary committee room that is meagerly furnished. The Chairman who conducts the meeting is described as a "large, pompous representative of the landed gentry" (6). As three more men hasten into the boardroom, the playwright colorfully describes them. The first one is a "a clerk, a seedy, pale-faced lawyer" who leans over his papers intensely due to his uneasiness at the Chairman's irritation. As Perkins enters the room, he is designated as "a small, colorless gentleman of small independent means" (7). Macnamara gives Feathergill the most attention in her description of the three characters and thus prognosticates his significance in the drama. The playwright designates him to be refined enough to feign nonchalance, although she says that his act is transparent. Macnamara defines

him as “a shy man of rheumatic tendency, vain and sensitive about his work” (7). He brings to the meeting a rolled-up architectural drawing and a cardboard model of two small brick cottages with “slate roofs and casement windows” (7). Macnamara designates the comedic tone of the piece by indicating that all three gentlemen have shiny bald heads.

The Chairman’s impatience speaks explicitly of him. His idea is to get the matters-at-hand over with as soon as possible. Though he says, “We have the good of the community at heart,” his manner reveals his distance from the concerns (18). After the meeting is over, he talks to the architect about having an addition of a billiard room added to his house. Thus, he shows his thoughts since he does not wish to speak further about the plans for the workers’ cottages. He seems able to put it out of his mind too easily after as the meeting is over.

Macnamara’s comedic description of the three gentlemen enhances her satiric tone. She uses physiological imagery to portray their eccentricities and peculiar mannerisms. Although she conveys a sense of a settled cultural order, she protests it by showing the shortsightedness of some of its privileged members. As they exert influence upon the community by their decision-making, they exhibit a sense of their unworthiness for the task. Since each one seems wrapped up in their own concerns, they are unable to make reliable assessments of the situation at hand.

There are three working-class representatives at the meeting. Horbury is described as a retired tradesman, with a thick build and a forward manner. Smith is a rough-looking farmer in overalls. Finally, Mrs. Hodges is indicated to be a neatly

dressed and attractive woman of thirty-five years. She sits in a chair by the wall but moves it up a little closer to the table and leans forward expectantly as she waits for the meeting to begin.

The Chairman indicates his impatience with the matters at hand and abruptly calls the meeting to order. He interrupts Horbury who keeps trying to say that the “finance of this Gover’ment H-housing Scheme is -er – in one word, it’s rotten!” (6). The Chairman ignores Horbury as he fixes his gaze upon the model in the center of the table. When Horbury continues to interrupt, the Chairman is finally forced to acknowledge him and says, “The finance, Mr. Horbury, is not before us” (9). As the Chairman hurriedly changes the subject to take control of the meeting, he speaks of the next item on the agenda, a letter sent to the Committee.

After the Chairman proclaims that they are merely “tools in the hands of the Ministry of Health and must conform to their regulations or resign,” Smith proclaims, “Well I’m fed up with all this waste of talk! What about resigning – in a body!” (18). His answer to the Chairman indicates the helplessness of the working class in a social order that is controlled by the aristocracy. In Smith’s criticism of power politics, he speaks like a crushed rebel rather than an impartial observer. None of the working class representatives are afforded respect. While Horbury continually protests the lack of adequate financing of the project, he is ignored. Though Smith makes some blatant statements about the water-butts, he is not taken seriously. Mrs. Hodges, due to her deference upon matters of procedure, is not afforded the chance to speak at all.

As the Chairman indicates the letter from the Women's Institute, a Mrs. Clam-Digby enters the room and her ostentatious bearing interrupts the flow of the meeting altogether. Macnamara describes her "of county importance, as her luxurious furs and commanding headgear loudly proclaim" (9). Continuing her comedic trend, Macnamara indicates that in Mrs. Clam-Digby's case, "her baldness is concealed by expensive false hair" (10). As the wealthy woman superciliously admits that she is late for the meeting, the chairman jokes with her by saying, "A bare hour, Mrs. Clam-Digby, a bare hour!" (10). Ignoring the business-like atmosphere of the meeting altogether, Mrs. Clam-Digby changes it to a social gala as she points to the model of the small houses on the table and exclaims, "Oh what is that darling little toy? Not a model of the new cottages?" (10). Mrs. Clam-Digby shows her sense of self-importance by her assertion that the charm of the little model provides another example of how the working classes are being indulged.

Mrs. Clam-Digby presents a heightened parody of the wealthy. With no reservations, she conveys her sense of superiority as she enters the meeting. Enjoying the attention she receives from being late, she apologizes without conveying any feeling. While everyone at the meeting accepts her extremes of behavior as a matter of course, she enjoys her position of privilege. Mrs. Clam-Digby is rewarded for her childish indulgences by the attention she receives.

After the Chairman introduces Mrs. Hodges as a representative from the County Federation of Women's Institutes, Mrs. Clam-Digby interrupts him to ask with annoyance why such a representative is needed. The Chairman quotes from

Circular No. 40 issued from the Ministry of Health that recommended that planning committees have representation from “ladies who have had experience of the housing” (11). Mrs. Clam-Digby then claims that she remembers Circular 40 was merely advisory and that they had agreed to ignore it.

As in Shaw’s *Widowers’ Houses*, the poor as the object of discussion, are silent. As Sartorius speaks about them and their habits, they cannot speak for themselves. As Mrs. Clam-Digby condescends to the working class and wants to make sure that they do not receive more than she thinks they deserve, she fails to notice that Mrs. Hodges, a member of the working class, is present. As extreme as her behavior appears to be, Macnamara presents it as natural for Mrs. Clam-Digby to presume her right to act in a superior manner.

When the Chairman answers Mrs. Clam-Digby by saying that the Women’s Institutes had insisted upon the observation and enactment of Circular 40, he nobly confirms that the committee would undoubtedly benefit from consultation with those who inhabit the houses in question. As Mrs. Clam-Digby indignantly asserts that they adhere to the architect’s plans and forget this nonsense, Mr. Feathergill responds. He admits that he has won a gold medal for his designs, but humbly acknowledges that he has never lived in one of the houses. As the conversation proceeds, Mrs. Hodges’ presence is still overlooked.

Macnamara’s appreciation for Shaw’s brand of thesis play emerges in this drama. As the Chairman and Mrs. Clam-Digby represent those who accept the status-quo, Horbury and Smith protest the idea. Then there are those characters that

vacillate between the two extremes representing a possible resolution to the dialectical configuration. In her willingness to keep silent and observe the rules of protocol, Mrs. Hodges cooperates and acts with objective reason. In his admission that he has never lived in one of the houses and that his work should not be deemed as faultless, Feathergill shows sensitivity to the working class and can hardly be categorized as showing the same level of antipathy as Mrs. Clam-Digby. These two characters who straddle both realms of thought show more objectivity than the others and indicate hope for a better future.

As the Chairman cites that the local Women's Institute (WI) of Spatebridge has sent a detailed criticism of Mr. Feathergill's plans, Mrs. Clam-Digby responds with indignation, "My criticism is that it's unpatriotic to throw away the county's money on erecting palaces" (12). As they proceed to a discussion of the water-blots that will be used as a cheap substitute for proper drainage, Smith objects vehemently, "Cheap and nasty! Stagnant water – breeding gnats and midges! In stormy weather – overflow! In the first drought dry up and open at the seams!" (12). Dismissing Smith's protest, Mrs. Clam-Digby says that they should be accepted if they are a cheap substitute. As Smith and Clam-Digby directly conflict over this matter, they build the ironic tension of the drama.

The Chairman attempts to bring the discussion back to the letter of criticism from the Women's Institute, but Mrs. Clam-Digby proclaims, "I should ignore it altogether!" (13). The Chairman explains that the women object to the water-butts, the casement windows, as well as the lack of storage space. The Clerk then reads from

the letter, "We are unanimously and emphatically agreed that the requirements of a family are not met by a kitchen-living-room and a tiny scullery without a fire-place. In family houses there ought to be two rooms fit to sit in" (14). After hearing this, Mrs. Clam-Digby expresses outrage at the request for a larger kitchen and a separate sitting room to which Horbury once again pipes in, "We spend hours deliberating on the plans and that, but it's the financial aspect, Mrs. Clam-Digby" (20).

In Horbury's mantra that it is the financial aspect that is objectionable, he gets to the core of the matter. As the Chairman says that it is not the topic in question however, the subject is dismissed. Yet Horbury is correct in presenting the fact that if there is not enough money to finance the houses that discussion of the planning seems futile. At this point in the drama, the Women's Institute is brought in as another entity in protest of the box-like dwellings. Though Mrs. Clam Digby is annoyed, she is for once overpowered by the persistence that Horbury shows.

At the meeting's adjournment, Mrs. Hodges makes an attempt to speak to Mr. Feathergill though he fails to notice her since he is busy making dinner plans with the Chairman. As Mrs. Hodges overhears their conversation, the Chairman informs Feathergill that he cannot put him up for the night because one of his children has taken ill. Although he says that he will find him a room at one of the local inns, Feathergill believes that they may be full and laments that there is no evening train. Mrs. Hodges makes to leave but one can see that she is perturbed that she did not get a chance to speak at the meeting or speak with Feathergill afterwards. However, her face noticeably brightens, as if she has an idea, and she exits.

Although Mrs. Hodges does not get a chance to speak at the meeting, she has an alternative plan and leaves with a smile on her face. Audience members soon learn that she has decided to leave word at the inn that Mr. Feathergill is welcome to stay at her cottage if there are no rooms available. She hopes to give him an opportunity to experience life in the cramped quarters of the box-like dwelling that her family currently resides in.

Act II begins with a description of Mrs. Hodge's cottage as follows:

A small kitchen-living-room, so crowded that a cross has to be taken zigzag and often involves some measure of shunting. Besides a full complement of furniture, part old and good, part new and bad, the room contains a perambulator, a baby's high chair, a man's bicycle, pilgrim baskets, a tin trunk, a laundry-basket, a sewing machine, a set of garden tools, and trays of apples and onions. On a tall clotheshorse in front of the fire are two sheets and a pillow-case: leaning against it, a small flock mattress. On a smaller clothes-horse are Mrs. Hodges' coat and hat: on the fender, her boots (22).

As the scene opens, a heavy rain on the roof and a rap at the door is heard by the audience. However, Mrs. Hodges has not heard the door because of the noise that she makes shoveling coals into the fire in addition to the fall of the rain upon the tin roof. Finally after a third rap upon the door, she hurries to the front passageway.

The noise and the density of objects in a small space provide the audience members with an introduction of the havoc caused by the living conditions that the family must endure. The casual humor with which all is presented belies the reality of the situation. Mrs. Hodges' equanimity indicates how she has become accustomed to such difficulties. Although she takes matters in stride, Mrs. Hodges inherently believes that better circumstances for her family are possible and should be attained.

Without having difficulty accepting the current situation as it is, Mrs. Hodges works for change with dedication and conviction.

As Mr. Feathergill stands at her door soaked through from the storm, Mrs. Hodges apologizes for not hearing him and says it is from having no bell or door knocker that she could hear. Feathergill confesses that his rheumatism is bothering him tremendously, and Mrs. Hodges offers to lend him some of her husband's dry clothes and make him a hot bath. She says that she has already lit a copper-fire to heat up the water in case he should come. When Feathergill expresses surprise that she would have to light a copper-fire, Mrs. Hodges exclaims, "We've no boiler. Have you forgot the design of the house? 'Twas you did it" (25). He can only apologize and say, "I know! Stupid of me!" (25).

Mrs. Hodges frequently reassures Feathergill that she is pleased to offer hospitality to him though he repeatedly apologizes for the trouble he's causing her. As she admits that she's cleared out a bedroom used for a store-room, Mrs. Hodges explains, "Having no shed outside and no cupboards in, we're obliged to keep our fruit and roots and Sunday clothes and that just where we can" (25-26).

In hearing Mrs. Hodges speak for the first time, we glean an appreciation for Macnamara's ability to incorporate colloquialisms in her dramatic language. She brings the characters to life as they speak. Macnamara allows reality to emerge primarily through the concerns and speech of her characters. However, she also pays attention to the visual aspects and provides picturesque imagery of characters' appearance and the details of setting.

At this point of the story, Mrs. Hodges' children are introduced and the audience meets "Lizzie, a pretty child of about twelve, who has inherited her mother's hair" (26). As she bursts in, her mother asks about her other daughter, Mary, to which Lizzie replies, "Just behind" (26). Mrs. Hodges warns both girls to go back into the scullery and take their wet clothes off. As they see the gentleman visitor, the two girls giggle and run into the scullery and close the door behind them. The girls' constant giggling accentuates the comedy of the piece by their innocent amusement. As the children's laughter is infectious, audience members begin to enjoy the awkwardness of the situation. Embarrassed to be at the mercy of Mrs. Hodges and to have to experience the crowded housing, Feathergill begins to look ridiculous. The children's laughter underscores the uneasiness of his circumstances.

When Mrs. Hodges asks Feathergill whether he would prefer to take a bath by the fire in the zinc wash-tub or use the fixed bath in the scullery, he readily opts for the fixed bath. Mrs. Hodges says that he should place his clothes in the main room because there isn't any place to put them in the scullery – a room which is almost entirely taken up by the fixed bath. When he opens the door, he remarks distastefully how it is full of steam and as he falls down the step, the children burst out laughing once again. Lizzie proclaims, "Ain't he a cure?" and Mary answers, "I never in my life seed such a cure," (29). Again, Macnamara captures the colloquialisms of speech and emphasizes the humor in the situation.

At this point, Mrs. Hodges' husband comes in and meets Feathergill arranging his clothes. After their brief introduction, Mrs. Hodges hurries Feathergill back into

the scullery saying that there's not much time for the water to stay hot. Admitting to Hodges that he is plagued with rheumatism, Feathergill apologizes for using his dry clothes. As Hodges reassures him, the girls again laugh ecstatically as Feathergill falls down the step once again as he exits into the scullery. As he continues to apologize to everyone and trip on the step, humor is mixed with pathos in this drama.

Mrs. Hodges asks her husband to help her by getting the girls quiet and busy with their homework. Lizzie admits that she has "three sums and another yard of that Shakespeare!" (31). As Lizzie argues and whines to her mother about which homework she should do first, Feathergill calls desperately for Hodges' help saying, "I've somehow pulled the plug, and I can't get it in again!" (33). As Mr. Hodges exclaims that he's never meddled with the plug before, the girls become tickled once again after watching their mother stifle laughter. Lizzie says, "Ain't he a prime silly?" to which little Mary echoes, "I never in my life seed such a prime silly!" As Hodges returns to say that all the hot water has gone down the drain, he comments that Feathergill is "jumping about in his shirt like a worried flea!" in the freezing cold scullery (that has no fireplace). (33) Mrs. Hodges stands at the door to the scullery and asks if Feathergill would like to wait for some more water to heat, but he answers that he'll just have a dry rub down. Mrs. Hodges reassures him then, "Oh, you'll be all right, sir. A dry rub down is better than a bath for rheumatics, some do say" (34).

As Lizzie attempts to start her homework, Macnamara adds to the comic tone of the play. Apparently, Lizzie copied her Shakespeare from the board while at school, but has copied it wrong. She reads aloud, "On, on you noblest English whose

blood is fat from fathers of water-proof" (35). Her quote is from Act Three, Scene 1 of *Henry V* as he motivates his troops for the battle at Harfleur and says: "On, on you noblest English, Whose blood is fet from fathers of war-proof." Henry V means that the blood of the nobles was inherited or "fetched" from their fathers who have been tested at war and proven themselves able (Gurr, 118). Not understanding the quote, Lizzie insists that it says "their blood is fat from fathers of water-proof." Her father is conciliatory to her as he says, "Fathers of waterproof, eh? Not bad f'r this weather! Children's be waterproof, too, I reckon." Yet Mrs. Hodges reasons, "You've got it wrong, Liz. I don't believe they'd invented waterproof in them days" (35). But the child argues, "That's nothing. Shakespeare often made a mistake about what they'd invented and what they hadn't" (35-36). Mrs. Hodges makes a good-humored but firm reply to her daughter as she says, "We don't want it out loud anyway" (36).

The audience must have enjoyed the innocence of the child's misquote of Shakespeare especially since it happened to coincide with the inclement weather conditions of the play's setting. Furthermore, audience members would be entertained with the recognition of how children can annoy their parents as they protest the obvious adamantly. Macnamara capitalizes on the humor of commonplace disputes that children have with their parents over such things as homework and what the teacher said. Of course, the comedy of the scene is accentuated by Mr. Feathergill's crisis over his bath in the next room. Even though so many things occur at once, Mrs. Hodges retains her poise.

As Feathergill opens the door to reenter the room, he hands his wet clothing ahead to Mrs. Hodges but “pitches headlong up the step” (36). Cursing the step in his embarrassment, he winces at the girls’ giggling as he claims that Mrs. Hodges must have to remember that step hundreds of times a day. When Mr. Feathergill asks for a looking-glass to put on his tie, Mrs. Hodges motions to the mirror that is also in the main room. In script notes, Macnamara writes, “With delicate tact the host and hostess make conversation while the guest finishes his toilet” (37). In this scene, Macnamara accentuates the lack of privacy available in such small quarters as one of these box-like cottages provide

As they ready to have their tea and meat-pies, a knock is heard at the door. The insurance man has come to collect a payment. Hodges becomes very angry at having his tea interrupted and asks his wife, “What’s he mean by it – calling tea-time? Ain’t he aware you’ve no parlour to show him into?” (38). Mrs. Hodges answers that she must let him since the weather is so bad outside. Before she answers the door however, she instructs her children firmly, “Stop your tea, children, and sit and wait. That’ll teach him” (38). The ironic humor continues as Feathergill is shocked that they would have to stop their meal because someone has arrived unexpectedly. As the insurance man apologizes and explains his delay, all sit stone cold as instructed and wait while Mrs. Hodges pays him. After he leaves, Feathergill observes, “I didn’t know working people considered it such very bad manners to intrude upon a meal” (39). Hodges, who has become annoyed with another delay answers roughly, “Some

things do escape the well-educated. But that's no manner of excuse for a chap like him" (40).

Here begins a reversal in roles, another comedic device. Hodges suggests that his ways are superior, and that he knows better than the upper-classes in matters of convention. Perturbed that his tea is postponed, he says that the insurance man should know better although upper class people would not. He probably refers to the licentious conduct of such upper class characters as Mrs. Clam-Digby and their lack of humility or consciousness of others. To Feathergill's surprise, he refers to his class' superiority over the upper-classes in these matters.

When Feathergill announces that he must brave the weather once again to attend the parish meeting this evening, Hodges inquires whether he will have to *defend* his plans. Macnamara writes that Feathergill answers "with a wry mouth. I was asked to *explain* the plans" (40). As they begin again to have the tea and meat-pies, there comes a thundering rap upon the door. Above the general exclamation of all seated around the table, Mrs. Hodges asks Lizzie to go and see who it is upon which her daughter opens the door and calls back, "There's a motor outside. A numbrella – ever so big!" (40). As Mrs. Hodges hastens to look, she announces that it's Mrs. Clam-Digby. In the script notes, Macnamara writes a description of the reaction, "Feathergill is the first of the four to bolt into the scullery. He is closely followed by Hodges and the two giggling children" (41). In his exasperation, Hodges confronts Feathergill indirectly by asking him whether he will defend his plans.

Mrs. Clam-Digby admonishes Mrs. Hodges for hearing that she wanted to have the permanent bath removed. She wants the six foot bath removed because it takes up all of her room in the scullery which also has no heat for a bath. They have been using the portable zinc washtub instead because they can place in front of the fireplace in the main room. Mrs. Hodges wants more room in the scullery or kitchen so she wants the huge useless bath removed. After a series of scoldings, Mrs. Clam-Digby warns Mrs. Hodges that she must “pride herself on the nice house provided for you, and try to live up to it” after admitting that she was quite shocked that they would want the large permanent bath removed. (41) Mrs. Clam-Digby reprimand Mrs. Hodges as if she were a child, “Of course, if people don’t choose to take advantage of opportunities for raising their standard, I can’t force them: but my servants shall never have any excuse for blaming me” (42). The abuses of the lower-classes are accentuated once again in this scene. Mrs. Clam-Digby’s overbearing manner is enough to cause everyone to want to hide from her presence so that her visit will be as short as possible.

As their tea is finally resumed once again, Mrs. Hodges remarks, “Poor, dear thing!” after which her husband grumbles, “Quite shocked, she was, Haw-haw!” After he says this, Macnamara writes the group’s reaction in script notes, “Mrs. Hodges laughter is clear and soft, the children’s shrill, Feathergill’s hollow. At this point, Feathergill realizes that his own dignity is doomed” (42). As Mrs. Hodges avers that it’s a shame to laugh at Mrs. Clam-Digby and that if she’s been brought up better she’d know. In a satirical manner, Mrs. Hodges asserts, “Ignorance – that’s

what it is – ignorance!” (43). The comic reversal is reiterated as Mrs. Hodges pities Mrs. Clam-Digby’s obnoxious behavior and claims that she must not know better.

In the final phase of the drama, Feathergill cautiously speculates about the Parish meeting this evening. Mrs. Hodges decrees that the “Women’s Institute’ll be there in force, sir!” (43). She continues, “There’s a lot of feeling. But you’re going to persuade us that parlours are a nuisance, aren’t you sir?” (43). Mr. Feathergill writhes at her words, but says that he’s certain that women won’t come out on a night like this. However, Mrs. Hodges dashes his hopes as she says, “The Institute are women in earnest.” As Macnamara brings in the Women’s Institute, she shows her feminist inclination to show the power of women who are determined to take action in a society still very much run by men.

As Feathergill rises suddenly, he exclaims that he has just remembered another appointment. Though Mrs. Hodges reminds him that he’ll get wet again in the storm, he proclaims that he has important business to take care of. As Mrs. Hodges helps him with his coat, she hands him his plans and his model. Hodges follows him outside and watches as he pitches the plans into the river. As he tells his wife, Mrs. Hodges remarks, “Before he draws out fresh ones perhaps he’ll come and ask me” (45). Then, she asks her husband, “Bert, d’ you see any manner o’ means whereby I could contrive t’ invite the Ministry of Health to tea on a wet afternoon?” (45). Mrs. Hodges’ husband exits to fetch their two boys as the drama ends.

Feathergill has been transformed by his experience at Mrs. Hodges’ house and thus the comedy has a serious implication and thus the satiric humor of this comedy

has elements of pathos. Like Shaw, Macnamara protests the abuses of the many by the privileged few. Her intellectually provocative and didactic drama echoes the Fabian ideals of George Bernard Shaw. In her play *Mrs. Hodges*, Macnamara takes on a more hopeful tone than Shaw does in *Widowers' Houses* and thus illustrates the difference that one person's efforts can make. Rather than magnifying the depravity of human nature, Macnamara expresses the hope that can be found in one person's actions against wrongdoings.

In this chapter, I focused upon the political influence that Shaw and the Fabian Socialists exerted upon Macnamara. The playwright was certainly motivated by other artists and theatre practitioners besides Shaw, most notably Elizabeth Robins and Annie Horniman; but her collaboration with Shaw on the production of *The Gates of the Morning* precedes her acquaintance with these other major figures and seems to inform her entire body of work. Furthermore, other prominent figures that are associated with Macnamara are all linked to Shaw as well by their participation in the Independent Theatre movement. For example, Robins became famous for acting in Ibsen's plays and Shaw had made these plays popular in England by sponsoring their production. Horniman's theatre served as an extension of the Royal Court in England's provinces. Since Macnamara's plays provide us with the other solid evidence of her political theory and approach, the similarity of the subject matter of her dramas to the content of the Fabian Tracts which were written by Shaw and other members of the Fabian Socialists' set, suggests she espoused their radical political stance.

Macnamara's artistic style emerges as different from either Shaw's or Robins' since she treads more softly upon volatile issues. Instead of writing such over political pieces as *Votes for Women!* by Robins or *Widowers' Houses* by Shaw, Macnamara embeds her theories more deeply into the fabric of the drama itself and presents issues as part of a broader philosophical inquiry. Perhaps because she is a woman without the fame and fortune of Robins or Shaw, Macnamara may have felt the need to be subtler in her approach. Without compromising her political agenda, Macnamara's approach brings her work an artistic dimension that characterizes it as uniquely her own.

Chapter Two: The Theatrical Context of Macnamara's Drama

Experiencing success early in her career as a playwright, Macnamara had two of her plays produced on prominent stages in England during the opening decades of the twentieth century. The Incorporated Stage Society sponsored a production of *The Gates of The Morning* in 1908 at the Lyric Shaftesbury Theatre of London and Annie Horniman produced Macnamara's *Our Little Fancies* in 1911 at her Gaiety Theatre of Manchester. Since restrictions of the Lord Chamberlain had proven prohibitive to the creation of new art forms in England's theatres, both of these companies purposefully sought to bring experimental and non-commercialized forms of drama to the public in their privatized establishments. Both companies had been formed with the goal of restoring England's prominence in the arts after leaders had become aware of the avant-garde drama already being produced with frequency in continental Europe. These theatres encouraged the works of new dramatists as part of their attempt to bring innovative artistic styles to the public.

This chapter will examine the beginning of Macnamara's career as a dramatist, the support of major figures that she obtained, the important ideas that she put forth in her works, the good reviews that her dramas received, and the impressive actors who brought her plays alive on stage. These two plays, *The Gates of the Morning* (1908) and *Our Little Fancies* (1911), are the only plays of which there are numerous critical reviews to draw from. It is uncertain as to why her later plays did not receive as much attention from theatrical producers, although her plays were certainly

published. *Florence Nightingale*, a major work, has a story of its own and there was a production of Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters* by Nugent Monck's experimental Maddermarket Theatre in Norwich. When her plays have been brought forth from obscurity into public awareness, time will tell whether they can stand on their own merit and warrant production in the 21st century.

What was the experimental or independent theatre network that showed support of Macnamara's work? J. T. Grein's Independent Theatre, which had been founded under the auspices of the Incorporated Stage Society, introduced the movement toward experimental drama in England in 1891. George Bernard Shaw expanded upon Grein's vision by founding the Royal Court Theatre in central London in 1901. Under the artistic direction of Harley Granville Barker and the business management of John Vedrenne, the venture proved to be successful. The Royal Court's theatre success inspired producers in England's provinces to replicate their methods of circumventing censorship through the sale of individual subscriptions. Annie Horniman's Gaiety Theatre of Manchester and Nugent Monck's Maddermarket Theatre of Norwich are examples of experimental theatres that rose up in the provinces.

Macnamara must have felt a surge of optimism as she obtained news of her plays being chosen for production by these forward-seeking theatres. She must have regarded two professional productions in a three year time span as a propitious sign of her future as a playwright. As evidenced by the broad social consciousness

inherent in her play's themes, she had much in common with the Fabian Socialists' of the Incorporated State Society and the progressive goals of Annie Horniman's company.

Both of these dramas that were chosen for production by Independent Theatres reflect the progressive tendencies of Macnamara's work. *The Gates of the Morning* is a play about the detrimental nature of religious fanaticism. The play also conveys strong feminist sympathies especially in the relationship between Alice and her overbearing husband. In the play, the topic of parenthood becomes an issue: both in the portrayal of Alice's mother and the controversy over her baby. The goal of Nancy Larne, Alice's aunt, to create an optimal environment for growing children is brought into question as Macnamara honors the role of the natural mother above all. A subplot accentuates the play's main theme as the dying Mill Rowbin is compelled to demonstrate her religious conversion and thus becomes another victim of the forcefulness shown by the Reverend Samuel Wilson, Alice's husband.

Our Little Fancies exemplifies Macnamara's forward-seeking drama as the play deals with many serious themes. The tension between generations is brought to the surface as an elderly couple faces the ingratitude of the son that they have raised. The play shows how people can develop fixations upon things as a defense mechanism against the unpredictable nature of life. For example, Ellen Burtenshaw is attached to the idea of having a spectacular funeral even though her life has been very ordinary. Ellen Burtenshaw's "little fancy" makes statements about the Poor Law and

its tendency to only be concerned with the physical needs of the poor and to overlook their psychological needs. Ellen Burtenshaw clings to the funeral idea because it gives her a sense of dignity and pride that life has not shown her. Therefore, she cannot give up her plans no matter what the circumstances may be. The play indicts the Poor Law's treatment of the elderly as a way of demonstrating the tendency of larger society to mistreat or dismiss them. Each character shows an attachment to a particular thing or idea as an extension of their identity, their "little fancy". Again, Macnamara uses a subplot to substantiate her themes as she honors a spinster named Miss Dempsey whose fancy is merely to do nice things for others. Miss Dempsey had to give up a dream of a romantic life in the theatre in order to take care of her elderly father. Through her character, Macnamara shows that people can give up one fancy and take up another one. That play will be examined in the later part of this chapter.

The Gates of the Morning

The Gates of the Morning is a play about a young woman named Alice Larne who ran away from her loveless upper-class home to start a life in the theatre. There she met a man who had promised to marry her but was killed in an accident. A baby resulted from their affair. Now a struggling single mother, Alice attended a revival meeting whereupon she met her future husband, Samuel Wilson, the revivalist preacher. As the play opens in Alice and Samuel's home, her friend from the theatre, Mill Robyn, is dying and stays at their home during her period of convalescence. Wilson feels it is his duty to make sure that the dying woman's salvation is assured

and urges her to keep up that conversion feeling. As part of her contrition, Mill has been asked to reconcile a couple that she tore apart many years ago with a deceitful letter which she does before she dies. As Act Two begins, Alice and her husband visit the home of her mother. Her mother maintains her distance while Samuel attempts to interest her in her grandchild. His plans are devious though because he really wants to rid himself of the child. When Alice's aunt offers to take the baby and give him an ideal future, Samuel is delighted. Alice initially agrees but later goes and steals her baby back. At this point, she tells her husband plainly of his own need for contrition. Showing his real love for Alice, he humbly relents and embraces mother and child at the play's end.

In *The Gates of the Morning*, each of the characters exhibits a drive or determination that sometimes causes him/her to make imprudent decisions. The Reverend Samuel Wilson demonstrates the impulse to save souls and focuses all of his energy to that end. Having found gratification from exerting mastery over others, he shows a lack of sensitivity to others' needs as he focuses solely upon being the facilitator of their redemption. Another example of a character that shows a stilted focus is his young wife, Alice, who is so pleased to have found a husband and father for her child that she has failed to notice Samuel's religious extremism. Likewise, Alice's mother fixates upon her dog and has apparently lost the ability to trust or love other human beings. Alice's young aunt, Nancy Larne, obtains gratification from her aspiration to found a school in which she can mold the development of human beings

from babyhood. While she has a worthy goal to start the school, she neglects other aspects of her life. Finally, Mill Robyn's desire to please others could be called her fixation but it must be said that her focus allows her the greatest flexibility of any character, even if she only serves as a victim of their wiles. As she follows the preacher's directives, she goes against her previous inclination to be promiscuous and deceitful. She agrees to atone for her sins by attempting to reconcile a couple that had been separated ten years by one of her devious schemes. Each of these character's compulsions becomes the source of their separation from their better selves and thus makes it difficult for them to form meaningful relationships with others.

In this play, Macnamara shows religious fanaticism as another means of focusing upon something that provides a sense of gratification or distraction from the self. After his wife confronts him, Samuel Wilson finds that he needs to atone for his sins as much or more than all of the people that he has been trying to convert. His religion is no more of an answer to life's questions than Alice's desire to find a husband, or Mill's desire to find love, or Nancy's plan to start a school, since each goal has validity for that person. He has turned religion into a goal that can be achieved instead of being willing to develop the characteristics of inner spirituality. His brand of religion has a surface quality instead of reflecting the beatific nature of the divine.

Only a 1930s typescript revision of *The Gates of the Morning* is available in the Bristol Collection. The exact date of the last revision remains unknown, but a note on

the typescript says, "Read by Guthrie, 1936." Apparently, this version is the third in a series of reworkings of the script. In a second edition, Macnamara changed the play's title to *A Wife from the Lord*, but later returned to the play's original name in her 1930s version. Both of these titles indicate the playwright's desire to contrast religious fanaticism with more authentic spirituality as part of the play's theme.

The play shows evidence that Macnamara had a personal connection with the motif of the play. From biographical material, it is easy to ascertain the basis for her interest in exaggerated obsessions with religion. Thus, the preoccupation shown by the play's leading character reiterates the shroud of anguish that Macnamara's father brought to his family from the trauma of a boyhood experience. Having been told by a relative that his life did not indicate the blessings of the so-called Elect, he apparently took her proclamation to heart. Struggling with a critical sense of defeat thereafter, he had never been able to separate his identity from his aunt's proclamation about his life. His struggle with alcoholism and negligent loss of the family fortune indicates his inner despair. Perhaps from her observation of her father's struggle, Macnamara often sets out to dispel the myths inherent in the kind of religious fanaticism that tears down rather than builds up.

On March 2, 1908 at the Lyric Shaftesbury of London, Macnamara's *Gates of the Morning* was first performed for the public at a Sunday afternoon matinee. A critic from *The Daily Mirror* expresses disillusionment with Macnamara's manner of making "irreverent allusions to ideas which are sacred to millions of English people" (March

3, 1908). The title for the review is "Blasphemy on the Stage". While some reviewers praise Macnamara's treatment of such topics as the nature of genuine spirituality and the theoretical disputes between Dissenters and the Church of England, others are offended by her direct approach. In a letter from George Bernard Shaw to Macnamara, he advises the playwright to steel herself against the reactions of others and remain resolved in her original intention for the drama. Shaw writes:

Preserve every element of strangeness with jealousy: it is just the parts that they will feel comfortable and familiar with that are of least importance. Shock, mystify, even outrage and wound for all you are worth. (Letter from Bernard Shaw to Macnamara, Bristol Collection, nd)

To put forth such controversial subject matter must have been difficult in 1908, and a critic of *The Sunday Sun* writes of Macnamara's rendition, "I have no doubt that Miss Mack's Dissenting draper turned minister will be regarded as libel by most of the Nonconformists who see it, and many people who are not very devout would be scandalised possibly by his free use of phrases, sacred from association, and blessed words." (*The Sunday Sun*, nd) The critic may have had in mind such lines as spoken by Samuel to Mill Robyn while she is dying in Act One of *Gates of the Morning*:

Calm yourself! Quiet! There'll be worse than death in your face if you backslide into sin and take your vanity with you into the grave. Torture by fire there'll be in your face. Flames rouging your sunken cheeks – flames blackening your dried-up lips – flames" (10)

Macnamara presents a hell, fire, and damnation brand of preacher in Reverend Samuel Wilson whose only saving grace is that he genuinely loves and remains

devoted to his wife. Yet, even his love takes on aggressive tendencies as he tries to possess her and shows jealousy of her baby.

The Reverend Samuel Wilson

E. F. Spence of *The Westminster Gazette* writes his impression of Reverend Samuel Wilson's character:

The chief feature of *The Gates of the Morning* is the vivid picture given by Samuel Wilson, a Nonconformist minister, drawn very cruelly, yet with an admirable impartiality and treated as an individual, not a type. He is a narrow minded enthusiast, intensely sincere but amazingly fatuous in his belief in himself as a prophet and preacher: a small mean-looking, uncouth, common man, a draper by trade, with a natural flow of words that sometimes reaches eloquence and at the back of which is a passionate belief by means of which he is able to sway crowds. (E. F. Spence, *The Westminster Gazette*)

The drama revolves around Samuel Wilson's conversion of others but culminates with his realization of his own need for transformation.

Several reviewers praise Macnamara for her ability to convey complexity of character instead of creating a stereotype. It would be easy to make this character broadly farcical instead of genuinely committed to what he is doing. Though Macnamara portrays him as worldly-wise, Wilson believes in his calling. His love for Alice and his ministry hold the same intensity as evidenced by the following lines from the play:

Sam: Alice's conversion was a gentle shower with the sun shining through: and against the darkest cloud the rainbow of me falling in love. Soft and bright and sudden. But mark this, my dear wife, my first quiver of yearning was towards your immortal soul (10).

With Samuel's intensity comes his break from the stereotype because instead of being a charlatan, he believes in his representation of God.

As the *Daily News* reporter writes of Samuel Wilson: "It is his will and narrow ideas that create the dramatic clash" (March 3, 1908, Macnamara collection). Of course, his strength of conviction propels the play forward as he attempts to drive everyone toward their salvation. It is the word "drive" that testifies of his character. Instead of leading gently or by example, Wilson resorts to coercive techniques that often become abrasive to others. Since he holds the same standards for himself, he cannot be called a hypocrite. Yet, he shows a ferocity of will that intimidates others as he remarks, "He knows his Bible by heart, regards texts as talismans, has a real gift of florid speech, sincerely believes himself to be without sin, more particularly without self-deception and self-righteousness" (*TLS*, March 5, 1908, Macnamara collection). While this type of character has often been depicted on stage, Macnamara's version is unique since she presents him as vulnerable to his own intensity and willing to change at the play's end. As the *Time Literary Supplement* reviewer states, "Under the hot Gospeller, there is the makings of a man" (*TLS*, March 5, 1908, Macnamara collection).

Samuel Wilson's show of vulnerability make him a likable character and his love for Alice is endearing. He shows his selfishness by not wanting to share the burden of the child, but has rationalized his stance as people so often do. He states that he will either have to lie about the child to his congregation or compromise his integrity in the public's eye if he admits the child's origins. Wanting to give full devotion to his ministry, he believes that their lifestyle will not be suitable for a

growing child. Furthermore, he does not wish to provide financial support for the child from funds that could be used for his ministry. Although he does not see his rejection of the child as selfish or as hurtful to his wife, to his surprise Alice points to his behavior as both egocentric and injurious.

Norman Page served as the play's director and played the leading role after another actor was forced to relinquish the part on short notice. Page was a burgeoning young actor in London's theatrical scene in 1908, and was faced with the challenge, while playing this role, of overcoming the audience's preconception of him as a player of comedic parts. Several critics comment that his performance in this play should serve as a significant step in his already advancing reputation. Having been directed by Harley Granville Barker on many previous occasions, Page had been taught to heed the importance of observing subtlety in speech and movement as part of his portrayal of a character. *The Birmingham Daily Post* reviewer comments upon Page's refinement of style, "Curiously, though perhaps unconsciously, reminiscent of the methods of Mr. Granville Barker, he imparted a reality of feeling to the morbid and self-righteous fanatic" (TLS, March 3, 1908, Macnamara collection).

To convey the preacher's presumptuous manner, Page was said to have combined restraint with forcefulness. The following description of Page's performance warrants quoting for its imagistic conception of the character:

Lean, pale, and magnetic, with a dome-like forehead and deeply sunken eyes, Mr. Page gave a very convincing picture of the personage, and by the intensity of his acting and the admirable unconsciousness with which he delivered the most comical lines, made a valuable and highly artistic contribution to the performance (*Era*, nd, Macnamara collection).

Page was said to have shown great skill in the manner in which he humanized the preacher's overbearing qualities by displaying an earnest passion for winning souls to heaven and convincing himself as much as others of his heavenly mission. As a critic from the *Sunday Sun* confirms, "Even when he deceives himself, it is with the aid of some doctrine or principle that in its purity may be great and beneficent" (nd, Macnamara collection).

The writer from the *Sunday Sun* conveys a concern that Nonconformists would likely regard the playwright's rendition of the minister to be a slanderous representation of their denomination. Yet Macnamara, as so many critics observe, does justice to the character by showing how he remains thoroughly convinced of his mission as he moves ahead in steamroller fashion. Macnamara provides the means for audience members to empathize with the character since he is as deceived by the image that he puts forth as his needy followers. Self-taught and equally self-determined, Wilson lacks the capacity to perceive when he transgresses upon the boundaries of others. In his belief in his own righteousness, he dismisses any indication to the contrary.

His intensive manner of showing affection to his young wife reflects the same tendencies of forwardness that he uses to sway crowds. Though he lavishes praise upon his wife, he often fails to connect with her authentically. In the habit of admonishing others, he cites his wife's sinful idolatry of her baby in his attempt to strengthen his proposal that she should allow her wealthy mother to raise her child.

Accused by Mill of being jealous of the attention that his wife lavishes upon the infant, Wilson characteristically dismisses such assertions as nonsensical. After all, he admits having trouble seeing himself as a sinner at all (23).

The *Sketch* reviewer comments that Macnamara's dimensional characterization of the preacher serves as a testimony to her talent:

Margaret M. Mack in *The Gates of the Morning* has given one of the most vivid pictures of over-righteousness that I can remember. We have had many unpleasing Nonconformist ministers on the stage, but none so painful as Samuel, and none that I can remember so ably drawn. The skill in the character-drawing of the vain-glorious, Bible spouting converter of souls, beneath whose vast vanity and narrow mind lies a real man, capable of generous impulse and even humility, a creature who at the worst, is intensely sincere is great enough to show that Miss (or Mrs.) Mack is a born dramatist" (*Sketch*, nd, Macnamara collection).

As the reviewers note, Macnamara shows the double nature in the man and how he hypnotizes himself with his own conceit. While this type has been often caricatured on stage, Macnamara's rendition had more credence since she showed him to be emotionally exhilarated by his belief in himself and his message. Samuel Wilson's evolution toward a greater recognition of self becomes the play's focus. His transformation is initiated by his wife, Alice.

The play's action intensifies as audience members begin to wonder whether Alice will forsake her baby in order that she might accompany her husband to New Zealand to further his ministry. No longer attempting to cajole his wife, he has now flatly refused to take custody of the child. At this point, Alice awakens from her delusions about her husband and realizes the full implications of his pride and egotism.

The baby brings the characters together in need for resolution, and the mother's love for her child is stronger than her love for Wilson. The drama takes a conclusive turn as Alice confronts her husband for his ways of using religion to manipulate others. After conveying her insights to him, she forthrightly refuses to tolerate his excesses any longer. As the couple enter into a clash of wills, the underlying aspirations of both characters surface. For instance, Alice discovers that her husband prays regularly that he not be burdened with children since they might prove to be a distraction to his ministry. Since he had not indicated this desire before their marriage, Alice now turns on him with unleashed fury. As she indicates her intention to keep her baby, she points out his lack of sensitivity to others. Obviously shaken by her vehement attack upon his character, he breaks down into tears. As he crumples under her contempt, he reveals his love for her to be genuine. The danger of losing Alice prompts him to apply the same scrutiny to self that he has so long applied to others. With a display of humility, he becomes a more likable character. Demonstrating strength by his willingness to face his pride, he indicates a desire to save their marriage and embraces both mother and child. Expressing a new resolve to consider the best interests of all family members in their new life together, his love for his wife provides him with a more realistic perspective of self and others.

Macnamara indicates that both mother and father share in the responsibility of parenthood. Though Alice's child is an illegitimate baby from a previous liaison, the child is part of Alice and Alice part of the child. However, Wilson feels no kinship with the infant as the following line indicates, "I'm praying for His guidance, to make

a suitable arrangement for the upbringing of this infant who came into the world against His law" (18). Extremely jealous of the baby and possessive of his wife, Samuel begins to drive Alice away with his protests of the child. With his deep belief in himself and his brand of religion, he asserts that he has a prophetic gift and can predict that if Alice does not relinquish the baby, it will be an ominous sign. As Samuel says, "You forget the foreboding has a black shadow across it. If you don't accept the death-in-life of the parting you're inviting the Lord to slay your first-born" (76). Despite his arguments, Alice will not concede to part with her baby. With his threats and admonitions, he shows no sign of wanting to assume the paternal role. At this point, Alice would be content with keeping the child and caring for his needs on her own. She may not want the child to feel rejected as she had been. Though Sam cries that she promised to obey him at the marriage altar, Alice insists that the baby will be part of their lives or they will have no life together.

Alice Larne Wilson

Through the play's dialogue, audience members learn about Alice's background and how she came to marry Reverend Samuel Wilson. In a decision to remove herself from her mother's coldness and apparent lack of concern, Alice ran away from her privileged home to go on stage at the pantomimes. At the theatre, Alice became involved with the man who fathered her child. Though they intended to marry, this man was killed in an accident before the ceremony could take place. With the challenge of rearing a child on her own, Alice suddenly found herself

precariously alone in the world until she met the dynamic preacher, Samuel Wilson, just following his service.

Both were drawn to each other during the prayer meeting: the strength of his personality drew her under a spell while her misty gray eyes captivated his attention. Their brief courtship ended with marriage, but now Alice faces the challenge of working through conflicts in their relationship that she had not previously anticipated. Settled in with her husband as the play's action begins, she has shown a remarkable ability to transcend the difficulties of the past and begin anew. In script notes, Macnamara describes her as "as an attractive, well-developed, capable girl of one and twenty in a gay over-all" (3). In the play's second scene, she enters the room of their houseguest, Mill Robyn, and makes a bright and bold entrance that indicates much about her character.

In the play, Macnamara turns Alice into a strong woman as she confronts her husband and realizes her mistake of being misled by her desire rather than facing the reality. She becomes willing to venture forth on her own as she says to him, "I was going to spend the night with baby at a hotel. I'd better stick to that. Meet us at the dock in the morning. You can take us both or leave us both. Whichever you choose" (77). She begins to assert her own wants and needs to her husband, "I'm not religious like you. All I know is, of my own free will, I won't be parted from my baby" (77).

Even when he says her luggage is locked at the dock, she will not be swayed, "It can be sent back. Or I'll forfeit it. I shall manage somehow" (77). With a new determination to stand on her own, she remains unwilling to be subject to her

husband's rejection of her baby. She even denounces his love which is the turning point. Speaking of his "love" she says:

I'm sick of the word. Your love is like a great snake, coiling and crushing—a great snake of jealousy. Again and again I've spotted your jealousy and shut my eyes. I so wanted to believe you are good (82).

She states her wants and needs explicitly to him:

It's quite simple: we are not suited. What I want most of all is brothers and sisters for Baby—yes, four or five of them. That's natural and right. What you want is a barren wife—wrapt up in you—groveling—not daring to look at another man or call her soul her own (83).

For Alice "to call her soul her own" is a bold proclamation since Sam continually assesses her state of spirituality. As Alice tells him when he exhorts her to "recall the gates of the morning!" (81), she replies, "Twaddle! There aren't any gates to the morning. You invent them—and they're locked—and you're the only man with the key" (81). Showing her unwillingness to let him control her with his religion, she stands up to him with a certainty and finality in her voice that leaves him shaken. Finally she says to him, "Stop talking! I shan't bother about being religious any more... Men make religion up, and expect women to put up with it. I've had enough" (83). Resolute in her move toward independence, Alice claims her very soul back from her husband.

Newspaper critics speak of the ease with which the actress, Amy Lamborn, played the part of Alice Wilson in this first production of *The Gates of the Morning*. As an *Era* critic writes, "Miss Amy Lamborn played Alice with a bold, simple, straightforward style that was very effective, her bursts of maternal feeling and her

scornful tirade in the last act being treated with spirit, earnestness, and ability," (*Era*, nd, Macnamara collection). While the plot turns around the minister's epiphany of self, Alice shows the strength to confront him. Though he had been busy converting others, she has now brought him to a greater awareness. The *Times Literary Supplement* reviewer writes of the force of the last scene, "Her wrath and plan speaking quite crumple up Samuel whose faith in himself is so shaken that he clings dazed and helpless to mother and child " (*TLS*, March 5, 1908, Macnamara collection). Throughout the play, he has continually offered words of reproof to Alice for her lack of attention to his directives, yet he becomes humbled when his wife's strength of will equals his own.

As Alice address her houseguest and friend, Mill Robyn, in the play's opening scene, the play's subplot begins. Macnamara's purpose for the subplot is to further substantiate the inclinations of her main characters. In Samuel's obsession with Mill's continual show of conversion, Macnamara shows how he has made religion a superficial goal rather than a matter of the heart or spirit.

As he constantly attempts to force her to demonstrate her conversion, he supercedes Mill's free will. Although wise to his ways, Mill remains subject to the preacher. Her dependence as a houseguest coupled with her physical weakness renders her unable to stand up to anyone. Except for a few snide remarks, Mill plays along. As representative perhaps of one of his congregation who follow along with him, Mill brings both pathos and humor to the play.

Mill Robyn

Described by Macnamara as a “fine-featured but haggard blonde woman nearing forty” (1), she is reported to be dying of consumption. As the play opens, Mill sits dejectedly in a chair as a maid enters with a parcel for her. Upon Robyn’s request, the maid opens the package for her and pulls out a blue flannel robe. A note attached to the robe reads, “Though clouds be gray, the sky above is blue” (2). Robyn responds by making a bitter observation of how the Reverend Samuel Wilson enjoys reminding her of her impending death. Stating her dislike for the robe’s bright blue color since it reminds her of the Virgin Mary’s gown in the Nativity scene, Robyn thrusts the robe aside and asserts her preference for wearing an old silk evening dress that she has just retrieved from an old chest. As Alice enters and consoles her intemperate friend, she firmly asserts the inappropriateness of Mill wearing an evening gown to receive visitors this afternoon.

As a former actress in the pantomimes and a model for artists, Mill’s licentious lifestyle has been replaced by her attempt at virtue after a religious conversion experience at Sam’s meeting. When Alice warns her that the straps of the old carmine dress might give way, Mill responds by saying, “If they did, it wouldn’t be the first time Roger Mardale has had the privilege” (3). As Mill acts genuinely repentant for trying to be funny again, she conveys a pattern for her character which is rather humorous. As hard as she may try to be sanctimonious, Mill slips back into her former ways rather often. The preacher remains concerned that she reaches heaven when she dies. As he tries to help her recreate the conversion experience time and

again, the situation becomes rather ludicrous. As the audience waits for her to backslide, it brings a comic element to the dramatic situation.

The preacher regards vanity as Mill's greatest sin. To show repentance for past error, Mill has agreed to help reconcile a couple that she was instrumental in breaking apart many years ago. Having had sexual relations with Mardale while modeling for him, she became intensely jealous of his later engagement to Nancy Larne. Therefore, she wrote Miss Larne a treacherous letter in which she indicated that she was still having relations with him during their engagement. The prevarication caused a break of their engagement and prompted Miss Larne's departure to Canada .

Miss Larne has now returned to England for a visit and Mill has agreed to let the minister arrange to have them both visit her at the same time with hopes that such an encounter might reunite the estranged couple. She plans to confess her deed to them. Her concern with her appearance indicates that she still finds Mardale attractive. A critic from *Era* interprets the scene: The resurgence of the "Old Eve" in Mill's character and her reversion to former habits and modes of speech gives to this scene an awful comicality" (*Era*, nd, Macnamara collection). As another reviewer observes, "Even in articulo mortis, she is rapping out oaths or trying on her "transformation" in the midst of Samuel's exhortations" (*TLS*, March 5, 1908, Macnamara collection). Apparently, she finds it difficult to keep up the conversion feeling.

Mill Robyn's character indicates much about the social standards of the time period. Given her past reputation as a "loose" woman of the world, the playwright rather mercifully allows the character to die since there is no social sphere that she can easily fit into. Her religious conversion does not necessarily determine her acceptability in conventional realms. With her past life in the theatre, she might find it difficult to assimilate into a life of respectability. If she goes back to her past means of making a living in the theatre or as a model for artists, it would undoubtedly prove difficult for her to maintain her present level of commitment to religion. Even with the preacher's constant exhortations, Mill finds it difficult to sustain the state of religious ecstasy that he wants her to demonstrate. In the playwright's realistic portrayal of the character, she shows the futility of having religion replace a meaningful personal life. Instead, the dramatist proposes that spirituality should strengthen and enrich people's lives rather than being thought of as a way of replacing interpersonal connections.

Mrs. Larne -(Alice's "mean old mother") *The Birmingham Gazette*, May 3, 1908, Macnamara collection)

The above phrase that the Birmingham reviewer used to describe Alice's mother may have been how many people perceived the character. Yet, Macnamara frequently features mother/daughter conflicts in her plays. When the mother tells her side of the story in this drama, she gives audience members a way of empathizing with her. Instead of creating a comic villain in Mrs. Larne as the above reviewer indicates by his description of the character, I believe that Macnamara presents Mrs.

Larne as one who has been embittered by her villainous designation. Though she has been cold and rejecting to Alice, their conflict is apparently more complex than the *Birmingham Gazette* reviewer realizes. Macnamara draws the conflict between the generations by showing that both women have been disappointed. While Alice looks to her mother to be a role model and supporter, Mrs. Larne had hoped that her daughter would make her proud and happy. In the play, both women seem dissatisfied with the other, and neither will compromise their position. As Mrs. Larne comments about Alice running away, "A girl with an ounce of unselfishness takes pleasure in being a good daughter. But not you – never" (50), she shows her perception of the relationship's failure.

The playwright draws Mrs. Larne, Alice's upper-class mother, as one who lives a life devoid of human relationships or sustaining spirituality. Having wished for a son to continue the family name, the difficult she experienced during Alice's birth prevented her from having any more children. Furthermore, she surmises that her daughter has been obstinate and contrary ever since she was born. Speaking of her rebelling against her from the earliest age, Mrs. Larne declares:

She knew perfectly well she was defying me – I saw her little mouth set. And so it went on. Perhaps you approve the climax – marching off from her home and leaving me a lonely invalid widow (37).

While both Alice and her mother are reconciled to the circumstances of the past, their relationship has remained strained and distant. Mrs. Larne has given up on forming a relationship with her daughter and lavishes all of her affection upon her pug dog, Comfort.

Critics found that Mrs. Alice Mansfield's rendition of the uncharitable, dog-loving grandmother to have been amusing. Apparently, Mansfield played the part as one who could no longer muster any depth of feeling. Without apology or regret, she remains contented with her dog and uninterested in those around her. The *Era* reviewer claims, "Miss Alice Mansfield gave a highly original and unctuously droll impersonation of the selfish and silly Miss Larne, whose greasy self-absorption was most amusingly depicted" (*Era*, nd, Macnamara collection). Making no effort to be polite in her disclaimers, she provides a foil for the younger people's enthusiasm and innocence by her demonstration of indifference. She blatantly rejects Wilson's attempt to profess religion with his quotations from Scripture. As she asserts that she does not like to hear Bible stories quoted in her drawing room, Wilson responds by saying, "What an admission!" (47). Another reviewer writes that "Samuel tries his text and his revival meeting eloquence and finds them quite thrown away upon a lady who will not allow people to quote Scriptures in her drawing room" (*Times Literary Supplement*, March 5, 1908).

Mrs. Larne's wealth and social stature generates fresh topics for debate as related to the contrast between England's High Church and its dissenters. For instance, she dismisses Wilson's designation of himself as a minister as false. Recognizing only the Church of England for its authenticity, she disdainfully remarks, "I knew you couldn't be a real clergyman" (46). As Sam proclaims that he prefers the example of the Apostle Paul to the Archbishop of Canterbury, his words fall on deaf ears. Mrs. Larne's reification of the High Church provides a sharp

contrast with Wilson's belief in the preeminence of the revivalist style of worship as the only sincere display of faith. In turn, Mrs. Larne emphasizes the importance of the outward show of manners as more important than ambiguous notions of faith. Wilson responds to his mother-in-law's sense of superiority with a conviction of his brand of faith as more authentic, "The snobbery of the Church of England isn't religion – I pity the wearers of the dog-collar" (47). Showing more reverence for drawing room manners, Mrs. Larne represents the proprieties of upper-class society in this drama.

In Alice's mother, Wilson has encountered one as unyielding as himself. After Alice apologizes for his rudeness, Wilson remarks, "When the Spirit moves me, I'm obliged to sink the gentleman and cry the message like a prophet of old" (56). Wilson states his passionate preference for the Nonconformist's emphasis upon having a direct approach to God. He refers to Jesus' selection of apostles to support his argument for Nonconformists against the High Church as he says, "I am a true follower of the Master who chose his disciples from the working class" (47). After he condemns her love of dogs as sinful, he apologizes, "As a gentleman, I'm free to beg your pardon – but I trust you'll make what I said a matter of prayer for enlightenment" (56). In a characteristic manner, Mrs. Larne replies, "I wasn't listening. Kindly open the door" (56). Both obdurate, each finds it difficult to show humility. Macnamara parallels the character's personality types with the religion. As Mrs. Larne is cold and snobbish, Samuel is forceful and emotional. Macnamara rejects both the High Church

of England and the evangelical type of religion denying either's claim to advantage. Instead, she reveals the faults of both in their extremes.

Aunt Nancy

Nancy Larne, the 32 year-old aunt of Alice's, has just returned from a teaching stint in Canada and likes to boast of her higher education. Interested in applying her research knowledge to create the best environment possible for infants to grow and learn, she has returned to England with the aspiration to open a facility for infants and toddlers. In addition to her interests in child development, she tends to dote on children and expresses her feelings regarding them in language that "sometimes provokes a smile" (*Morning Post*, March 4, 1908). As Nancy reunites with her former beau, Henry Mardale, he wants her to pose while he paints her with Alice's baby (whom she offers to adopt) as Madonna and child. Mrs. Vera Coburn is praised for her performance of the role in many reviews. The *Era* reviewer writes, "Miss Vera Coburn hit off very tactfully the curious and rather puzzling personality of Miss Nancy Larne" (*Era*, nd, Macnamara collection).

Macnamara and *The Gates of the Morning*

The *Times Literary Supplement* reviewer writes his response to the play, "One came away from it a little shocked, a little tired, a little angry with the author, and yet forgiving her for the sake of several really good moments," (*Times Literary Supplement*, March 5, 1908, Macnamara collection). He then surprisingly continues by exclaiming, "How seldom one gets moments in the theatre that can be called really good!" (*TLS*, March 5, 1908, Macnamara collection). His comments speak volumes

about the kind of responses that the Stage Society hoped to evoke from audience members. In his letter to Macnamara, Shaw wrote that he thought it good to cause discomfort and dismay. It is interesting to note that Macnamara saved the negative review of *The Sunday Sun* entitled "Blasphemy on the Stage", she must have realized that her play was offensive to some audience members. While *The Times Literary Supplement* talks about the enjoyable and delightful moments, he starts his review on a different note as he writes, "It is one of the functions of the Stage Society to do queer things" (*TLS*, March 5, 1908, Macnamara collection). He continues to say that it is their trademark but that Margaret Mack's play is "naively, flauntingly, outrageously queer" (*TLS*, March 5, 1908, Macnamara collection).

While he says that it sometimes passes over into the region of "downright bad taste, that he saw much cleverness in the play, cleverness of observation and irony" (*TLS*, March 5, 1908, Macnamara collection). After going into much vivid descriptive detail, he writes, "This gallimaufry of Revivalism, High Churchism, pug-dogs, and babies is sufficiently absurd. But we begin by remarking that the play was queer" (*TLS*, March 5, 1908, Macnamara collection).

His next line warrants critical commentary: "One half suspects the author of being a clever, morbid schoolgirl, and feels inclined to prescribe hockey and plenty of rice-pudding" (*TLS*, March 5, 1908, Macnamara collection). The author of the article reverts back to the Victorian feminine ideal of Coventry Patmore's "Angel in the House" with his advice for a woman should not be too clever if it will make her restless and discontented with her role as the supporter of the male figure in the

household. Her role is to provide solace to the man upon his return from work and to create a place of sanctuary in the home. Furthermore, a woman should not be more intelligent than the man in this paradigm since he maneuvers in the world while she remains confined to the boundaries of home. In Victorian times, it was believed that if a girl learned too much that it would disrupt the “normal” pattern of her life.

As the critics make their concluding remarks, they generally affirm Macnamara’s ability as a playwright. One reviewer writes of her ability to create believable characters, “Though none of the characters is as finely drawn as that of the minister, considerable ability is shown in handling all, even, indeed, a purely comic character – that of the selfish, hard mother of Alice” (*Westminster Gazette*, nd, Macnamara collection). Another review writes of her ability to interweave an argument into the play’s action, “When I say there was a ruthlessness in the argument that reminded me of Ibsen, and a wittiness in the dialogue that was reminiscent of Bernard Shaw, I am trying to express my feeling that, even if imperfect, *The Gates of the Morning* is a genuine work of art.” (*TLS*, March 5, 1908, Macnamara Collection) To be likened to Shaw and Ibsen is indeed a compliment for any playwright.

In both *The Gates of the Morning* and *Our Little Fancies*, Macnamara studies the characters’ egos- or the means by which they show the ability to adapt to varied circumstances. In *The Wisdom of the Ego*, George Vaillant calls to mind Freud’s comparison of the ego to Plato’s horseman who attempts to straddle and ride two horses simultaneously (7). The ego is likened to the horseman in that it strives to regulate both horses and thus keeps the self-serving impulses of the id in balance

with the moral constraints of the superego (Vaillant, 7). As the author indicates the ego's "remarkable capacity for life-preserving distortion", he further comments upon the "human capacity for ingenious, creative, often healing self-deception." (9) In both plays, Macnamara examines the character's propensity for developing fixations that provide the ego with a sense of stability as the person finds one way of meeting a need and retains that course. In both plays, Macnamara shows that a person's "little fancies" are often more serious and deeply rooted than they initially appear.

Our Little Fancies

Macnamara's second play to receive professional production was *Our Little Fancies*. It was staged at the prominent Gaiety Theatre during its third year of operation in Manchester. Annie Horniman, the theatre's founder, had placed a replica of a sailing ship above the stage that became known as the Gaiety Ship.

It served as a symbol of the metaphysical beliefs of Annie Horniman that a person's soul was on a voyage towards perfection – a philosophy that Horniman held dear. By 1911, the Gaiety was experiencing profound success and the little ship was riding the crest of the wave (Goodie, 121). The company of actors and actresses were proud and happy to belong to an acclaimed and innovative theatre that held performances for packed houses each night. It was in February of 1911 that Macnamara's *Our Little Fancies* was produced at the Gaiety Theatre.

Goodie subtitles her book about Annie Horniman "a pioneer in the theatre" and it is safe to say that Horniman earned that designation. Having sponsored the renovation of the building that was used for the Irish National Theatre in 1904,

Horniman worked closely with William Butler Yeats and Lady Gregory to establish the Abbey Theatre in Dublin. Having experienced much difficulty in her involvement from afar, she turned the operation of the theatre over to them as she made plans to begin her own professional company in Manchester. With Ben Iden Payne as her business manager, the Gaiety brought an acting company together and readied them for performances of new works as well as the classics.

Payne wrote a letter to the *Manchester Guardian* introducing the new theatre to the city:

Sir, I am writing to inform you of a scheme which, it is possible, may form the nucleus of a city theatre, the idea of which, I am informed, has been mooted recently in Manchester. Miss A.E.F. Horniman, with myself as her general manager, hopes to form a repertory theatre in Manchester and we shall commence our work in the coming autumn with a series of productions, probably at the Midland Hotel Theatre (qtd. in Goodie, 108).

He then explains the long-term plans for the company and indicates the unique offerings of the company and its value to the community.

We have, tentatively, given the name of the Manchester Playgoer's Theatre to our work, and we intent to produce no plays which are not sincere works of art. We shall seek to produce good new plays, to revive old masterpieces, and to present translations of the best works of foreign authors. We have chosen Manchester because we feel that of all towns it is the one most ready for such an undertaking, and that there, if anywhere, will be the support necessary for the success of our scheme. I hope very shortly to give much fuller particulars. Yours etc., B. Iden Payne (qtd. in Goodie, 108).

As he writes of the theatre's goal and purpose, he establishes their association with the goals of the Independent theatres. When he speaks of a repertory system, he intimates that the theatre will have more flexibility and room for experimentation than the actor-manager system allowed.

Our Little Fancies shows the playwright's resolve to present the needs of the poor without sentimentality. Through the play's action, Macnamara shows the importance of each person's need to contribute productively to society as the primary means of establishing a sound sense of self. Like Shaw, Macnamara shows how the degradation of the poor causes as much difficulty for them as the deprivation of physical needs. Macnamara's personal connection to the dramatic themes may be a result of her father's loss of the family fortune and the subsequent dread of humiliation that her family faced in the community in which they lived. Her play, *Our Little Fancies*, shows how each character develops an obsessive way of establishing a sense of self-respect in the midst of poverty. The drama illuminates the life of the Sussex County poor and treats the characters with the kind of complexity and individuality that had been traditionally reserved for those of noble status.

In *Our Little Fancies*, the elderly Ellen Burtenshaw is introduced as a woman who has long made personal sacrifices for her orphaned nephew, Alfred Fayres. She shares a cottage with her late sister's husband, Daniel Fayres, who is preoccupied by his friends' circumstances in the Poor Law home and his impending old age. In the meantime, young Alfred finds himself in legal trouble after "borrowing" his employer's money to impress his girlfriend. However, Ellen will not agree to bail him out of trouble since it would mean giving up her savings. Her one dream is an elaborate funeral for herself and she cannot lend this allocated money to Alfred no matter how desperate he might be. Though her brother-in-law pleads with her, she will not change her mind. Miss Dempsey, a kindly neighbor, saves the day by selling

a piece of her expensive lace and replacing the missing funds before the police are called. Both Ellen and Daniel enter the Poor Law home so that Alfred and his bride-to-be may have the cottage.

Ellen Burtenshaw

As the play opens, sixty-two year old Ellen Burtenshaw limps about to set the table for tea. She and her brother-in-law, Daniel Fayres, are described by the playwright as “pleasant and kindly and possessed to a remarkable degree of the quiet dignity that characterizes the best among the rustic poor” (1). Ellen has worked all of her life as a laundress and now has rheumatism in her hands as well as an injured leg. An idea of Ellen’s workplace environment may be obtained from the Fabian Tract entitled “Life in the Laundry” as described in chapter one. From the tract’s description, it is evident that laundresses worked long hours in rooms of extremely high temperature. Often, they were forced to stand in bacteria-laden water for lack of proper drainage. The rooms were full of steam and workers were forced to breathe in the poisonous gases emitted from hot irons. An understanding of her past occupation makes her sacrifices for Alfred all the more significant.

Ellen concedes that when Alfred marries and his family comes along that she will be crowded out of the house. Thus, she resigns herself to a future at the Poor Law home. Without self-pity or bitterness in her tone, she tells of her past of being left with Alfred’s care as an orphaned baby and having to nurse her sister “as were bedridden nineteen year” (8). She explains other aspects of her past to her neighbor Miss Dempsey:

Well miss, the only time marriage'd ha' been a convenience to me, I couldn't have it. 'Twas when Daniel and me was left with little Alf and ever such a doctor's bill, besides two funerals not paid for. I can't abide debt-no more can Daniel – and if we could have become man and wife we'd ha' lodged in one room. But in them days it weren't thought to be right for two sisters to have the same man. Looking back, it seems silly we couldn't ha' pinched in house – room stead o' beer and bacon (9).

As Miss Dempsey proclaims that she will have her reward in heaven, Ellen answers with a religious pride, “Anyhow, come what may, I've one thing to look forward to and that's a nice funeral. The money has been saved and ready ever since I was a young girl in service. As Ellen recalls that from first to last, she has had a very plain existence, but confesses that “What I couldn't abear is a pauper's grave” (8).

Ellen's desire for a “swagger funeral”, as Gladys calls it, has become a representative symbol of all the glory that life has not offered her. Ellen bears her deprivations bravely and is comforted by thoughts of this splendid ending to her life. Sadly though, of course, she will not be there to share in this glorious celebration. Yet, it must give her many moments of pleasure to contemplate this magnificent event that is centered around her life. As she outlines her wishes to Thomson when she prepays him the money for the funeral, “New black for the family first of all, sir, and that hearse with the silver leaves on the glass and them plumes what go straight up and then bush out like a sweep's brush” (22). The coffin that she's already purchased has been kept under the sofa and is described by Alf as “real oak moreover and genuine silver-plated handles – a frist class Thomson coffin. Have a look at the silver name-plate with the text on it (28-29). She has the funeral planned out explicitly.

The planned funeral makes life bearable for Ellen. When Alf defends his great-aunt to his girlfriend, he says, "You'll find the old soul good-tempered and willing, ready to drudge till she drops as her rheumatics allow" (26). In the Poor Law home, Ellen takes up crochet though her fingers are bad with rheumatism. The nurse praises her, "But Burtenshaw with her twisted up fingers- it's a marvel how she can do anything. She has got grit, hasn't she Miss Dempsey?" (9). As the play opens, she limps about setting tea. She shows great tenacity and earnest desire to do her best despite the circumstances.

Ellen also shows a kind of folk wisdom often times in her dealings with others. As she speaks to Alfred about his competition with his peer, Ben Saunders, she observes, "You seem to live to take the shine out of Bert" (16) and then she adds "envy's a pore virtue to cherish" (16). When Alfred speaks of winning Gladys over completely from Saunders, Ellen surmises, "She hasn't promised you yet. 'Taint wise to boast of a girl till she've passed her promise" (11). Practically speaking she cajoles him when getting ready for tea, "Girls don't take no notice of their food when they're courting" (12). When consoling her brother-in-law Daniel about the Poor Law home, she claims, "There's naught so bad you can't get accustomed to it" (4).

Ellen is the first to be wise to the manipulative nature of Gladys. When she finds that Alfred lied about her age and pension money, she becomes extremely disappointed. When he speaks about his aunt to Gladys who worries if they will have enough money, he says, "Auntie, You eat no more than a fly! And you ain't bedridden, you can still crawl about and do most of what's wanted, can't she

Granfer?" (22) After these assertions, Ellen answers, "I'm going to send for the Relievin' Officer" (22), the relieving officer being the one who escorts people to the Poor Law home. As Gladys pipes in that she should feel no shame to go there, she shows her callousness and concern for herself. To all this, Ellen answers Daniel who vehemently protests, "I've nought to regret looking back. I've done my best and worked hard without ceasing" (23). As Daniel continues to protest, she reassures him,

Nought in the wide world could reconcile you to the House, I know, but I shall take it easier than most. I shan't be a pauper ever and ever when the worst is said. I've made it sure my bones shall rest in peace (24).

Though Ellen Burtenshaw realizes that Gladys would want her out of the house, she is reconciled to it as long as she has the dream of the funeral to hold onto.

The critic of the *Manchester Guardian* describes a scene from the play that made a strong impression upon him as Ellen adjusts to the Poor Law home. His evocation of the play's ambiance calls for a full quote of his impression of the scene as an audience member:

Imagine a workhouse yard, lit by evening sunlight, and a row of chairs facing you with all the formality of Moliere. Imagine these chairs filled by some half-dozen old women in the evening of their days, whining, scolding, philosophizing, some at their ease, some huddled on their chairs, living penury. One old woman maundered childishly on, sans teeth; another dropped her knitting needle and was too frightened to take it again; and overall the clear and awful sanity of the old woman with the hoard, the monomaniac's sanity, prevailed. There was no kind of sentimentalized, sympathetic stuff here, and even a trace of Maeterlinck's awe in the presence of old age (*Manchester Guardian*, nd, Macnamara Collection).

The writer of this review eloquently describes the presence of the coffin upon the stage as symbolic of this woman's dignity. Indicating the coffin as symbolic, he writes, "The coffin is real and illuminative – illuminative because it shows one more that it matters in art not what things are done but how they are done" (*Manchester Guardian*, nd, Macnamara collection). He conveys its deeper meaning with his poignant recollection of a later scene,

Later, when the coffin stood for a symbol of an old woman's passion and she wept beside it the few hard tears of her life, it came to mean less the actual boards and hideous shape, and became simple the idea of a coffin (*Manchester Guardian*, nd, Macnamara collection).

Ellen's life has been consecrated, ordained, and justified in her mind by this coffin. A reviewer describes Miss Ada King's rendition of the role as one "who completely absorbs the character of the emphatic old lady. Ellen Burtenshaw knows what she wants and like many other elderly persons, she is only happy in the assurance that her wishes will be carried out" (*Manchester Weekly Times*, nd, Macnamara collection).

Daniel Fayres

As the play opens, Daniel is preoccupied with his visit to the Poor Law home. Although he will be receiving a pension and will not be forced to go there, he grieves because of the ignominious conditions that inmates must endure. Expressing his regret that he has so long neglected his friends, he proclaims that it was dreadful to see the look upon their faces. Miss Dempsey agrees with him as she remarks, "The women bear up wonderfully as a rule, but the men – she shudders" (4). With this observation, Miss Dempsey corroborates Daniel's observation that the men seem

disturbed and unresolved to their new situation. He cries with exasperation, "What have they done to be put to shame? What for is the wall around them as high as the wall round Lewes gaol?" (3)

Both Daniel and Miss Dempsey conclude that the men do not adjust well to the new situation. Perhaps the women adjust better because they are accustomed to a life of adaptability while men traditionally have had a single focus in their work. As Daniel describes the men's seclusion, he remarks:

Close under that wall runs the main-road, with all sorts passin' by- hay wagons and motor-cars, huntsmen, beanfeasters, men, women, and children, horses and dogs. And all them old fellers can see is a tow'ring great wall, (3).

Shut out from the world, the inmates are treated as if they are being punished.

Daniel further laments of the manner in which they group the able-bodied with the idiots and imbeciles. Once again, he remarks of the men's faces, "shamed every one of 'em, lost-like, God-forsaken" (4).

Daniel can be described as kindly to others and devoutly religious. As Alfie remarks about him, "Genuine religious, Granfer is. I like to see it in the gentleman of the house – gives yer a feeling of luck, don't it now?" (29). As Gladys talks about the luck her friend had in gambling, he proclaims, "The luck of the devil to tempt 'em on" (20). When she replies that "money is money" (2), he answers "Tut, tut, my dear, them don't sound like the words of the Master" (2). After desperately trying to prevent Ellen from going to the Poor Law home of her own accord, he visits her every day once she signs in. When Alfie gets in trouble however, Daniel pitifully pleads with Ellen to relinquish the money to save him from jail, "We've no claim on yer,

Ellen. He's my flesh and blood not yours— Oh, don't let our little Alf be sent to gaol, don't— don't!" (85).

Daniel is truly kindly and does not like to see anyone hurt. The *Manchester Weekly Times* reviewer writes about the acting in a way that lends insight to the character as he remarks that "Mr. Charles Bibby is one more inimitable as the dear old man who is a comfort to everyone" (nd, Macnamara collection). Another reviewer asserts that Bibby "filled the part of Daniel Fayres with a quiet and pathetic realism" (*The Era*, November 18, 1911, Macnamara collection). Though Daniel so strongly objects to the Poor Law Home, he resigns himself to it. Wanting to be with Ellen and his old friends, he decides to enter the home rather than be alone. Though late in life, he and Ellen sweetly wed so that together they can qualify for the married quarters.

Miss Dempsey

In script notes, Macnamara describes Miss Dempsey as a "Christian gentlewoman of the old school so sympathetic in her refinement and eagerness to do good that one almost forbears to smile at her old-fashioned dress and manner" (1). Having given up a dream of a life in the theatre to care for her elderly father, she finds a sense of romance in doing small good deeds for others.

Bringing a parish magazine to Ellen Burtenshaw, she enjoys visiting with the elderly couple. Attempting to see the good in every one, she defends the work of the Guardians, "Not that there is any fault to be found with the Guardians. They are kindness itself— one of the few boards you know that allow Married Quarters for the Aged, the Unexceptionably, Respectable Aged" (4). Though Fayres objects by saying

that they are locked out of their rooms fourteen hours a day and herded with their own sex, she answers in her usual constructive and positive manner by saying, "You'll be a splendid visitor, for you can talk to them about the crops and the cattle" (4).

As Miss Dempsey makes reference to her aged father, she provides a vivid contrast with the treatment of the aged in the Poor Law home. Alert and involved in life, she says that people often think he is in his eighties though he has past ninety years. Miss Dempsey amusingly relates how he still keeps her accounts and reproaches her for any extravagant spending of money. She also tells how he watches over her and remarks upon such minor things as broken needles which indicates his good eyesight and awareness of surroundings. Macnamara shows that an inclusive treatment of the aged affords them the opportunity to have a longer and more meaningful life. Instead of isolating them from their families and loved ones as so often is done in modern times, older people should be integrated into the daily lives of the younger generation. Miss Dempsey's show of sympathy to others apparently extends to her father and provides him with a more fulfilling role than most elderly people assume. The Stage reviewer calls Miss Dempsey "a philanthropist" who "visits the inmates and finds Ellen quite happy and contented" (*The Stage*, nd, Macnamara collection). Dedicated to serving others, she finds romance and sentimentality in her role.

Alfred Fayres

As Alfred enters for the first time, his preoccupation with romance becomes immediately evident as he whistles a popular love song. Physically described by the playwright as “wearing newish gray trousers, an old drab coat, a waistcoat and a greenish cap” (10), his happy-go lucky aura surrounds him as he swings a cricket bat around and hums a light tune. The playwright describes his character “of weakfish principles and egregious vanity, he is nonetheless likable from the childish simplicity of his failings” (10). From letters in the Macnamara collection, the description sounds very much like her brother, Arthur.

Alfred’s first words to his aunt shows his desire to please his girlfriend, Gladys, and his contempt of the competition that comes from one of his peers, Ben Saunders. He speaks of Ben in relation to the cricket game just played, “Tell you what, if I play up in the last match as I did today my average may beat his yet. Conceited ass!” (11). As Ellen proclaims that “he seems to live to take the shine out of Bert” (16), she also adds that “envy’s a pore virtue to cherish” (16). Alfred’s primary object is to avert Gladys’ attention away from Bert altogether. As *The Stage* reviewer remarks about the character, “Alfred is a flighty youth, all on the surface” (*The Stage*, nd, Macnamara collection). Though Alfred may have some character from his good upbringing, he has been overtaken with his infatuation for Gladys and thus makes foolish decisions.

Alfred is torn between his love for Daniel and Ellen and his enthrallment with Gladys. Though he wants to create an impressive spread when she comes to tea, he

disregards the feelings of the older pair. When Ellen speaks of going to the Poor Law home because of his rudeness to her, his grandfather must prod him to resist her decision. After Daniel warns Alf that “the disgrace wunt fall on her, Alf, that’s the truth. Twill fall on you, as have eat up the best years of her life and now you’re sleek and prosperin” (24). Finally, Alf plunges in and forgets his concern for Gladys as he expressively shows his love for his aunt, “Oh rot it! She shan’t go Granfer. Drop it, Auntie! I’d- I’d work my ten fingers off for you so I would” (24). As she answers him sardonically to just remove the tray from the table, Alfie abandons his argument a little too easily as he says, “No budging her now, Granfer” (25). Obviously not sincere in his attempt, he later defers to Gladys’ wishes as he speculates, “Then I suppose I best refrain from persuading her against going. Will that content you?” His loyalty to his family is compromised by his courtship with Gladys.

Gladys Miles

The cunning and crafty Gladys has stolen Alfie’s heart. She plays with that knowledge by pitting him against a rival for her love, Ben Saunders. Though Gladys is only a parlour maid and still of the lower classes, she apparently dresses well and puts on supercilious airs. When they prepare the tea, Alfred objects to putting kippers on the table by saying, “She’s more refined than kippers. A house parlour maid, not a general”(13). When Daniel suggests the “S’ rimp-paste what the gentry has to their tea”(13), Alfred is delighted. In script notes, Macnamara describes the character as follows, “Black-crowned, red-cheeked and smartly attired, Gladys is a lode star to the youths of the village, who are blind to the signs of her ill-temper and

self-seeking” (17). As an instigator of the play’s action, Gladys propels Ellen to the Poor Law home and provokes Alfred to profess that the storekeeper’s money is his savings by the pressure she places on him. As a reviewer writes of the actor’s rendition of the role, he provides insight into the character by testifying that Miss Edyth Goodall was “horribly and correctly pert and common” (*Manchester Guardian*, nd, Macnamara collection).

Both of the plays that received early production feature themes that recur in Macnamara’s later drama. As seen in her rendition of the rustic setting and noble characters of *Our Little Fancies*, the playwright shows empathy for the poor and affords them great dignity in her realistic portrayals of the circumstances surrounding their lives. As seen in *The Gates of the Morning*, Macnamara frequently contrasts religious fanaticism with spirituality by showing the downfall of characters that take religion to dangerous extremes. In both plays, she investigates strained mother/daughter relationships and the challenge of overcoming generational differences. In *The Gates of the Morning*, both Alice and her mother express a yearning for reconciliation with each other although they regard it as impossible. In *Our Little Fancies*, Ellen Burtenshaw avoids a power struggle with Gladys Miles by placing herself in the Poor Law home. In this case, the generation gap apparently cannot be mended.

Macnamara often features society’s vulnerable such as the sick, elderly, or small children in a way that affords them respect. In *The Gates of the Morning*, Mill Robyn’s illness certainly makes her more vulnerable to the wiles of the crafty

preacher. Though the play centers around the infants, the baby is tossed around until his mother reclaims her right role in his life. Finally, the celebration of all stages of life is seen in Macnamara's treatment of the elderly in *Our Little Fancies* as the dramatist poetically highlights their tendency to experience loneliness and isolation. Finally, the production of these two plays establish Macnamara's participation as a significant dramatist in the independent circuit.

Chapter Three: Pacifist Ideology

“When there is peace within the individual, there will be peace in the family. When there is peace within the family, there will be peace in the community. When there is a peace within the community, there will be peace in the nation. When there is peace within the nation, there will be peace in the world.” Confucius

Two of Macnamara’s dramas written during the interwar period, *The Baby in the Ring* (1918) and *In Safety* (1923) convey the playwright’s belief that pacifist ideology should be based upon an analysis of interpersonal relationships and beneficent community life. Macnamara was like many pacifists who believed that a peaceful world could only be realized by exposing the underlying social causes of violence and conflict. In her dramas, she not only demonstrates the methods by which tension may be alleviated but also shows the actions and approaches to situations that tend to escalate conflict. Thus, her dramas provide conceptual representations of her ideology and thereby open the pathway for the message to apply to the varied experiences of audience members. Macnamara aspired to show that her characters’ ability to triumph over seemingly irreconcilable differences could serve as an indicator that the same good results could be achieved in larger scale political conflict if they were handled in a similar fashion. Finally, tracing the historical thread of pacifist ideology will help illuminate Macnamara’s pacifist dramas.

The Baby in the Ring was first produced by the Women’s Institute of Henfield, a small town in Sussex County, England. In an article in London’s *Observer*, Elizabeth Robins praised the play for its literary merit as well as its exploration of underlying

issues related to interpersonal conflict (John, 205). In 1923, Macnamara wrote a drama that was set in colonial America called *In Safety* that addressed pacifist issues more directly. In this play, the Quakers' peace-loving manner of responding to an aggressor's siege in the New World is contrasted with the defensive posture that another group of colonists takes toward the Native American population.

Both of these dramas feature individuals or groups that develop conciliatory methods of resolving differences while presenting compelling characterizations and intensive plot development for the stage. The protagonists of each play prove to be anti-heroes that rise above conflicting situations by first submitting or acquiescing to a rival. These central characters demonstrate wisdom by establishing a rapport with opposing entities and presenting a vision of mutual benefit. Therefore, the playwright entreats audience members to rejoice at the reconciliation of dissembling parties and apply similar methods of constructive problem solving to their own lives.

1907-Contemporary Pacifist Ideology and its Roots

Before proceeding to Macnamara's systemic treatment of pacifism in each of these dramas, it should prove advantageous to cite the historical trends that inform her ideology. By definition, the principles of pacifism are founded upon a general respect for life and subsequent avoidance of any form of violence or brutality.

Pacifism has an eclectic heritage since its principles are rooted in both Eastern and Western thought. From their inception, such eastern religions as Taoism, Hinduism, and Buddhism have urged followers to strive for detachment from the kinds of passionate desires that lead to aggression. During the Warring States period of

Chinese history (475-221 B.C.), Confucius observed pervasive conflict and therefore resolved to find a way in which people could coexist more amicably. After many years of careful reflection, he concluded that the establishment of peaceful civilization only becomes tenable as citizens develop the capacity to maintain sound interpersonal relationships in the family and community. Along the same lines, Macnamara bases her plays upon the premise that an observation and analysis of interpersonal relationships serve as the beginning of a more productive society.²

Greek Stoicism also illuminates traditions of pacifism with its manner of advocating the cultivation of individual virtue in order that one may best meet an obligation to society. Furthermore, Stoics believed that the soul exercised control over a person's being in direct correspondence to the way that Logos (Word, God) exerted mastery over the universe. In this cosmology, the human soul was thought to be a fragmented aspect of the Divine Being. In order to create the best self, Stoics asserted that human beings should allow their soul, or conscience, to govern their actions. Thus, they were encouraged to privilege the use of reason over desire or emotion. Extending their ethical sensibility to a view of the polis as a representation of the divine order, Greek and Roman Stoics believed that it was the responsibility of each citizen to place the good of the community above the gratification of self. Thus,

² See Harvey L. Dyck's *The Pacifist Impulse in Historical Perspective*(1996).

participation in friendship, family life, and civic activities became regarded as a vital means for each citizen to strengthen the development of personal virtue.³

The Christian Gospels, of course, advocate a non-retaliatory stance toward aggression. The message of the Beatitudes upholds harmonious relationships as a means of evidencing a relationship with the Divine in the same manner that Christ exhorted his followers to adopt a spirit of meekness and humility in dealings with others. Likewise, the Hebrew *Essenes* placed prominence upon the cultivation of integrity and delay of self-gratification and therefore showed many commonalities with other philosophical doctrines with regard to relationships among fellow human beings. All of these principles emphasize the importance of assimilating spiritual or moral principles into daily interactions with others. Scholars of succeeding generations have shown the tendency to revise or expand upon ancient philosophies and world religions in order to enhance their applicability to contemporary problems and thus pacifist ideology has been adapted to many different referential frameworks throughout the centuries.⁴

During the nineteenth century, pacifism became more formally adjoined to the political sphere as it moved away from its exclusivity of association with religion or philosophy. Newly formed pacifist organizations in Europe and America made their presence known in civic and social arenas. In 1815, the Society for the Promotion of

³ For an interesting discussion of the history of pacifism, see Charles Chatfield's *For Peace and Justice*(1971) and Charles Chatfield and Peter van dan Dugen's *Peace Movements and Political Cultures* (1988).

⁴ See Charles Raven's *Is War Obsolete? A Study of the Conflicting Claims of Religion and Citizenship* (1935).

Permanent and Universal Peace became established in London. By 1843, pacifist societies began organizing a series of international conventions to facilitate the practice of peaceful arbitration as a viable means of avoiding conflict. As part of their basic precepts, most prominent pacifist organizations in Europe formally declared their intention to counteract the nationalism that had been stirred by sensationalist propaganda. They also spoke out against overly romanticizing acts of heroism instead of conveying the harsh realities of the battlefield.⁵ Undoubtedly due to their public stand for pacifist ideals, Macnamara features Quakers in her play on pacifist themes, *In Safety*.

Pacifism and Socialism

To be a pacifist during an era of two world wars often required supporters of the cause to take an unpopular stand at a time when the majority of people believed that a show of force was the only means of resolving the ever-expanding conflict in Europe. Correspondingly, most British people voiced an ardent resolve to subdue German aggression; and patriotic sentiment surged as a spirit of nationalism spread rapidly through England just prior to its entry into the First World War. In this milieu, pacifists maintained a low profile since they risked becoming either a target of ridicule or even regarded as treasonous. During such emotionally charged intervals, outspoken critics against pacifists referred to them as the “dead weight” of society---- as those who benefited from political freedom yet remained unwilling to defend it. ⁶

⁵ See Brenda Colloms's *Victorian Visionaries* (1982) and April Carter's *Non-Violent Action* (1970).

⁶ See Jo Vellacott's *Bertrand Russell and the Pacifists in the First World War* (1981).

The conscientious objectors of England were often reviled and punished for refusing conscription to military service in part because so many people had loved ones risking their lives on the battlefield. England's entry into the expanding conflict had been promoted to the public idealistically as "the war to end all wars." Ironically, pacifist ideology had been incorporated into the war slogan. Since the slogan corresponded well with the liberal sensibility of many British people, the nation virtually united under the commitment to offer assistance to the Allied forces of Europe and the atmosphere was charged with emotion.⁷

A few select groups and individuals withheld their sanction of war in Britain despite intense pressure, expressing a refusal to believe that warfare was the only possible means of resolving the conflict on the continent. The Quakers, some select members of the Fabian Society, and a few courageous individuals were among those that took a noteworthy stand for pacifism in the midst of the battle cry. Towards the end of World War I, as sentimentalism died and the atrocities of war were brought to public awareness, a group of women met to advance the hopes of peace in a world ravaged by conflict. Since the tenets of Socialism had been based upon their philosophies of social justice and community life, socialists saw pacifist principles as an inherent aspect of their cause. Correspondingly, members of the International Socialists' League had pledged to lead civil strikes in their respective countries if rumors of war were to surface.⁸ However, more powerful loyalties surfaced when the

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ See Chris Waters, *British Socialists and the Politics of Popular Culture* (1990).

conflicts between northeastern European countries erupted into battle. At this point, the international coalitions disbanded as their leaders rallied to the support of their own countries, betraying their commitment to pacifist ideals when their own countries were threatened.⁹

Fabian Socialists were among those who took the most noteworthy stand against Britain's entry into the war. Members of the group, like other pacifists, found themselves in a precarious position as the war began. Fabian Socialists had finally acquired a position of influence in the government and had just become incorporated into the Labour Party as the war began. Therefore, most Fabians were reluctant to jeopardize their newly acquired status by taking an unpopular stand as England rose to the defense of their Allies. Furthermore, their policy had always been to work within the establishment to achieve the gradual institution of socialist principles in England. Therefore, most Fabians felt compelled to move with the tide of public support for the war---at least officially.¹⁰ Yet, the general inclination of the group did not preclude George Bernard Shaw from presenting his views in his characteristically ostentatious manner.¹¹

As editor of the *New Statesman*, Shaw composed a long supplement entitled "Common Sense About War" just after England declared war in 1914. Shaw declared war against warfare as he deemed the government's decision to end England's neutrality to be a serious error. As he denounced the "militarism, diplomacy, and the

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ See Harry Morrison's *The Socialism of Bernard Shaw* (1912).

popular hysteria against all things German," Shaw came under personal attack for his beliefs (Mackenzie, 402). His former friend, H.G. Wells, proclaimed that Shaw had turned into "an idiot child screaming in a hospital" and Sir Henry Arthur Jones deemed Shaw a "freakish homunculus, germinated outside lawful procreation" (Mackenzie, 403).

Shaw's defiance against the war held bitter consequences as his plays became blacklisted and his public proclamations became the subject of public ridicule. Always identifying with outcast members of society however, Shaw continued to promote his position against war even further. As a way of coping perhaps with the broad censorship of his ideas, Shaw began to regard himself as a martyr and showed new interest in the correlations between social philosophy and religion. Shaw believed himself to be standing against the world and showed continual certainty of his rectitude. He exemplified the same strength of conviction that he had incorporated into his portrayal of St. Joan as she withstood trial by her prosecutors and this play was written during this period.

Other notable individuals took a public stance against Britain's entry into the war. Pacifists like Fenner Brockway were imprisoned during WWI for their status as conscientious objectors. Ironically, he became a Labour MP after the war but published a book in 1922 that provided detailed descriptions of his period of incarceration. His book, *English Prisons Today*, brought about a new awareness of the severity of penal codes and prison conditions in England. Born to Christian missionaries in India, Brockway had begun his career as a political activist, writer,

and journalist. However, he is most remembered for expressing his bold convictions against the evils of empire. In Sir Norman Angell's 1909 book, *The Illusion*, he argued that war could not possibly increase the economic status of any country and could only serve to deplete the financial resources of all participants. Angell held his brand of "New Pacifism" in contrast with former pacifist ideals. Protesting the sentimentality of nationalism, he asked people to use greater rationality in their formation of ideas about war. Angell isolated himself at the onset of WWI but reemerged into the public arena time and again as an activist for pacifism during these volatile years.¹²

James Hardie also showed particular courage in publicly denouncing the mass patriotic sentiment that spread during British involvement in the Boer Wars and World War I. As chairman of the Socialist International, Hardie had been instrumental in writing the organization's pledge of protest against the war. Biographers attributed his unremitting struggle for pacifist ideals to have been the cause of the premature decline of his youth and health since he had struggled against the tide for so long. Brockway, Angell, and Hardie were among the few prominent British citizens that demonstrated constancy in their dedication to pacifist ideology.¹³

Bertrand Russell, a young scholar at Cambridge University in 1914, responded to the news of war by requesting his professors' signatures on a petition of protest against the war. Forwarding the document to the *Manchester Guardian* for

¹² See Keith Robbins' article in *The Blackwell Biographical Dictionary of British Political Life in the Twentieth Century*(1990).

¹³ Ibid.

publication, Russell showed strength of conviction that England should retain a position of neutrality. As the basis for his argument in the paper, Russell was like Sir Norman Angell in asking people to place prominence on “reason” in their consideration of war and its destructive potential. His youth must have given him the ambition to continue his quest to place doubt in people’s minds about the nationalist sentiment that swept across Great Britain. Unwavering in his dedication to his cause, Russell composed a letter to London’s *Nation* in August, 1914, expressing a bitter disillusionment with the nation for the “pride of patriotism that promotes mass murder” (<http://www.san.beck.org/WP24-Russell.html>).

Russell finally found support by joining the No-Conscription Fellowship that had been started in 1914 by Fenner Brockway and other young men who were joined by their belief in “the brotherhood of man” (Vellacott, *Bertrand Russell*, 28). Eventually, his campaign against the war led to his dismissal from Cambridge, yet his commitment to finding the means for achieving world peace continued throughout his life. In 1950, Russell won the Nobel Peace Prize for his work in upholding humanitarian ideals and freedom of thought.

Feminism and Pacifism

Controversy developed in feminist groups of the time period regarding the association between pacifism and women’s issues. In gatherings of the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), women debated the necessity of England’s involvement in the war. A conflict in the group over the war eventually erupted into a decisive split among the leaders of the organization (Vellacott, 121).

Yet, Millicent Garrett Fawcett, the group's leader, reluctantly agreed to sponsor a meeting that promoted the conservation of peace just as war had been declared in 1914. Several of the women's Labour organizations such as the Women's Co-operative Guild sent large numbers of representatives to the meeting (Vellacott, 121). The news of Parliament's decision to enter the war earlier that day had not yet reached the women as they proceeded with their agenda, and many of these women expressed hopes that the country might retain its status of neutrality (121). Yet, most of the women realized that Britain's entry into the war was inevitable. Therefore, a large part of the discussion consisted of speculation about the impact that the war might have upon their lives. If nothing else, the meeting allowed the women to come together to share their anxieties regarding the mounting crisis (Vellacott, 121).

On the day after the meeting, Millicent Fawcett received a letter of reprobation from Lord Robert Cecil who had been a key supporter of the suffragist movement in Parliament. In his message, Cecil reprimanded Fawcett for allowing the NUWSS to sponsor such a gathering (122). With a threatening tone, he warned the feminist leader about women's need to retain supporters like himself in Parliament as he wrote, "Even to me the action (of holding a meeting about peace) seems so unreasonable under the circumstances as to shake my belief in the fitness of women to deal with Imperial questions and I can only console myself by the belief that, in this matter, the National Union does not represent the opinions of their fellow country women. Lord Robert Cecil" (Vellacott, 122).

As a feminist leader, Fawcett had become known for her tendency to moderate her stance in the face of reprobation from mainstream political leaders. Given that inclination, it is not surprising that Cecil's letter pushed Fawcett to a decided refusal to lend the name of the NUWSS to any further resistance to the war. However, her act of eliminating pacifist issues from the organization's agenda placed her in direct opposition with other members of the executive committee. As tension escalated within the NUWSS over many of the women's desire to retain the group's stand against war, a group of prominent members withdrew from the organization in 1915 and formed the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Among the dissenters, Maude Royden began a passionate campaign for pacifist tenets even while evidence that the war raged surrounded her. Not one to be swayed by popular sentiment, Royden became one of the few leaders who transcended persecution, as she became known and respected for her delivery of eloquent speeches about the immoralities of war even during wartime (Strong-Boag, 184).

In Ray Strachey's otherwise detailed and accurate account of the NUWSS, she conspicuously fails to mention the women who split from the group in 1915. Even more reprehensibly, she deleted their names from the organizations' records altogether despite their well-known contributions to the organization's early years of formation and development. As Vellacott exclaims, "She {Strachey} also wipes out the leaders of the dissidents from the annals of pre-war suffrage history, omitting all mention of their names in connection with the striking new political policies which they had largely inspired and administered before the war" (Vellacott, 115).

Indicating her unmitigated loyalty to Fawcett's leadership, Strachey discloses the biased nature of her otherwise evenhanded account of the organization's activity.

The new group was for women who had become dissatisfied with existing women's organizations and wanted a group where they could designate world peace as a primary rather than secondary objective. Not only did they convey their commitment for the establishment of world peace as prerequisite to all other humanitarian or social justice causes, but also they showed that women wanted the vote to make a difference in the world in such controversial issues as war and peace. As other chapters of the Women's Peace League were formed, these women became inspired by the activism of women from other nations.

In January of 1915, Carrie Chapman Catt demonstrated her dedication to pacifist tenets by organizing a world conference for peace in Washington (Bacon, 205). Three thousand American and European women showed their enthusiasm for pacifist ideals as they traveled to attend the meeting in order that they might "consider what might be done to press for peace negotiations" (Bacon, 205). During the meeting, the Women's Peace Party of America became officially established and Jane Addams was appointed as Chair (Bacon, 205). Like many other similar organizations around the world, they sent representatives to the International Congress of Women for Peace at the Hague in the Netherlands that was held later that same year (Bacon, 205). President Woodrow Wilson called the women's mission "silly and base" and the British Parliament directly prevented 180 women with plans to attend the meeting from departing British shores (Bacon, 205).

Touring America when the international conference of women for peace was called, Emmeline Pethnick-Lawrence of England, another dissenter of the NUWSS, was able to attend the meeting by traveling directly to the Netherlands. Fifteen hundred women from twelve different countries convened and “formed a platform that has been called the forerunner of Wilson’s Fourteen Points and of some of the principles set forth by Wilson for the League of Nations” (Bacon, 205). The women at the convention showed remarkable objectivity as they met with others from contending nations. Demonstrating their ability to transcend political allegiances in order that they might discuss the means of finding a basis for world peace, these women showed how political conflict could be resolved through diplomatic efforts. Even though many women had endured the loss of loved ones and other hardships that the war had brought about, personal concerns remained secondary to the preeminence placed upon the collective goals of the newly established organization. At the meeting, women expressed that obtaining the right to vote would help bring about the world peace that they sought as they declared, “We consider that the introduction of women suffrage in all countries is one of the most powerful means to prevent war in the future.... Only when women are in the parliaments of all nations, only when women have a political voice and vote, will they have the power effectively to demand that international disputes shall be solved as they ought to be, by a court of arbitration or conciliation. But to accomplish this we need political power” (Alonso, 27).

Just after the war, international pacifist organizations such as the Fellowship of

Reconciliation rose to prominence as many recognized the necessity of building an improved sense of world community. During the interwar period many peace organizations were formed. In Britain, the Peace Pledge Union was founded in 1935 and had acquired some 133,000 members by 1937. As a socially conscious and politically active citizen, Macnamara was likely to have been among those who had become disenchanted by the grim realities of trench warfare that became known during the First World War.

The Women's Institute of Henfield, Sussex

Although a great number of early twentieth century feminists were committed to pacifist ideals, war was a reality for them to contend with rather than merely a topic for discussion. Even those who opposed the war had been caught up with the crisis and knew that England had been threatened by the aggressive actions of other nations. According to Angela V. John, a biographer of the actress and playwright, Robins wrote to Florence Bell in August of 1914, "And so peace-lovers as we may be, who can doubt but England has taken the only decent course? But the nightmare is like a palpable darkness" (197). Lack of adequate food supply was only one of the many challenges that British citizens faced during the First World War. Not only were many soldiers starving on the battlefields, but also food supplies had become increasingly meager at home.

Canadian women formed the first Women's Institute in 1914, an organization dedicated to the conservation and economy of food during the war. Their purpose was to share ideas for making food supplies stretch as far as possible. Such fears of

shortages were heightened by the submarine blockade the following year that prevented food supplies from reaching shore. Thus, the idea of Women's Institutes caught on and England had 760 like organizations by the war's end (John, 204). Furthermore, most of these groups continued to operate after the war to assist with rebuilding the country after the devastation of war.

In 1917, a Women's Institute, or WI as they were called, had been founded in Henfield, Sussex and the organization recorded 183 members by 1920 (John, 204). Macnamara was one of its founding members and became the recording secretary under Elizabeth Robins, who served as the first president of the Henfield chapter (John, 204). Robins, a famed actress of Ibsen plays and published dramatist, had recently purchased a country estate called Backsettown in Sussex County as a respite from the noise and clamor of London life during the war. Robins enjoyed hosting social gatherings for the WI at her Henfield home during her tenure as president and did frequent readings and recitations during social events (204). Describing the productivity and benefit that the organization offered the communities it served, Robins wrote an article for *The Nineteenth Century* entitled 'A New View of Country Life' (John, 204). In her commentary, she extolled the work of the Women's Institutes and described them as "little democracies that were self-governing, self-supporting, and encouraging all classes to work together" (John, 205). Relevant to the socialist and pacifist cause, she saw the groups as models for cooperation and hence a better society. Robins had expressed interest in attending the International Congress of Women at The Hague. John writes that her mention of the Congress was casual but

indicated her interest in peace and in women's role in combating militarism became increasingly important to her (John, 203).

John indicates that she found it "somewhat ironic that Elizabeth who relied on cooks to prepare her food, lectured on food control" (204). Still, social status or class background lost relevance for these women as they worked together to cope with the difficulties of war. Not only did these women discuss methods of food conservation, they also were able to voice their opinions about political issues and local matters of concern. Members of the group contributed whatever talents they might have to bring vitality and interest to the gatherings. Even after Robins moved away from Henfield, Macnamara requested her appearance as a guest to deliver her famous brand of rousing speeches to the group.

As an already published and produced playwright by this time, it follows that Macnamara would have written plays for the social gatherings at the WI since members were encouraged to make creative contributions that enriched the group. Thus, her play *The Baby in the Ring* was performed at Caxton Hall for the WI and approaches the topic of war indirectly (John, 204). Robins praised Macnamara's play in an article in London's *Observer*. Presumably, the WI of Henfield sponsored several productions of her play although little information about the actual productions can be found in the annals of the Henfield WI.

Macnamara and her sister, Helena, were leading figures of the Henfield chapter and Macnamara was remembered by a local Henfield woman for emphasizing her Irish heritage by always dressing in emerald green and riding a green bicycle through town (John, 204). John writes that Macnamara was "keen for the Institute to become politicised and is quoted as saying that 'Nothing short of the Socialist Revolution is really worth working for'" (John, 204). However, Robins assuaged local women's

fears that the organization had become too political and emphasized the importance of working together. Though little can be found about the performance of *The Baby in the Ring*, the script itself provides invaluable insight to Macnamara's themes. In her usual manner of handling volatile issues, the playwright addresses means of dealing with conflict in *Baby in the Ring* without making direct reference to current events.

The Baby in the Ring (1918)

Presenting pacifist ideology in the context of a familiar Biblical parable, Macnamara addresses the many complications inherent to peaceful coexistence within families or small groups. In *Baby in the Ring*, these small groups are representative of larger social groups; by contrasting characters preoccupied with self to those that exemplify a more altruistic inclination, Macnamara shows the basis for productive community life. In this play, disparate strands of ideology become interwoven together to show that munificence holds greater levity than personal gain. Reminiscent of the mother in the Old Testament parable, a mother's love for her child prevails over the self-seeking claim of another woman. In the Old Testament story, King Solomon discerns the truth of who is the rightful mother after witnessing the willingness of the actual mother to release her child rather than risking his harm. The story has had many versions; it is called the story of the chalk circle in China since the women were to stand inside the divided circle and pull the baby to their side.

In Macnamara's *The Baby in the Ring*, the basic parable takes on many layers of meaning as elements of the story become related to prevalent issues of the time period. In Macnamara's version of this ancient tale, a woman of little means vies with

a government representative, a matron, whose task is to acquire infants for participation in a scientific experiment. In her explanation of how the research is being sponsored by a wealthy individual with an interest in eugenics, the Matron explains how the officials seek infants from the lower class in order to determine whether heredity or environment play a more important role in a child's development. Yet, to solve the conflict peaceably is the central focus of the drama.

The Matron expresses great enthusiasm in finding this particular infant to use as a specimen of the trial, not only because of his lower-class background but also because of his obvious robust health. As a way of persuading the mother to relinquish her child, the woman testifies to the advantages and opportunities that shall be endowed upon the child as he grows up in a controlled, idyllic environment. While the mother can only claim her love and devotion to the child as a reason to keep him, the government offers enormous benefits and opportunities for him.

In the end, Macnamara's drama reifies the mother's love and ends the story in the same pattern as the traditional tale. However, she has also shown the importance that the state or government can make upon a child's optimal development. Though she deems the state's contribution as crucial for the child's process of growth, she asserts that the child should remain under the guardianship of the mother since the mother's love is incalculable in worth. The drama holds implications for England's social class system, the child's formation of identity, the application of science versus nature and the rights of the government to place a hold upon its citizens. All of these claims make the resolution of the conflict more challenging and complex. Thus,

Macnamara shows the inherent challenge of reconciling different objectives when settling differences and seeking peaceful ways to move forward.

As the play begins, we find the baby's mother placing her child upon a soft bed of moss and leaving her faithful dog, Fritz, to guard him. The mother has placed the child there so that she can complete her errand more quickly without bearing the additional weight of the child in her arms. In this scene, the placement of the baby upon the moss elicits many associations. Close to the earthly elements, the vulnerability of the infant takes on a similitude to the nativity scene of Christ. As the gentle and devoted watchdog guards the child, it calls to mind the peaceful beasts that surrounded the newborn Savior in a lowly atmosphere. Unbeknownst to the mother, the baby does not remain alone very long however before it attracts a number of admirers who parallel the wise men visiting the child. Each of the child's fanciers holds special significance in the play's allegorical configuration.

Before proceeding to the discussion of the baby and its representative status in this drama, it is important to discuss Macnamara's insinuation of the mother's precarious position as she endeavors to care for her child. In this drama, her susceptibility and solitude becomes contrasted with the vast strength of the federal government. The disparity of strength or power indicates the lack of consequence that the mother holds in such an association. In the aforementioned paradigm, the mother could parallel Mary of the Christian gospels and her vulnerability as she faces the world's increasing claims upon her son.

A profound sense of inadequacy conflicts with the mother's desire to keep her

child as the agent from the national government proposes the child's adoption.

Because the Matron has such convincing arguments, the mother begins to doubt herself more and more. As the Matron asks about the living conditions, the mother is forced to report "Yes, it's old and damp, and we've only two bedrooms among the six of us, and the drinking water has to be carried the length of the street" (37). As the government representative explains the higher incidences of death among poor children due to such living conditions and their propensity to contract diphtheria or measles, the mother shows increasing uncertainty about her claim to the child.

As the Matron pushes her point further by citing the mother's manner of allowing sentimentality to prevail over rational assessment of the situation, she also asserts that England holds the paramount claim to the child. Since the child could benefit the country by furthering research, the woman should observe her patriotic duty and release her child to the Matron's care. As the arguments are raised, the tension escalates and the conflict appears difficult to resolve.

As an addition to the primary conflict, the drama raises issues about the government's claim to a person's life. Macnamara presents the baby as symbolic of England's youth. Thus, the determination over the future life of the infant could be said to imply the government's petition for young men to enlist in the service of their country and therefore place their lives at the disposal of the state or nation. Since millions of young men forfeited their lives in World War I, it is obvious that the state held stronger claims upon lives than the individual during wartime especially.

Although no physical risk is implied for the infant in Macnamara's *Baby in the Ring*,

the Matron's attempt to take possession of the child resonates with the notion that the state exerts more authority over a life than an individual. This becomes an important factor in the resolution of this conflict.

Macnamara prefigures postmodern philosophical themes as she calls to mind the relationship of the body to the political power structure. Since the corporal body has long been an integral aspect of traditional theory especially as its relationship to the soul has been considered, it is important also to look at the body in relation to the agency or independence of the individual. Foucault asserts that political institutions make claim to the body as a means of exerting dominion over the person's soul. According to Foucault, the powerful constraints that authorities impose upon our lives impact our construction of image. Then, as government inflicts subjection upon an individual, these persons are also compelled to reconfigure their sense of self as servants to the cause, and therefore become "docile bodies" as they become subjected to the will of the state and surrender claims of self. As Foucault explains in *Discipline and Punish*, "These methods, which made possible the meticulous control of the operations of the body, which assured the constant subjection of its forces and imposed on them a relation of docility-utility that might be called 'disciplines'," (Foucault). If a person becomes enlisted in the army or an object of scientific experimentation, the individual's relinquishment over control of his body implies dominion of other upon the person's technology of self, freedom of soul, and ongoing process of individuation.

Without privileging one over the other, the dramatist's epistemological argument contrasts rationalism with the irregularity and mysticism espoused by Romantic poets or philosophers. Macnamara insists that both are necessary elements in life and art. The Matron symbolizes the detachment of rationalists as she indicates the logical course of the mother's relinquishment of the child for the provisions that the state can provide him. As the Matron's posture exemplifies rational thought, the mother's presence represents the romantic emphasis upon the child's need for love and empathy as a necessary means for building personality and character. As she claims the advantage of providing the child with emotional gratification and the means of developing a stronger identity in a family setting, the theoretical dispute continues as to whether the mind should reign over the heart, or whether sentiment should play an important role in the development of human beings.

The Matron reveals her title as an agent for the new institution of Applied Eugenics after disclosing that a millionaire has proffered a large sum of money for the sake of determining the impact of environmental influences upon a child's development. The Matron continues to explain that one hundred children from poor or working class backgrounds will be selectively enrolled in this trial. As the mother continues to object to the woman's confiscation of her child, the Matron urges the indigent woman to consider that her son would have the opportunity to become a rich man. Given the restrictions of England's class system, the Matron's proposal resonates with implications. Even Fabian Socialists recognized the unfeasibility of

overthrowing England's class system without revolution and had thus resolved to work within existing structures.

Macnamara remains deeply rooted in socialist ideology although she reveals a belief that no simple solutions to complex social problems exist. In both of her pacifist plays, she demonstrates a childlike candor and innocence of appeal to audience members to follow the humanitarian course without the promise of immediate results. Rather than using a satirical tone in this drama, Macnamara weaves the various threads of socialist and pacifist discourse into a remarkable cohesiveness as she writes an auspicious resolution to this conflict of interests between Matron and mother over possession of child.

In her juxtaposition of the rational versus the romantic, she introduces fantastic and imaginative elements in her play in order to provide yet another contrast to the formal rationalism of the Matron. Through the appearance of supernatural beings, nineteen pixies or fairies appear dancing and chanting with magical intonations. Flit, one of the fairies, chants melodically, "Have you heard what mortals say? Pixies never dance by day! They've not seen us not dance though, Silly things to think they know!" (15). Hoping to be seen by a mortal, the fairies gleefully flirt with danger. As they catch sight of the baby lying upon the mossy ground, Flit believes that the human will work for the fairies as he imagines him performing such tasks as "giving the butterflies advice" and "sending the sun to bed at noon" (17). Adding humor to the story, the fairies speculate of the kind of life that they will enjoy with a human being at their service.

Resembling the opening scene in the classic fairytale “Sleeping Beauty” in which fairies surround a newborn princess in order to bestow blessings and gifts upon her, fantastical creatures encircle the infant in Macnamara’s drama and therefore the baby becomes accentuated as the drama’s focus. Since the fairies’ have never seen a human before, Macnamara utilizes the fairies’ genuine desire to understand humans as a further means of conveying the child’s significance as representative of all human beings. The simplicity of the subsequent scenes elicits the literary power of elevating the ordinary to a new loftiness of dimension by innocent observation. As the pixies surround the baby, their sense of wonder elicits a sense of awe at the new life before them. Furthermore, the fairies’ misguided analysis of the human baby cleverly invokes appreciation for all that the infant represents as well as its helplessness or dependence upon others for its life. After concluding that they know nothing about humans even though they thought they knew everything, the fairies utilize their magic to summon one who can provide good advice: Mother Goose.

At the fairies’ beckoning, Mother Goose begins to chatter about the oddity of seeing a human baby lying on the ground on a bed of moss implying that humans tend to distance themselves from the earthly elements. Macnamara lets Mother Goose be the spokesperson of many new ideas. In this instance, she draws attention to the tendency of human beings to exploit rather than harmonize with nature and cites many examples of people’s careless destruction of the environment. Before she takes up her role as instructor to the fairies, Mother Goose becomes the dramatist’s

outlet for making sweeping commentary. Subsequently, she rattles on about the inappropriateness of urban dwellings for growing children. As she cites the “grimy squalor and staleness” of the air and the crowded conditions of urban dwelling places, she questions the rationale of human beings’ tendency to crowd into cities as if the spaciousness of the country did not exist (24). With the character’s description of the living conditions of the impoverished, she not only speaks of the complacency with which many disregard their plight but also reiterates the impact of such conditions upon the life of a child.

As Mother Goose provides instructions for the fairies regarding the proper care of a child, she evokes a sense of the possibilities that await it. Furthermore, the character acts as the dramatist’s voice as she suggests that a healthy respect for human life naturally creates an abhorrence of violence. As an extension of this theme, the playwright suggests that human beings should not be regarded as specimens that can be scientifically molded into a perfect form as the Matron proposes for the children who will be enrolled in her experiment. In contrast to scientifically defining the optimal conditions of a human being, Macnamara implies that these kinds of conditions can only be created by the nurturing and loving presence of a mother or caretaker.

As the play moves forward, the mystique surrounding the fairies creates an essential correlation between the play’s various motifs. The sparkling fairies’ presence indicates the preeminence of surrounding cosmological forces. The mystique that surrounds the fairies suggests the notion of arriving at the essences of

truth as well as compared with the limitations of human understanding. As human beings admit their provisional scope of perception, they come to realize that peace must retain precedence over conquest in human relations. Since it is impossible to reach agreement with another party, the rational choice is to accept diverging voices as part of the universal picture. The fairies serve as personal guardians to the baby on the moss protecting him from harm. Yet, the fairies also seek to observe human beings and show their innocence as they enter the world.

The playwright contrasts the importance of a human's need to form a unique and independent identity of self in contrast with the Matron's suggestion that human beings can be molded into arbitrarily established forms. Deeming both the state and family's presence as important to the child's development, the playwright designates the role of the family as more important since it has the capacity to provide the child with a sense of identity and belonging that human beings thrive upon. Macnamara proposes that the state's willingness to send young men into battle at high risk to their lives demonstrates its lack of capacity to care for its progeny sufficiently. Furthermore, the playwright suggests that a mother's love for her child extends to a greater regard for humanity in general and thus provides a basis for a more compassionate and empathetic bearing toward others as an example to the child of the kinds of interactions with others that act as a life-giving force. With the woman's ability to nurture life as in pregnancy should come a greater reverence for life. Therefore, women are less likely to view warfare as the only viable solution for solving conflict.

In the original tale and most renditions of the Solomon story, the vying entities are both women. Thus, Macnamara's allegorical tale perhaps implies that a women's inclination to nurture others can be mitigated if they merely imitate the competitive nature of a man's world. Therefore, women must start anew with innovative ways of reaching resolutions. Victorians believed that peace would be more attainable for the world when women ascended into the public realm since women were conceived to be more conciliatory and gentle. The *Baby in the Ring* thus emphasizes the nurturing aspect of the mother's role as crucial to the development of the child. Although the State, in this case, would provide material benefits, the State would not be able to furnish the child with an adequate substitute for the mother's love which is crucial to the development of the child's spiritual and psychological well-being. Though the play cites the importance of both the mother and the State's contributions to the child maturation process, the mother's contribution is deemed as foundational rather than ancillary. Therefore, the mother keeps the child emphasizing the importance of women as mothers to society – especially as related to peaceful relations in the world.

Pacifism and Feminism After World War I

After the war ended and suffrage for women over age 30 had been obtained, many feminists began to expand their theories of feminism to broader concerns. For example, Vera Brittain became a dedicated advocate of pacifism, writing a book about her traumatic experiences assisting wounded men on the battlefield. As she developed a stronger inclination for pacifism, Brittain identified the promotion of peace as aligned with the women's cause and subsequently branded militarism as

masculine ideology. By the 1930s, Brittain began to focus primarily upon pacifist issues in contrast with her pre-war emphasis upon suffrage. Her feminist views developed an even broader base by 1953.

In her book, *From Lady Into Woman*(1953), she expresses the belief that women are biologically different from men and that these differences are reinforced by socialization. Rather than women putting so much effort into competing with men on their terms, Brittain believed that a woman's objective should be to insist upon equality based upon her ability to make unique contributions to the world. Since investigations indicate that women were more likely to join organizations that helped animals or aided abused children for example, Brittain began to correlate qualities of love and tolerance as essentially female. Rather than women's platform wanting equality with men for their similarities, she believed that they should request equal rights because of their differences.

Likewise, Virginia Woolf developed a powerful treatise with similar themes of pacifism as it related to feminism in her *Three Guineas*, published just before the Second World War in 1939. Summarily, Woolf attributes the love of fighting and war to the traditions of men and urges women to draw upon their own traditions to "make use of mind and will to abolish the inhumanity, the beastliness, the horror, the folly of war" (Carroll, 17). She implies that pacifism should be a crucial part of women's developing social and political consciousness (Carroll, 17). Elizabeth Robins was among those who recognized the developing parallels between the "new feminism" of Eleanor Rathbone and others who insisted on women's uniqueness and

superiority in some areas. She also correlated feminism with pacifism as she decreed, “Wars will cease when woman’s will-to-peace is given equal authority in council with men’s will-to-war” (John, 203). After the First World War, many more feminists began to correlate pacifist issues with an ever-widening feminist platform.

In Safety (1923) and Quaker Beliefs

Pacifism has always been an important tenet of the Quakers’ religion. Before embarking upon an in-depth study of Macnamara’s play *In Safety* that is set in colonial America, it is important to look at the forces that shaped the Quakers’ beliefs. Since 1647 when George Fox of England preached about the divine essence within all individuals, his followers questioned the justification of warfare or violence. For the Quakers, there can be no sense of “otherness” since they hold that all human beings possess equal potential for goodness. In fact, their beliefs could be said to be an important precursor for the later emphasis upon equal rights for minority groups. As a way of understanding Quaker views, we can look at the manner in which Quaker schools disavow the use of punishment for students. Rather than threatening retribution for noncompliance, Quakers believe in creating an atmosphere that brings forth an individual’s inclination for good and inherent motivation. Perhaps their expressed belief in a person’s potential brings forth the positive results they are known to attain.

From the Quaker’s perspective, all persons have the same status and importance before God regardless of race, religion, or gender. Due to these beliefs, Quakers have allowed women as well as children to speak within their assemblies as

they experience divine prompting. Puritans of colonial America adamantly opposed the Quaker's assertion of women's equality and subsequently refused to grant citizenship to Quakers considering that it might be threatening to their established way of life. Although Quakers of America have often faced various forms of discrimination, Quakers throughout history have persevered in causes for equality. For instance, Quakers were at the forefront of the anti-slavery movement in America as well as in England. Quaker women have long been active in feminist organizations expressing continued disbelief that their equality is not taken for granted.

Most notably, Quakers have remained at the forefront of pacifist activism in America and abroad. Lucretia Mott's work during the nineteenth century as a social activist exemplifies the role that Quaker women have played in struggles for women's suffrage, abolition of slavery, and awareness of pacifist tenets since she embraced all three of these causes wholeheartedly. When Mott was refused entry to an international meeting held in England for the abolishment of slavery after she had traveled thousands of miles to attend, she began to realize the full significance of the suffrage issue for women and began to work for it tirelessly upon her return to America.

As she maintained her efforts against slavery, she also helped organize the Seneca Falls Convention for women's suffrage in New York in 1848. After the Civil War, she became primarily dedicated to world peace efforts and became the president of a local pacifist society in Pennsylvania. Though she continued her work for women's issues as earnestly as before, she revealed the most powerful hold upon her

heart in a letter to a friend as she declared, “Even the woman question, as far as voting goes, does not take hold of my every feeling as does war” (Bacon, 203). In fact, pacifism has been ideologically rooted within the Quaker religion from its very foundations and has been tenaciously maintained by the Society of Friends throughout their history.

Quakers in England between the World Wars

Quakers of England were undoubtedly alarmed by the death tolls reported during both world wars. Many of them had been conscientious objectors during World War I due to their religious beliefs. Rather than being legally charged for their non-conscription status during the war, they were assigned to non-combatant duties that they gladly accepted as a means of providing assistance. Since Quakers had long presented pacifism as part of their beliefs, they were not resented for their non-conscription status as much as many others who were deemed as being merely delinquent of their duty. On the contrary, the Quakers succeeded in bringing honor and recognition to their long-term stance against war even as patriotism abounded. It was well known that Quakers’ ideology extended beyond methods of negotiation and reached to the roots of society. Even during times of peace, Quakers pointed out underlying problems in society as evidenced by violence in newspaper headlines and Quakers had often emphasized the need for basic social reform as a foundation for world peace.

Maurice Rowntree was among the Quakers who spoke effectively for pacifist ideals in London during the 1920s and 1930s. Rowntree was already eighty years of

age by 1939 when his book *Mankind Set Free* was published in London. Despite his advanced age, he showed the necessary drive and determination to write about his beliefs in the need for social revision. Having served as a member of Parliament for many years, he analyzed pacifist issues from both national and international perspectives. Rowntree based his ideas about pacifism upon Quaker tenets since he was an active member of the Society of Friends. Even though his book was published just as the Second World War began, Rowntree maintained his optimism about the power of good to overcome evil. Likewise, he proposed that his ideas be utilized as the basis for a plan to create a world of peace and cooperation rather than a world of violence and retaliation. In his preface he asserts, "I have realized that we must find a way out of the present chaos or perish" (Rowntree, 17). As dreadful as it was to ponder the loss of so many young lives during the First World War, Rowntree expressed even more regret about the spirit of vengeance that proceeded from war's inexorable manifestation of "winners" and "losers". Rowntree proposes that people put themselves to the task of creating a society in which justice and compassion replaced exploitation and brutal force (17).

Historically, Quakers' had shown strong leadership for pacifism in their dealings with Native Americans. Quakers strove for justice for the Indians even though "the royal charter gave to the proprietor the privilege of making war on the savages and pursuing them" (Wilson, 6). In contrast, William Penn expressed a more peaceable approach to the Indians prior to his coming to America:

I have great love and regard towards you: and desire to win and gain your love and friendship, by a kind, just and peaceable life;... I have sent my commissioners to treat with you about land, and to a firm league of peace; let me desire you to be kind to them, and the people resolve these presents and tokens, which I have sent you, as a testimony of my good will to you, and my resolution to live justly, peaceably, and friendly with you (qtd. in Wilson 6).

And sixty-seven years later, Israel Pemberton wrote:

Is it not a consideration worthy of thankful remembrance, that on all the desolation on our frontiers, not one Friend we have heard of, has been slain or carried captive, and we have reason to think, both from their conduct in places where Friends were exposed to others and from their declarations to us, they would never hurt Friends if they knew us to be such. There were a few exceptions to this policy on the part of the Indians. The five persons who were killed and few who were taken captive lived in areas where Friends had no controlling voice in shaping the Indian policy (qtd. in Wilson, 6-7).

Philadelphia Quakers passed many laws to protect the rights of Indians. They prohibited their members from purchasing Indians as slaves and put laws into place that precluded white colonists from making private agreements with Indians or moving into territory that had not been negotiated. Friends became known for attending meetings of treaty negotiations to protect the rights of the Indians. Native Americans began refusing to sign treaties unless a Quaker was present to interpret the agreement (Wilson, 6). In 1869, the Associated Executive Committee of Friends on Indian Affairs was formed on behalf of the Indians and met with President-elect Grant to discuss a more peaceful and charitable Christian policy toward the Indians. As a result of this meeting, the President nominated people to serve as agents on behalf of Indians' rights. The Quakers continued to be recognized and appreciated for their recognition of the Indians as human beings and their courage to stand for their rights (Wilson, 7).

In Safety

Margaret Macnamara's 1923 drama *In Safety* establishes authorial faith in the possibility of fostering amicable relations between disparate cultures by indicating how peaceable associations may be created and sustained. Set in colonial America, the drama contrasts the reactions of two groups of European colonists to the rumored attacks by a Native American tribe of Algonquin Indians. As the drama opens, a small group of colonists hasten towards an armed fortress anticipating an Indian attack. Moving rapidly across the terrain as they discuss the situation earnestly, the colonists pause at a Quaker meetinghouse to ascertain if the inhabitants have been justly warned of the imminent danger. With the fearful posture of the first set of colonists newly established, Macnamara shifts our focus to a small congregation of colonial Quakers. Just informed of the prospective danger, the Quakers engage in solemn deliberation amongst themselves concerning the crisis. As a gesture of peace, the Elders announce that their congregation plans to reconvene in the clearing outside of the meetinghouse to await the Indians' approach. The first colonists are astounded and dismayed by the Quakers' idea and beg them to reconsider. Hoping to divert them from a seemingly fatal course of action, one of the colonists conveys graphic details about the Indians' reputed acts of savagery. Despite various protests, the Quakers remain resolved to continue with their intended plans. Although objections have been raised about the inclusion of children in this dangerous mission, the Quakers inevitably concur and remain as one coalition. Hence, the children are required to face possible acts of brutality in the same manner as the adults.

Each character's group affiliation becomes an integral part of their identity. Therefore, the manner in which the playwright develops the distinctiveness of each community holds a strong bearing upon the drama's overall impact. Although the nobility of the Quakers' proceedings will likely command the audience members' highest regard, the fearful deportment of the first set of colonists could hardly warrant full condemnation under such threatening circumstances. Although Macnamara depicts the Quakers' commitment toward their spiritual ideas as an exceptional act of gallantry, she requests audience members to have compassion for those that remain consumed by fear or intolerance.

Macnamara shows how misapprehension and distancing furthers discord. The Quakers attain a favorable outcome in their entreaty for peace as they extend empathy and inclusion to others. In contrast, the haughty and exclusionary deportment of the first set of colonists meets with the Indians' wrath. Rather than glorifying or vilifying either enclave, Macnamara demonstrates the correlation between actions/attitudes and reactions/strife. She underscores the strife created by contention and violence without denouncing any of the three coalitions represented.

Macnamara utilizes ritual to heighten the encounter of three disparate entities. In this drama, rituals inhabit the space and time of the play's previous action yet become part of the contemporaneous action. The performative gestures of each faction indicate their distinctiveness as well as association with the social and semiotic matrix of colonial America. For example, the established prayer meetings of the Quakers exemplify their adherence to the group facilitation of prayer and worship as

an integral part of their daily lives. The Quakers acquire collective strength through spiritual devotion as they contend together amidst the rugged wilderness terrain. Their regular worship services serve to enhance their sense of mutual responsibility and thus establish a greater likelihood for survival in such strenuous circumstances.

With allusions to popular conceptions, the playwright incorporates such prototypical motifs as the Quakers' convocation of meetings, the white colonists' tendencies toward reclusion, and the Native Americans' desperate strikes against ever encroaching intruders upon their land. Ritualized orders have established the basis for each community's self-identification in foreign surroundings or novel circumstances and thus sustain the groups' cohesiveness. The moral and spiritual integrity of the characters becomes manifested through their participation in ritual practices. As the two groups come to an understanding, expected rivals explore new realms of possibilities as they get to know each others' rituals, customs, and beliefs.

Macnamara places her drama among Quakers struggling with the brutality of the wilderness in colonial America. Removed in place and time from the aftermath of World War I, the drama allows audience members to have a greater objectivity of response. Macnamara effectively contrasts the Quakers' inclusive and compassionate approach to conflict with the settlers' manner of creating distance or furthering hostility among opposing forces. Macnamara draws a distinction between the stereotypical gender roles exhibited by the settlers with the more flexible functions of the men and women of the Quaker community. Even more profoundly,

Macnamara correlates the expanded gender roles among the Quakers to their extension of greater tolerance and appreciation of all human beings.

As the drama opens, an American army officer named General Stapley hurriedly accompanies young James Weir and his wife through the wilderness to an armed fortress as they anticipate an Indian attack. The varied responses to aggression begin to surface as the white settlers stop to take respite from their travels at a Quaker meetinghouse. Instead of making efforts to move to the fortification, Stapley observes that the Quakers are continuing with their meeting as if oblivious to the impending danger. Presuming that the Quakers must not be aware of the circumstances, Stapley consults with his friends to discuss the best way to break the news to the Quakers without causing mass hysteria. Although Stapley's character is complex, he represents the patriarchal status of the conventional male as the playwright describes him as a "stalwart colonial in the prime of life" (10).

Since Stapley generally presumes his judgment and way of life to be superior, he is condescending to whoever represents differences. His reference to the Quakers ridicules their alleged cowardliness. As Mrs. Weir urges the general to warn the Quakers without delay, he responds, "Softly dear lady! You forget. There is no immediate danger from the Indians. And these Quakers are timid folk. With their men kind professed cowards, the women are likely to be in a pretty panic" (11). Not only does Stapley show condescension to the Quakers for their commitment to non-aggression, he also reveals his view of women with his prediction that the Quaker women will panic.

Audience members soon ascertain that Stapley presumes control of the small threesome of travelers as he downplays input from others, especially Mrs. Weir, since she is a woman. In accordance with his character, he prides himself for his great wisdom and integrity as he requests two elder Quakers to step outside of the meetinghouse in order that they might speak with him. Not only does he speak reproachfully to them for their apparent lack of awareness of the extenuating circumstances, he also refers to the other Quakers as “your people” and thus shows his tendency to designate their otherness. As he orders the young Quaker that greets him to, “Stay! Bring a second elder. Just as well for your people to get an inkling of the gravity of the matter” (12). Stapley characteristically supposes that his way is the “right” way; and he must therefore correct the course of those in error. His egotism and sense of superiority comes through in his every word and action.

The patriarchal dynamic of the small group is confirmed by young James Weir’s apparent desire to acquire the same kind of authoritarian male identity as the General. Though he submits to his forceful leadership style, Weir emulates the older man as he ridicules the Quakers, “A pair of fine broad shoulders and a chicken heart! The sight of such a fellow makes me sick!” (12). The young James Weir has evidently begun to acquire the same inclination for supposition of superiority as the General. When the officer is confronted by the realization that one of the Quaker elders is a woman, he demonstrates his contempt once again as the young Weir reiterates, “What’s this---a woman?” (12) and Stapley replies condescendingly, “Don’t laugh, I beg” (12). Perhaps realizing that he could easily become the next object of ridicule,

Weir hastens to participate in Stapley's patronizing appraisal of the Quakers and their practices.

As Stapley becomes fully aware of the fact that he is talking with a woman in a position authority, he assumes a patronizing tone revealing his preconceptions as Stapley addresses her, "Your servant, madam! I expected two men elders—I can but entreat you to be calm" (12). Though Mrs. Copeland displays no effort to retain composure, the settlers reveal a hidden state of fear after Zebulon Hoxie communicates the news that the raid may come sooner than originally expected. As young James Weir unwittingly displays a dread of the attack by slightly quivering, Mrs. Copeland offers them some water to calm his tremors. Defensively, his wife rushes to assert that her husband is "as brave as a lion" (15). The General also hastens to compensate for him by adding, "Braver, Mrs. Weir! But even lions may be thirsty. I am, I confess" (15). Though fleeting, James Weir's disclosure of fear was inconsistent with patriarchal notions of ideal manhood and therefore was immediately obscured by both his wife and older colleague. Rather than accepting fear as a normal response to such a threat, it becomes subverted as disgraceful. The patriarchal structure that the settlers represent within their relationships to each other is shown as harsh and unyielding as well as prohibitive of their growth as individuals.

Macnamara illustrates the difficulties that characters, as representatives of human beings, find themselves in as they strive to fit into preordained roles. Her representation of women within a patriarchal structure demonstrates her perception

of a world of confining roles. Macnamara dresses Gertrude Weir as someone who has defined herself fully within a traditional configuration. Macnamara describes the character, "Mrs. Weir wears a large shawl of bright green silk and a "gipsy" hat with green ribbons" (10). Gertrude seems to accept her world unquestioningly, and even joins in the male's conviction that traditional modes remain superlative to the manners and means of the Quaker or Indians. It is obvious that Mrs. Weir considers these worlds to be inferior to the one she is accustomed to.

Her mode of interaction with the other characters causes us to question the satisfaction of her existence. In accordance with this argument, the question of expression versus repression arises within an analysis of Mrs. Weir's character. Mrs. Copeland's apparent ease in the articulation of thoughts and feelings could be compared with the communication skills of Mrs. Weir who shows evidence of being overly censored in patterns of communication. Mrs. Copeland seems more at ease with efforts to express herself since she has long enjoyed a freedom to do so within the Quaker community. In contrast, Mrs. Weir's tendency to have periodic outbursts perhaps stems from the customary repression of personal expression. Conceivably, Mrs. Weir dreads being disregarded so much that she experiences surges of anxiety in her attempts at self-expression. Consequently, she seems to have unconsciously developed a habit of frequently complaining or expressing minor dissatisfactions to the men in her life as a means of retaliation for their suppression of her thoughts and feelings. Besides continual complaints, her other means of expression is to have a sudden outburst. Her penchant for overreaction and hysteria soon becomes evident

as she realizes the danger that the Quakers are in: "Oh! God knows! Warn them now--quick!" (11). Both men respond by attempting to soothe as well as admonish her. Mrs. Weir not only deems herself a secondary personage in the company of her husband and his male friend, but also conducts herself rather like a child in the company of adults.

Macnamara adroitly juxtaposes Mrs. Weir's portrayal of a "lady's" role by Mrs. Copeland's embodiment of womanhood-- their contrasting functions proffering distinctive prototypes for audience members. The following exchange between Mrs. Copeland and Mrs. Weir places them in bold relief, "We Quaking women as ye call us- we walk by our own inward light and stay our courage upon God alone" (17). Just as Gertrude Weir continually demonstrates her weakness and dependence upon men, Mrs. Copeland displays a proportionate amount of autonomy and self-possession. As characters upon the stage, we can imagine Mrs. Weir's shallow and anxious breathing as well as her sporadic displays of emotion while Mrs. Copeland presents herself in a more moderate and dignified manner. To further delineate the contrast between Mrs. Copeland and Mrs. Weir, Macnamara writes: "The stiff straight lines of her muslim wrist bands, large collar and close cap are in marked contrast to Mrs. Weir's graceful frills and fichu" (12).

Mrs. Copeland and Mrs. Weir's differences do not end with physical representation upon the stage but become even more pronounced as their inner conflicts emerge. While Mrs. Weir sometimes realizes the ineffectual nature of her role, Mrs. Copeland often struggles with the burden of responsibility to the

community. While Mrs. Weir operates in a survival mode, Mrs. Copeland copes with the various intellectual and spiritual concerns of the people of her community.

Although both characters deem themselves ideologically centered, Mrs. Weir's acceptance of her world has fostered such long-term habits of self-repression that her essential nature has perhaps been removed from her awareness. Although Mrs. Copeland struggles with self-doubt and experiences inner conflict, she has generally obtained a sense of self-actualization and inner strength that has evaded the young Mrs. Weir.

Loveday Smith also represents the role of women in Macnamara's play. Described by the playwright as youthful and pretty, her character is marked by the willingness to persevere in the face of fear. Just as young James Weir paralleled the elder Stapley, Loveday presents us with a younger version of Mrs. Copeland. In many ways, she emulates the characteristics of the older woman by demonstrating a capacity for self-direction and reliance upon inner guidance to make decisions. Through past struggles with making difficult decisions and taking responsibility for outcomes, she shows a capacity for independence and maturity despite her youth. After the Quaker community has been reminded of the pending danger of attack, Loveday remains resolved to abide by the collective decision of her congregation to be inclusive towards the Indians. Though Loveday stands by the side of her husband during the intensive moments before the Indian's arrival, she shows an independence of spirit and maintains her courage to face the outcome of the group's commitment to their gesture of peace.

The characteristics of Zebulon Hoxie, the Quaker elder, are contrasted with the aforementioned demeanor of General Stapley. Hoxie calls upon his associates to apply reasoning to the situation at hand. As he cites historical evidence against utilizing force to resolve conflict, he appeals to their intellect and sense of ideals. Thus, Hoxie explains the Quaker's rationale for pacifism in the following address to his people as he exclaims:

Hark thee friends! When we withdrew into this wilderness, our purpose, as we did openly declare, was to rid ourselves of military protection no less than of persecution. In the old country we were protected willy-nilly, now by the Parliament against Charles Stuart the younger against the Dutch, then by Dutch William against the French, and so on for another half-century. We were forcibly engaged by protection, and heartily spat upon and beaten for ingratitude to our gallant defenders. Repeat to the governor our former answer, he is clear of us in that he hath warned us (17).

Since the defeated in a war are dishonored, he remarks that a display of aggression usually creates a spirit of retaliation rather than resolution. Hoxie also conveys the Quaker's belief in the equality of all people as he indicates by his actions that such "others" as "women" and "Indians" are regarded as valuable and self-governing. Giving further evidence of the women's autonomy and equality of stance within the group, the elder Quaker responds to the query of James Weir about subjecting the women to the Indians' horrific scalping methods. Hoxie replies that the women do not 'stand at their [the men's] bestowal" (17). Hoxie reiterates once again that the Quaker women remain free to follow their own consciences just as the Quaker men do.

Macnamara skillfully builds the tension within the drama as our concern for the Quaker's safety heightens. To increase the fear for the Quakers' safety

further, Mrs. Copeland proposes that the Quakers move the meeting outdoors since their availability might be less threatening to the attackers. She predicts that the Indians might regard their meetinghouse as a fortress if they are enclosed within. Hoxie agrees with her suggestion and asks everyone to move outside under the trees. In a deafening and heavy silence, the group moves outdoors. After becoming resituated, George Dilwyn breaks the silence with an expression of his concern for the children. The tension in the drama rises further as the Quakers consider the children in their midst, "They understand neither their danger nor the glory of dying for the truth. For these my heart fails me, ought we to take the children to a military stronghold?" (20).

After another period of intense silence, Zebulon Hoxie responds after careful thought by requesting that fellow Quakers keep the quest for the spiritual realm above the vain fulfillment that can be found in this world. Though audience members may remain decidedly unconvinced of the Quaker's course of action regarding their decision to risk such danger, the resolution of the community seems to be strengthened by Hoxie's reminder of their pre-eminent purpose. After he quotes the Scriptural warning about placing their faith in God above all other things, the group makes a collective decision to place their selves in the spiritual realm as a means of transcendence over the worldly domain.

Many audience members might believe that the Quakers' course of action is extremist in placing innocent children under such risk. Macnamara succeeds in building the tension further as young innocents are placed as potential victims of violence. In this manner, the playwright creates heightened concern and sympathy as audience members recall Gertrude Weir's agonized words of warning to the Quakers, "But the children! The children! Tomahawked before your eyes! The poor pretty curls—" (18). Though the Quakers remain resolved, the tension of the drama escalates

as they also express their fears and doubts. Even the elder Hoxie divulges a susceptibility to fear as he exasperatedly proclaims, "Anguish for the women and children was ever the test of our faith" (18). Although the Quakers express acute concern for the little ones in their midst, their decision to remain on course indicates a higher placement of their spirituality over the will or intellect.

The drama's tension rises once again as five Indians move silently toward the vulnerable group of Quakers from behind. The Friends' quiet meditation is interrupted only as one of the women calmly indicates her awareness to the group of a threatening presence now among them, "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage and he shall strengthen thine heart" (21). As Zebulon Hoxie rises to face them, he conveys a gentle receptiveness to them. Suspicious at first, the Indians gaze at the Quakers with bewilderment. After several friendly gestures, the Quaker Elder motions to one of the children to bring some water to the Indians.

After several more communicative gestures between them, the Indians eventually relinquish their hostility as they place a hatchet above the door of the Quaker meetinghouse to indicate their intention to protect their new friends in the future. Yet, the Quaker Elder pushes it further as he still feels moved to convey his beliefs against violence to the Indians. After Hoxie gives him a pipe as a token of peace, he also removes their hatchet from its place above the meetinghouse door. After reverently removing the Mohawk emblem from the hatchet, he places the seal in his breast pocket over his heart as a sign of their new friendship. When he proceeds to break up the hatchet however, the Mohawk leader becomes angered

until he begins to realize that the Elder Hoxie's action symbolizes his nonviolent approach.

As another Indian suddenly enters the clearing after his return from battle, he heightens the drama's tension once again as he approaches his chief wearing Mrs. Weir's bright green shawl and carrying several rifles. As he lays the rifles at the chief's feet, the innocent voice of a Quaker child is heard to inquire about what the Indian holds under his cloak. In response to young Nathaniel's question, the Quakers can only attempt to catch their breath as they consider what is hidden under the cloak. The child's curiosity compels him to move closer to the Indians as he presumes the Indian warrior to be as amiable as the ones that the chief has just dismissed from their midst. As the Quakers hold their breath once again, the Chief harshly warns the Indian not to harm the child. As the Indian reveals evidence of his recent accomplishments in battle, little Nathaniel's cry of anguish represents the emotional anguish of the entire Quaker clan. The little boy runs to his grandfather's arms for protection after seeing a set of bloodied scalps.

Besides creating a drama of crisis in which the tension progressively builds, Macnamara demonstrates her skill as a playwright and theatre practitioner by providing remarkable details of character and setting that contribute to the play's authenticity. From research of the Mohawk language, the playwright incorporates Indian dialect for her Native American characters to speak while she also includes descriptions and illustrations of tribal clothing. As for the colonial Quakers, Macnamara apparently studied their lifestyle and prevalent mode of interaction with

other colonists and Native American tribes. As for the three colonists, her subtle depictions of the traditional male and female roles are bitingly satirical.

Though she creates characters of great dimensionality, her play is essentially an allegory for pacifist tenets as exemplified by her reification of the Quaker's ideology of social justice and equality for all people. As Mrs. Copeland's reminds fellow Quakers that a glimmer of light can be found in all human beings, she refers to the foundation of their beliefs in equality for all people. As the playwright creates passionate drama, she simultaneously conveys the crux of her blended ideologies in the following speech by Mrs. Copeland to fellow Friends, "Our seeking hath not followed safety, but peace---which is a shining thing, of delectable beauty. And peace hath been given us, not as the world giveth and snatcheth away in the hurly-burly of war, but by continuous gift from the Prince of Peace---daily renewed unto life Everlasting" (22). Though Macnamara places pacifist ideals within a particular religious setting, her play honors the creation of peace for all people as she honors higher ideals of social equality and justice.

Both *The Baby in the Ring* and *In Safety* impart pacifist ideology in situations that parallel the large-scale conflict of World War I, a war that shockingly impacted the British nation. In her drama, *In Safety*, Macnamara emphasizes the possibility of adhering to pacifist policies even as innocent children are endangered. In *Baby in the Ring*, Macnamara questions dominant narratives as marginalized characters speak out against social injustices.

Contemporary perspectives and historicized theories have been juxtaposed to form the dialectic in Macnamara's pacifist dramas. Just as Karl Marx cites the importance of placing contradicting elements into art or literature for inspiring speculative thought, Macnamara's drama conveys the possibility of allowing disparate influences to coexist. In this paradigm, characters are shown as capable of modifying their initial stance as they consider broader ramifications and find ways to manifest peace. Demonstrating the means of reaching a compromise that satisfies all, the characters' actions exemplify how the pacifist hermeneutic can serve mankind. Departing from conventional means of handling controversy, these dramas represent the possibility of restoring peace in a way that considers the importance of the needs and desires of all involved.

Chapter Four: A Feminist Voice of the 1920s

“Restless years then, and in retrospect, with a strange wistfulness under the gaiety: a theatrical decade too, that sustained rightly a Theatre Theatrical.” J.C. Trewin in *The Gay Twenties*

Conveying a multifaceted treatment of feminist issues, Margaret Macnamara wrote the dramas *Light-Gray or Dark?*, *Love-Fibs*, and *The Witch* during the 1920s. The dramatist often focuses upon the economic constraints of women as largely dispossessed members of society as she develops an epistemological inquiry of women’s stature during this time of recovery and reconfiguration. The dramatist examines women’s need to retain a sense of self as viable members of society as they return to more constrictive social frameworks after the freedom that many experienced while in the work force during wartime. In her dramas, Macnamara recreates the ambiguities of the 1920s world in which newly enfranchised women remain under constrictive patriarchy. Thus, a survey of this decade’s trends becomes crucial for obtaining a full spectrum of the world in which her women characters contend.

The British moved forward from World War I with the hopes of creating a better world. Nurturing a ravaged spirit however, conservatism expanded as people sought to reclaim a lost sense of security by reverting to traditional styles of living. Ironically, the most popular conception of the “Roaring Twenties” is the spirit of gaiety evidenced by images of lively dancing and rollicking parties that frequently appeared on the covers of contemporary publications. Yet, the forced frivolity served merely as a thin veneer for grieved souls. Nearly every British family mourned the

loss of one of its members after World War I and a close look at the decade reveals pervasive alcoholism as well as other self-destructive tendencies among the general populace. Although the majority of people struggled merely to reestablish order in their lives as the war ended, revisionists sought ways to create a more equitable society as a basis for creating an enduring world peace. Naturally, writers and artists took the lead in initiating a discourse that encouraged the reconfiguration of social constructs. Yet, it must be noted that progressive idealists were compelled to work within prevailing conservative trends as they addressed the impotence of former designs.

Plays for a People's Theatre (1920)

The dramas of Margaret Macnamara appear within a collection of high profile literary figures of the decade. In her plays, contemporary feminists can find an important revelation of women's voices during this time period. Resurrecting Macnamara's works from obscurity ensures greater appreciation of women's accomplishments during the time when the feminist movement experienced a temporary lapse of momentum even as it became an integral aspect of the modern world. Through her drama, Macnamara presents tropological renditions of women's speculative and protesting discourse during this volatile era.

The title page of *Plays for a People's Theatre*, a 1920 anthology in which four of Macnamara's dramas appear declares, "The plays in this series will merit the attention of those whose eyes are turned toward the future" (Macnamara, 1). Like other writers within this collection, Macnamara invites readers to envision a more

propitious outlook for women's futures by proposing that innovative social practices replace degenerative patterns.

A range of voices and possibilities designate the post-war drama of the 1920s. Casting recent suffering aside, light comedies and musicals became the most popular forms of entertainment on the West End of London's theatre district. Despite the trend toward facile amusements, many artists and writers of the 1920s chose more deliberative themes such as the probing inquiry of the war's failure to provide satisfactory resolution. In conjunction with those that boldly explore the pervasive disillusionment that haunted this era, the dramatists represented by this collection directly evaluate the impact of the war upon more vulnerable segments of the population. Titles such as *The Fight for Freedom* by Douglas Goldring, *The Kingdom*, *The Power*, and *The Glory* by Hamilton Frye, *Men at War* by S. J. Scholifield, *Touch and Go: A Play with a Labour Interest* by D. H. Lawrence, and Zinaida Hippius' *The Green Ring* identifies searching, analytical subject matter among these writers.

The presence of Hippius's work warrants special commentary since she and Macnamara are the only women's voices represented in this anthology. Hippius' theories likely influenced Macnamara's feminist sensibility just by the appearance of her work in the same collection. Hippius became known for advocating less definitive roles for males and females by challenging them to aspire towards a more sublime manifestation of being (Pachmuss, 25). Furthermore, her publications of Russian literature rendered her work easily recognizable among the British intellectual set during the twenties. Since Macnamara showed the tendency to

correlate feminist tenets with psychological factors and spiritual enlightenment, she shows a commonality with Hippius' feminist ideology.

Both Hippius and her husband, D. S. Meyerzhovsky, had helped to facilitate the work of other Symbolist poets while in St. Petersburg and were among the most distinguished and published members of this group. After their move to France to avoid involvement in Bolshevik revolutionary activity, Hippius wrote her transcendence theories. The author writes her sojourn through the Russian countryside to encourage peasants to seek intellectual enlightenment as a foundation for spiritual growth believing that there was a connection between "the loftiest aspirations of mankind on earth with the power of God" (Pachmuss, 40). Furthermore, she is also thought to have been instrumental in inspiring the exploration of spirituality as part of intellectual growth among leading philosophers in the early twentieth century (Pachmuss, 29). Hippius proposed a transcendental feminism that sought to overcome the duality of gender and aspired to overcome restrictions of material world to attain spiritual freedom (Pachmuss, 25).

Like Hippius, Macnamara showed alternative ways of approaching feminism. In her plays, she focuses upon women's need to form a more productive self-image as a prerequisite to social activism. The playwright develops her conceptual framework by introducing characters that forge ahead and counter prohibitive forces in their lives. Her marginalized characters demonstrate a capacity to recreate themselves as empowered rather than subjugated individuals. In accordance with Macnamara's feminist posture, *The Women's Leader* in May of 1920 proposed that "the women's

movement had become a “problem of thought rather than a problem of action” (qtd. in Caine, 178). Macnamara consistently expands notions of womanhood in her plays as well as proposing innovative ways for women to respond to challenges imposed by a society that disavowed women’s freedom as individuals. Unlike Hippius, Macnamara’s ideals also reflected some of the political standards of the Six Point Group, a feminist faction that remained progressive despite conservative trends.

Lady Rhondda’s Six Point Group

Formed in 1921 by Lady Rhondda with the express purpose of “removing all artificial barriers” for women’s advancement, the Six Point Group established an egalitarian platform by lobbying for the protection of unwed mothers, guardianship privileges for divorced mothers, as well as equal pay for women who worked in the same capacity as men (Berry and Bishop, 47). Winifred Holtby, a well-known member of the Six Point Group, voiced her belief in the importance of protesting gender as a determinant for retaining a privileged status in the work force. She publicly voiced her distaste for women’s limited scope of existence within the home by expressing her “condemnation of wives who lacked all vitality and engaged in vapid conversations” (Horn, 60). The Six Point Group’s cutting edge platform evidenced their determination to press for equality among the sexes at many levels.

Defining Trends of the 1920s-The Flappers

The 1920s flapper trend indicates the presence of a counterculture that served as an undercurrent of resistance against the majority’s mindless return to traditional patterns. Many social historians view the flappers’ appropriation of androgynous

styles of clothing as representative of women's desire to transcend imposed definitions of gender roles. As Billie Melman describes the flapper phenomenon, some of the contemporary inferences of the term become more apparent:

The emergence of the boyish figure as the ideal of feminine beauty may seem to belong to the history of fashion, but contemporaries regarded this figure as the symbol of the new morality, a sign of the transition from a sexually and socially heterogeneous society to one that was unisex, uniform, and classless (Melman, 5).

The flappers' representation of an integral state for gender and class incited antipathy toward progressive feminists who were viewed as foster parents of the phenomenon.

Naturally conservatives did not want to extend enfranchisement to those members of the younger generation that protested the kinds of tradition that they were striving to reestablish after the war. Reacting then to the indictment of mainstream society, the flappers moved from a mere representation of libertinism to a more defined symbol of resistance. Eventually, these nonconformists began to swear, smoke, wear short boyish haircuts, as well as non-formfitting styles of clothing. Becoming a trademark of the 1920s, the flappers remained within the realm of popular culture and were therefore separate from the formal feminist movement.

New Feminists

New Feminists boasted the largest membership of any feminist organization during this time and many social historians regard the group therefore as representative of the era's feminism. Contrary to the flappers or Six Point Group's inclination for dissension or rebellion, Rathbone's New Feminists offered a less controversial agenda. Pamela Horn describes the inclination of many British women

as the war ended in 1918, "When peace came there was a wish among the majority of women in all classes of society to put the sorrows and fears of the preceding four years behind them and return to the pre-war way of life" (Horn, 25). According to Pamela Horn, many women placed priority upon the reestablishment of prewar routines and creating a haven of familiarity within their homes (25). Therefore, Rathbone's New Feminist focus upon motherhood and conventional settings for women fit well within the contemporary context of women's lives and proved amenable to the post-war society it served. Heather Ingman further specifies the tendencies of New Feminists in her book, *Women's Fiction Between the Wars*:

By falling in with the prevailing cult of domesticity, 'New Feminism' had a conservative effect reinforcing women's position in the home. There was very little discussion during this period, even by feminists, that men might take a greater share in domestic responsibility. Feminists tended to put their faith rather in communalized and professional services (20).

According to Ingman's study, women not only returned to pre-war routines but also tended to reclaim traditional roles in relationship to their spouses. While modern feminists regard women's willingness to return to a more subdued status objectionable, it must be noted that a survival mode prevailed. As most women willingly relinquished their wartime employment for the sake of returning soldiers who needed jobs, a return to domesticity remained, for many, their only option. Yet, new career opportunities for women began to emerge at a steady rate.

Eleanor Rathbone's belief that the majority of women's rights had already been achieved proved offensive to Winifred Holtby's more progressive group.

Considering that this statement came from the leader of the largest women's rights

organizations of England during the 1920s, historians have questioned the validity of feminist activism during the interwar years by designating it as having an anti-progressive and reactionary character. Yet, the New Feminists sustained and successful pursuit of legislation for women should not be undermined. Nearly eighteen bills for women were passed by Parliament between 1918 and 1925. Since fifteen of these laws focused upon the rights of mothers and children, it is obvious that Rathbone's New Feminism played an influential role. Conversely, only three bills regarding women's rights of citizenship made it through Parliament thus reflecting the marginalized agenda of such feminists associated with the Six Point Group. Rathbone's course of activism proved more effective since it coincided with the conservative trends of the time period.

Feminist historians have often cited the adversarial relationship between these two largest organizations as prohibitive to the growth of the feminist movement. Although Lady Rhondda objected to Rathbone's inhibited ethos, their differences did not prevent either group from actively pursuing their objectives. While the Six Point Group did not prove able to enact as much legislation for the women's cause, their input kept the radical political platform alive for women during the 1920s. Both feminist groups should be credited with their accomplishments rather than imposing late twentieth century standards upon them.

American feminist trends of the 1920s reflect the same proclivity to place radicalism aside as society became stabilized. In Dorothy Bromley's 1927 article in *Harper's Magazine*, she contrasts earlier brands of militant activism with "New

Feminist” ideals. Bromley proposed that women work within the constructs of society rather than taking an antagonistic stance. For instance, Bromley suggested that women allow themselves to preserve their roles as wives and mothers while also pursuing the option of a career. Nevertheless, she maintains that family obligations should take precedence for women over career. Bromley’s article “Feminist “New Style” demonstrates that the American post-war milieu held strong similarities to England’s since the common focus of women was centered upon the reestablishment of order. Therefore, New Feminists of America share the same nostalgic desire to return to the seeming security of the past. In the same manner as Rathbone’s group, American New Feminists regarded the women’s campaign as a means of adding dimensionality to their lives without dissolving the traditional notion of the womanly ideal.

Counteracting the exclusivity that has so often been given to Rathbone’s New Feminism by social historians of English life during the 1920s, Workman describes the role of smaller feminist organizations. For instance, the Townswomen’s Guilds, the Women’s Institutes, the Women’s Freedom League, and the Open Door Council, as well as the Consultative Committee of Women’s Organisations, offered rural women invaluable means of obtaining support and connection with other women. Through participation in these organizations, women of smaller communities throughout England became more familiar with feminist terminology and issues. Thus, the women’s campaign had amore comprehensive reach during this period then has often been supposed.

Macnamara incorporates ideas from each of the prevalent feminist groups into her works for the stage, and thus her plays become a meeting ground for the many feminist voices of the 1920s. From Hippius' and the flappers' transcendence of prescribed gender roles, to the emphasis upon motherhood and the rights of children, to a concern for an expansion of the rights of citizenship, Macnamara touches upon it all in her dramas. In *Light-Gray or Dark?*, Miss Pelling transcends the fixed role that society places upon her remaining a docile old woman much to the Curate's chagrin. In *The Witch*, Mrs. Jernyngham fashions herself differently than others' expectations of her and thus becomes the object of others' indictment. In *Love-Fibs*, Jinny transcends prescribed roles and becomes independent enough to express her own needs' to her betrothed. All of these instances of transcendence of fixed gender roles indicate an expansion of a woman's image of self to greater fullness of life.

The dramatic themes of Macnamara's plays reveal that the itinerary of the two most prevalent feminist groups, the New Feminists and the Six Point Group, decidedly influenced her ethos. In *Light-Gray or Dark?*, the dramatist echoes Rathbone's agenda as she features women struggling with the economic and emotional strains of motherhood. Emphasizing the dignity of the mother's role, she echoes New Feminist beliefs. She also seizes the opportunity to speak against the use of double standards for men and women in *Love-Fibs*, resonating with the agenda of Lady Rhondda's Six Point Group. In *The Witch*, the playwright depicts how the characters of single women are questioned in a society that places high priority upon

marriage. Her portrayal of single women highlights the spinster's position of isolation as well as the skepticism that surrounded her existence.

As she cites a foundational bias against women in society in *Light-Gray or Dark*, she shows how one woman speaks against such standards. Macnamara brilliantly questions conceptual notions of truth in *Light-Gray or Dark?* as the Curate deems the woman's assertion as wrong-headed. In all of these plays, unmarried women illustrate by their isolation that commodification of women retains prominence over other social narratives in the 1920s. The playwright demonstrates the necessity of exploring the range of significations of a given premise rather than accepting established tenets without reflection.

Macnamara anticipates Julia Kristeva's theories as she depicts the striking transformational experiences that free themselves from linear and caustic environments even if only from within. Macnamara depicts a character's transformational experience as one small aspect of their continuing quest to form a more viable identity since one experience could not represent a lifetime. She nevertheless distinguishes their transformational moment as an important departure from self-defeating or stagnant habits of living. As leading characters begin to recognize the full ramifications of their circumstances, their novel efforts for self-expression create a sense of resistance against the power of institutional thought. Within each of these dramas, Macnamara presents multiple narratives in order to represent divergent female voices and various perspectives within any given setting. In her plays, the men usually move toward the women with a greater sense of self-

awareness and compassion for their plight. As each of these women demonstrate the capacity for greater empowerment and more salient self-identification, her dramas often end with the hope of better things to come.

Obtaining a Voice--*Light-Gray, or Dark?*

In various 1920s settings, Macnamara compares the discursive and generic systems in which meaning is produced. She conveys the risk that women take by choosing independence. As they give up familiar systems of signification, they are compelled to build new ones. Macnamara utilizes different strategies to investigate ideologies that women of the time period were forced to work within as they pursued more viable identities. She challenges the inevitability of putative statements of truth in *Light-Gray or Dark?* as the elderly Miss Pelling assumes an iconoclastic posture in relation to established power structures.

Macnamra's *Light-Gray or Dark?* portrays the struggle of a devoted mother faced with giving up two of her children for adoption after her husband's death and the subsequent decline of the family income. Although working to the breaking point just to earn their keep, her income as a cleaning lady proves to be inadequate to support all five of her children. Mrs. Bridger has thus made a concerted effort to have her two oldest children placed in a private orphanage with the help of the local church in order that she might save them from the detrimental environment of the state's workhouse. As the play opens, a clergyman arrives to obtain the necessary documentation for the boys' admission papers from Mrs. Bridger. Not having their birth certificates available, the mother eventually has to admit that her children were

born out of wedlock. With anguish, Mrs. Bridger relates the circumstances of the boys' illegitimate status only to meet with the condemnation of the Curate. Miss Pelling, an elderly woman who rents a room from Mrs. Bridger, wrestles with the Curate's conscience to allow the boys to be admitted anyway, but reacts with disdain. As he hastens to the door, the Curate confronts the despair on Mrs. Bridger's face. Showing an awareness of the need for compassion rather than judgment of others, the Curate abruptly signs the admission papers and grimly exits.

Miss Pelling attempts to stir the administrator from his arbitrary position. As she confronts his sanctimonious bearing, she makes a stand against the underlying preconceptions about women that he represents. Miss Pelling's life of solitary struggle has given her the determination to take a stand when needed. Having little to lose, she has long inhabited a position outside of the mainstream. Miss Pelling has likely been subject to others' pity or contempt and has long ago become callous to such expressions. Although she retains a respectable social status due to her past sacrifice of marriage in order that she might care for her invalid father, she now remains largely unconcerned about obtaining the approval of others. Miss Pelling retains a meager position on the social scale, she is now poverty stricken due to the onset of rheumatism and her consequent inability to work. Yet her status as an outsider offers the opportunity for her to develop a keen awareness of the inconsistencies in society's value system. Since she no longer remains convinced of the pre-eminence of any given schemata, she remains detached from imposed ideologies and instead seeks her own definition of truth.

Evolving into an inquiry of conceptual meaning, Macnamara's *Light-Gray or Dark?* examines the impact that society's notions of truth can exert upon women's lives. As abstract questions emerge in discussions held by the elder Miss Pelling and the church representative, it seems unlikely that a senescent woman and a young church minister would engage in bitter conflict. Yet, the elderly woman's distrust of arbitrary notions about life soon proves contrary to the young clergyman's strict adherence to established procedures. As the Curate chooses to ignore the bearing that such fixed precepts have upon the lives of the subjugated, he becomes even more exacting.

The young Curate remains determined to hide his growing apprehension of the forthright elderly woman by "assuming an air of patronage" towards her (6). Since he is obviously unsettled by Miss Pelling's sound sense of self, he endeavors to maintain a show of strength by making reference to his connection with established constituents. "The Vicar told me about you – spoke most highly of you" (7). In another stage direction, Macnamara notes that Miss Pelling immediately distrusts the Curate's words. Thus, Macnamara has already begun to establish the basis of the play as a conflict that occurs when patriarchal authority attempts to define a woman's identity and is resisted by the subjective thought patterns of the individual that he assesses.

Foucault's theory of hegemony sheds light on Macnamara's theme in *Light-Gray, or Dark?* Michel Foucault challenges the power that institutions exert through their utilization of language to label or define. As Foucault defines the archaeology of

knowledge to be the usage of arbitrary linguistic maps to organize information, he also upholds the radical indeterminacy of signification. In this play, the Curate asserts the definitive nature of his realm. As Macnamara juxtaposes the two women's responses to his forceful presumption of command, she proceeds to underscore its impact upon their lives. As the clergyman enters their home, he presents himself in an officious manner to Miss Pelling and then to Mrs. Bridger who arrives home a little later. As Mrs. Bridger is revealed to be a destitute, widowed mother of five children, Macnamara renders her as a "haggard and crushed looking woman of five and thirty who has been pretty" 11). With an intricacy of dialogue and characterization, Macnamara shows how the domination of discursive practices impacts the woman's body.

During the introductory scene, Miss Pelling's insistence upon her own sense of truth becomes offensive to the Curate. As she satirically remarks of her past sacrifice of personal opportunities so that she might care for her father, she destabilizes institutionalized notions by questioning the nature of ethical standards, "Sometimes I wonder if I hadn't better let father go into the infirmary after all. Right and wrong are that muddled up in the world, aren't they sir?" (8). Interpreting her words as heretical, he seeks to prohibit any further discussion that threatens to dismantle his revered value system. He chides Miss Pelling, "Though life be difficult, I'm sure you know where to look for guidance without my telling you" (6). Again, the Curate relies upon institutional foundations to reify his stance.

To extend the social theme further, Macnamara depicts the tendency of bureaucratic systems to privilege generalized procedures over individuals' needs. For instance, the Curate demonstrates severity with his refusal to consider deviation from conventional practices. Not only does his stance prove demoralizing to Mrs. Bridger and her children, but his ensuing defense of his position conveys the self-legitimizing processes of strongholds of power at the expense of the underclass. Since his refractory nature predisposes him to maintain an arbitrary position, he retains a linear approach as he repudiates the option of considering an individual case.

His need to maintain authority bears great significance in terms of the two women's desire to overcome oppressive power structures and transcend their mean existence. By indicating that the Curate asks about their crowded living conditions "without much interest"(6), Macnamara shows his predilection for remaining detached from their lives and not being willing to risk showing compassion for fear of emotional involvement. Macnamara depicts his dissociation with the two women as a means of showing the authorial nature of institutions that are falsely presented as being altruistic. Their capacity for retaining leverage is strong.

In her study of early twentieth century women's drama, Patricia Schroeder cites the tendency of early twentieth century feminists to employ realism as a critique of the social system. She cites Sheila Stowell and Amy Kaplan who both argue convincingly "that realism is not the monolith that critics with limited historical awareness sometimes mistaken perceive" (Schroeder, 41). Realism can present an occasion for analysis and objectivity just as Macnamara imparts the reality of two

women's lives without placing finality upon her depiction. Highlighting the bareness of their living the doors of the bleak room represent the women's desire to escape economic hardship and lower class standing. Symbolic perhaps of their desire to transcend suffocating circumstances, the two doors may signify their desire for expansion and growth. Correspondingly, the sparse furnishings of the room convey a sense of the women's precariousness in social systems that exclude and disregard them. The apartment's location in the attic of a London tenement demonstrates these women's grave sense of isolation as they cope on the periphery.

In contrast to the Curate's position in the system, Mrs. Bridger is situated upon the lowest rung of the social hierarchy as an impoverished single mother. As a carryover from Victorian social standards, the poor were seen as deserving of their plight due to their lack of drive or ability to succeed. As the woman enters exhausted from a day's labor, the Curate greets her with the news that her two oldest boys have been admitted to the church's orphanage. Mrs. Bridger suddenly breaks down into tears at the thought of parting with two of her children, but must admit the limitations of her resources. As Mrs. Bridger's past circumstances regarding her first husband come to light, the Curate's disposition toward her changes. In spite of the fact that the future of her children remains at stake, the woman is overcome by fear as indicated by her passive acceptance of his condemnation of her life. Having internalized the guilt that society has inscribed upon her, she has become an integral part of her society's enslaving matrix.

Unlike the manner in which Miss Pelling questions the criteria of the Curate, Mrs. Bridger remains under the stronghold of the established system and concedes to its judgment without protest. Thus she remains easily defeated by forces that consistently convey her inferiority and finds it inconceivable to express herself to representatives of authority. Breaking codes of constraint through bold self-expression, Miss Pelling contrasts with Mrs. Bridger.

Macnamara's treatment of women's enforced silence anticipates thematic issues of the later twentieth century feminist playwright, Timberlake Wertenbaker. In her 1990 drama, *The Love of the Nightingale*, she explores the epistemological potential of language," or range of signification possible from any given language (Aston and Reinelt, 135). Wertenbaker presents the idea that facility with language helps one develop conceptual ideas. Conversely, those that lack the means for viable self-expression become less inclined to develop complexity of thought. Therefore, women's enforced silence on theoretical or political issues for many generations has thwarted their ability to learn and grow in these areas.

To illustrate the detrimental effects of silence, Wertenbaker adapts the mythical tale of Philomele in *The Love of the Nightingale* in a manner that highlights the relationship between elements of thought, language, voice, and power. The playwright graphically details the violence inherent in the subjugation of less powerful entities as her rapist excises her tongue to prevent his crime from becoming known. In like manner, Macnamara illustrates that Mrs. Bridger has been prevented

from developing meaningful expression of self and has so long been prohibited from speaking back to authority figures that she no longer makes the attempt.

As the playwright conveys the imposition of arbitrary social standards upon an already subdued individual, she indicates how Mrs. Bridger withdraws into silence and shame as a result of past treatment in this regard. As the Curate proceeds to confirm the illegitimate births of her two oldest sons, Macnamara conveys that Mrs. Bridger “shrinks” and later indicates that “her voice retains its flatness” (27). Thoroughly disheartened, Mrs. Bridger speaks little for the remainder of the Curate’s visit. As the church representative prepares to leave, Miss Pelling exhorts the younger woman, “Plead for yourself, Mrs. Bridger! Plead for yourself, don’t sit there dumb and stony!” (27). Macnamara thus embarks upon a vigorous investigation of the obstruction of self through prohibitive silence in the character of Mrs. Bridger. If the young mother fails to acquire enough strength to speak, she inevitably conspires with the forces of patriarchal society.

The urgency of the entreaties of Miss Pelling for Mrs. Bridger to confront her doubts are thwarted by the Curate’s measure of her silence, “She realizes, I trust, that she deserves her punishment” (25). Regarding himself as an upholder of morality, the Curate expresses contempt for those who fail to maintain the standards that he assumes to be universal. At this critical shift in the dramatic action of the play, Miss Pelling ruptures the social code altogether by superceding his authority and assuming an anarchistic position, “She don’t! Why she’s silent is from despair of ever pulling

the beam out of your eye" (25). The Curate's rhetorical power contrasts with Mrs. Bridger's silence.

The dramatic tension builds as Miss Pelling continues to confront the Curate's pride of position by questioning his application of arbitrary rules without considering the needs of the individual. As Miss Pelling veers her protest into its final phase, she places him on the defensive by referring to the foundational principles of Christianity as she proclaims, "The Babe of Bethlehem – He wouldn't have grown up to be the man that he was, if he hadn't the love of a mother in childhood. Unstinted love she gave him, you can see it in her face in all her pictures" (27). Miss Pelling passionately places women on a heroic scale as she valorizing her younger friend's role as mother and providing instances of women who bestowed notable legacies through their roles as mothers. Eluding to the fact that the Poor Law Home would counteract all of Mrs. Bridger's recognized effort to raise her children soundly, Miss Pelling creates a striking contrast in her comparison of the apathetic nature of institutions with a mother's natural inclination to nurture her child's growth. The New Feminists' exaltation of the mother's role becomes evidenced through the association of Mrs. Bridger with the divine maternal figure.

In a spectacular last scene, Mrs. Bridger suddenly stands to show resistance to the Curate's deprecatory discourse. Though remaining silent, Mrs. Bridger resists the social forces that have so long demeaned her with a simple yet indecorous nod for the young minister to leave. Her contempt allays the Curate's hardened stance more than all of Miss Pelling's rational arguments. Unexpectedly moved by the resolve on Mrs.

Bridger' face, he hastens across the room to place his signature upon the admittance papers. Her brief but resolute moment of autonomy proved to be powerful. Her impulse toward a great selfhood promises a better future.

In *Women's Way of Knowing*, the author addresses the violent nature of women's enforced silence and identifies those that "live cut off from others in a world full of rumor and innuendo," (Belenky, 25). Fearing what others may say about them or the power of words to demean, they remain quiet hoping to escape notice and further degradation. Recognizing only the potential of language to blight, these women fail to deem language as a tool for formulating abstract thought. Just as Mrs. Bridger dreads the potential of the Curate's words to condemn, she remains silent to preclude any further incidence of reproach or indictment. Her silent gesture though acts as language empowering her to resist instead of remaining immobilized by her fears.

In *Light-Gray, or Dark?*, the playwright's renderings of institutionalized restrictions retains precedence over any sense of quick resolution. Audience members are left to hope that Mrs. Bridger continues to develop a greater capacity for self-expression. As Macnamara explores the potential of language, the deconstructionist theory of Jacques Derrida becomes applicable. Since Derrida asserts that any system of language incorporates a certain set of values, he claims that individuals within a certain order come to believe that there is no truth outside of the apparatus in which they have become situated. With Miss Pelling's objection to absolutes, Macnamara explains the range of possible meanings in a set of

circumstances. By her example, the playwright asks audience members to question internalized belief systems. Since any set of values implies an antithesis, oppositional forces usually surface to challenge and disrupt. Macnamara undercuts the rigor and consonance of predominant rhetoric by interposing irony into her dramatic texts. Signification becomes deferred as meanings collide with social, cultural, and intellectual orders. Therefore, the language in her plays acquires a dynamic dimension of its own by its invocation of various interpretations and meanings.

Miss Pelling resists the social order as she exercises a prerogative of language to express her ideas. Furthermore, Mrs. Bridger's ability to transcend a mode of passive acquiescence prompts her to consider an alternative course of action and thus reintegrate with stronger aspects of self. Although her use of gesture still shows an inhibited praxis of language, her heightened state of consciousness indicates greater prospects for the future as she moves the Curate from his severity to a more liberal display of human concern. As he abruptly signs the paper and departs, his mutability becomes a harbinger to those who are oppressed by prevailing social structures. Furthermore, Mrs. Bridger's mere recognition of her oppression is a good sign.

In conclusion, Macnamara's *Light- Gray or Dark?* protests the kinds of absolute values that hold women on the lower rung of society. The dramatist invites speculation of existing social structures by suggesting that each situation has many shades and layers of meaning rather than an either/or configuration. When considering Derrida's examples of binary oppositions, it is easy to ascertain that patriarchy has traditionally become aligned with the first order terms of such binaries

as legitimate/illegitimate, factual/fictional, rational/irrational, and observational/imaginary. If patriarchy links first order terms with masculinity, such second order terms as illegitimate, fictional, irrational, and imaginary have long been assigned to the female. In her play, Macnamara figuratively poses a dispute of such dualities in the designations of definitive traits to either men or women. Macnamara creates characters that display more expansive realms of possibility rather than allowing traditional notions of gender to predominate. As Miss Pelling asserts herself in protest of the minister's judgment, she disrupts his expectations. Macnamara portrays the elderly woman as one who moves outside the realm of conventional practices by assuming a traditionally masculine or assertive posture rather than submitting mechanistically to established beliefs.

Sexology of the 1920s

Popularized scientific studies of the early 1920s brought a new awareness of gender related topics. In his seven-volume work, *The Psychology of Sex*, that was published between 1897 and 1927, Havelock Ellis recognized the importance of women's sexual fulfillment, but qualified his acknowledgement of their desires by specifying that their needs should be fulfilled within heterosexual and conjugal relationships only (Horn, 54). Instead of his theories liberating women, his postulations served as another means of limiting the realm of women's lives.

As Ellis' identification of women's needs became paired with Freud's warnings against the various neuroses that stemmed from sexual repression, a gratification of women's needs became regarded as critical to women's health and overall well-being.

Single women or “spinsters” became subject to even greater scrutiny or disparagement. Despite wartime losses, single women became increasingly stigmatized and often regarded as deviant after the introduction of Ellis’ sexology. Accordingly, Catholic clergyman, A.M. Ludovici deemed spinsters as “a body of human beings who are not leading natural lives” (qtd. in Horn, 54).

As public opinion regarding the necessity of marriage intensified, Six Point Group feminist, Winifred Holtby, lamented that she must now be regarded as “riddled with complexes like rotting fruit,” since she remained unmarried, (Horn, 54). As Pamela Horn explains, “In such a climate, friendship between women became suspect” (55). Despite these indictments however, single women took up new kinds of careers and often prospered in their endeavors. Correspondingly, Macnamara’s plays often feature single women with resolve and determination to maintain a sense of dignity as they encounter the skepticism of others. Her emphasis upon a spinsters’ self-sufficiency and seamliness protests other designations. In the next play for analysis, *Love-Fibs*, Miss Brown is a spinster who sets an example of positive adulthood for her adopted daughter despite the community’s tendency to relegate her to the periphery.

Love-Fibs

Macnamara’s play, *Love Fibs*, imparts feminist themes as it satirizes the insularity of a small community. She underscores the citizenry’s practice of relegating those that represent differences to a peripheral status. The process that individual characters take to form a viable identity in such circumstances becomes the

central focus of *Love-Fibs*. Macnamara indicates the agency of the community's dominant ideology to refract its shaping power back towards the centralized social standards. As each character strives to form or maintain a productive conception of self, the dramatist shows the influence of the collective upon the individual's process of development. *Love-Fibs* is the story of Jinny, an orphaned girl attempting to establish a positive identification of self in a small community that excludes her. Relying upon her fiancé, George, to help her attain the acceptance she desires, she remains at his mercy. At the drama's conclusion however, Jinny learns to rely upon her own criteria for defining self and becomes willing to relinquish her relationship with George, if necessary, to retain the sense of resolution that she has recently developed within herself.

As *Love-Fibs* opens in the bright hours of the early morning in a Sussex Cottage in southern England, its cheerful setting indicates the play's orientation toward the youthfulness of its characters. A trim-figured girl of seventeen years of age poses in front of a mirror as she puts on an elaborate hat. As she answers her guardian or adopted mother, Miss Brown, Jinny's hesitant and mercurial speech patterns betray a sense of her self-doubt. Macnamara underscores the young woman's susceptibility to others as she indicates her habit of changing her self to please them. She consistently surrenders to others' will and neglects her own needs in the process.

During the play, Jinny "borrows" a pound note from Miss Brown's grocery money in order to buy her fiancé, George, a more expensive gift. After he denounces her for the problem it will cause with her reputation in the community, she confesses

shamefully. Hearing George berate Jinny, Miss Brown mentions that she happened to see George kissing another girl to which George shrugs his shoulders with contempt. Although he feels his blunders should be tolerated, Jinny begins to experience enough strength of self to become more independent of George. Although deserving punishment from Miss Brown, Jinny decides to refuse to submit to George's double-standard any longer.

Throughout the play, George serves as a foil for Jinny's failure to attain a productive self-image. In a contrasting manner, he conveys a strong sense of entitlement and shows a sense of command as he speaks to her in tones that explain his observations about life in an authoritative manner. At other times, he reprimands her if she strays from his expectations of how she should behave. Jinny continually places herself in an obligatory mode as she focuses upon maintaining equilibrium in the relationship. While George takes their relationship for granted, Jinny constantly worries about the status of their relationship. Her tendency to succumb to his will only serves to encourage him to consolidate his position of power.

George exploits his realization of her dependence upon him by continually scrutinizing, anatomizing, and reprimanding her. As their mode of interaction manifests anxiety within her, the tension of the drama builds. By alternatively affirming and distancing, renouncing and then exclaiming his devotion for Jinny, George's manner renders her unstable and uncertain in the relationship. Subversively inscribed to retain subordinate status, Jinny evidences an internalization of the patriarchal configuration within the relationship. Both young people view their

romantic involvement as a means of escaping their inner vacuity and hope to fulfill an unremitting desire for completion.

Displaying an incisive understanding of human foibles, Macnamara demonstrates how two young people's mode of communication corresponds closely with their conception of self. As the town's mistrust of Jinny renders her weak and dependent upon her fiancé to fill the gap of her social needs, the community's unmitigated absolution of George reinforces his arrogance. While Jinny consistently seeks the approbation or endorsement of others, George antithetically conveys a strong sense of conviction that his every declaration holds merit. Just as Jinny speaks hesitantly, George communicates with others in an emphatic and self-righteous manner. Each person's self-image is conveyed by his/her actions and responses toward others. When confronted with wrongdoing, Jinny apologizes, explains, and pleads for forgiveness while George conversely denies or rationalizes his behavior while demonstrating a staunch refusal to be censored. Both characters reveal their states of mind as they express themselves literally and figuratively in the world.

Jinny's guardian, Miss Brown, occupies a marginal status within the community yet has developed an apparent resolve with regards to her distinctiveness. In the script's notes, Macnamara describes Miss Brown as a "kindly, dignified, old maid whose romantic temperament is salted with sagacity and mild humor" (6). She has obviously formed a solid sense of self, nevertheless, she remains delimited by social standards just as Jinny has been. Macnamara places the contrasting narratives of Jinny and Miss Brown along different trajectories even

though they remain contingent upon the same patriarchal discourse that holds prevalence in their community.

In this atmosphere of oppression, Miss Brown preserves a strong sense of self whereas Jenny succumbs to the town's judgment and endeavors to reconfigure herself in order meet the town's criteria. Thus, the playwright refers to the choices available to those who are relegated to a subordinate status. Although Miss Brown demonstrates the possibility of living autonomously, she nevertheless conducts herself with reserve and restricts herself to selective settings in which she finds comfort. In contrast to the older woman's self-sufficiency, Jinny's prospect of developing a salutary conception of self remains deterred by the community's proclivity to guide and control the actions of its constituents by the promotion of certain standards. The playwright highlights each character's means of reacting to such designations.

Symbolic of her disjunction with self and the community, Jinny remains intensely preoccupied with maintaining George's approval. The playwright depicts her dread of his discovery of any wrongdoing. When forced to explain her misdeed, Jinny conveys as much doubt of self as she endorses George. In Macnamara's portrayal of the young couple's slanted mode of interaction, she highlights the young woman's disquietude as she becomes increasingly diminished rather than strengthened by their association with each other. As Jinny doubts her legitimacy, she subordinates her will to George's desires. Remaining acquiescent, Jinny strives to maintain harmony at all costs while he continues to take her affection for granted.

Purporting his intention to protect and defend her, George maintains a strong position of dominance. In fact, one of his lines reads, "I own you" (15). As he discovers the truth about her pilfering a pound note, he refuses to absolve her. Furthermore, he proceeds to act in a strict authoritarian manner as he vehemently reprimands her. Exerting his control as he announces his determination to end their relationship, he proclaims that Jinny is "too base to be engaged to me. I'm done with her!" (26) Reflecting a deep conviction of his own virtue, he repudiates Jinny's character. Thus George presents himself as an omniscient patriarch, and he expects her to maintain a juvenile's position of a naughty or pleasing child.

Jinny becomes an extension of George's identity rather than establishing a sense of consolidation with self. Jinny has become part of George's oneness, his mirror image, an extension of his volition. In the same manner as Lacan's fragmented infant observes the wholeness of another and seeks an identity with self as it first observes its reflection, Jinny regards others as whole while observing a lack of wholeness within her own reflection. Having lost hope of realizing an undivided sense of self, Jinny has come to relinquish the desire to obtain coherence and transferred this longing onto George. She has begun to designate his presence as a substitute for wholeness. Jinny's relinquished status evidences itself in every strata of her being as she indicates a sense of her self as unworthy. In contrast, George displays enough confidence for both individuals as he maintains a parental role:

Boasted of your goodness, I have – up and down! Never doubted you as straight as myself!...Tricked me into wearing this watch and lovin' yer for it. Here take this off! Take this off I say! (25).

Striving to remove any associations with his alternately maligned or coveted object of desire, George detaches from one who might diminish his place of privilege in the community.

The course of the drama changes as Miss Brown's questions George about his recent indiscretions with another young woman. Their interaction facilitates a new awareness for Jinny regarding her beloved George and she no longer sees him as infallible. After she hears George apply a liberal interpretation of his actions just after chastising her so vehemently, Jinny begins to discern the fallacies embedded within his proclamations of "truth". A synchronic moment of evolution for Jinny begins as she reclaims her life upon its own merits instead of relying solely upon George. Her vexed spirit and conflicted state of mind produce a new bearing upon the situation.

Ironically, George suddenly becomes placed in doubt instead of Jinny since Miss Brown has borne witness to his act of betrayal. George first reacts with denial but then proceeds to excuse himself with ease as he excludes himself from responsibility, "Kissed, Pshaw! Who'd call it a kiss!" (28). Revealing a double-standard, George excuses his actions just after castigating Jinny so harshly. While minimizing the incident and trying to shift the focus of scrutiny back upon Jinny, he detonates, "Rot! To compare keeping silence about a little obliwingness to a lady – to compare that with dishonesty in regard to money!" (28) Since his words always indicate a sense of finality, George shows resolve about his own transgressions but fails to perceive any hypocrisy in his condemnation of Jinny.

Jinny reveres George because he exists in a realm of inclusion within the community that she longs to be a part of; his status emphasizes the shame that the young woman has always experienced regarding her inferior background. Therefore, she realizes that her only means of obtaining an integral stance depends upon her continued involvement with George. At this interval, Macnamara implies a remarkable historicity within the world of the play as she declines from creating a definitive outcome. In traditional comedy, the play would end up with marriage as the differences between George and Jinny are reconciled. In this case however, Jinny would exchange freedom for the consolation of becoming integrated into the controlling apparatus of the community.

Macnamara refuses to create such a conclusion and leaves the final outcome undetermined. The playwright takes an unconventional position as she has Jinny choose independence as a better option. Jinny has shifted her focus from holding onto George to obtaining a stronger sense of self. Therefore, she defies her subordinated position within the community and embarks upon an odyssey of self-realization instead. With a fresh recognition of her past tendency to compromise self, Jinny displays a new capacity for creating a new ontological canvass of self.

Throughout the play, Macnamara creates illustrations of failed communication. As much as Jinny has hoped for acceptance, she unknowingly evokes rejection by the townspeople as she remains ill at ease and doubting of self. In *Love-Fibs*, Macnamara represents the degeneration of communication as individuals function without adequate regard of others. If a circle that represented the community could be

drawn, diagonal lines that intersect, but fail to rest at any point, could represent the townspeople's communication with each other. In other words, people interact with each other on a surface level without understanding the core truths about each other's lives. As the diagonal lines suggest frustrated efforts at colloquy among the members of the community who speak in different genres of discourse, meaningful disclosure of self becomes illusory as imposed standards causes fear.

Macnamara embarks upon a study of the rhetoric deployed by collective formations to ensure compliance. Jinny's sudden decision to decline the opportunity to become an integral member of the community becomes important as she realizes the cost to self. Her rejection of George means that she opts to forego this inimical matrix and create new objectives for self. No longer drawn by the lure of the town's center, Jinny has experienced a new freedom and sense of self-sufficiency that allowed her to move away from restrictive spheres of discourse. Instead, she becomes self-generative rather than enslaved by a desire to please. The stronghold that the community had upon her life has been mitigated as she defies George.

In this community, Jinny's peripheral status has stemmed from her background as an outsider and orphan. While the people of the community have extended superficial gestures of reception, they have done so officiously. Macnamara questions the determinism inherent in the community's domination over its people. Prominent members of the town retain their stronghold by practicing a surveillance of less established individuals and reifying those considered worthy. The locus of

control metaphorically issues from the town's center in this play. Since Jinny realizes these truths, her relationship with George held extensive meaning.

Paralleling the play's theme, one of the major issues for the "New Feminists" of the 1920s was the double standard of morality for men and women. While women were categorically reviled or scorned for yielding to lascivious temptations, men were commonly exonerated for the same kinds of activities. In an examination of the moral stages of development for women, Carol Gilligan's study find that the "male sense of self as discrete with the moral concept of right" and the "female relational self is tied to the moral concept of responsibility" (Smith, 244). Gilligan studies the process by which women make decisions as related to their self-concept and ideas about what their responsibility includes (Smith, 244). In relation to *Love-Fibs*, George still believed it was alright for him to tell a fib but took Jinny to task for the same behavior.

By reducing the status of women to that of children, the privileged role of men could thus remain justifiable. In *Acting Women*, the author mutinies against the longstanding penchant for designating women as perpetually juvenile and thereby justifying the male's authoritative role as she claims that patriarchy "views women simply as children, at times uncontrollable and destructive, incapable of maturity and adulthood" (Ferris, 111). In accordance with the same theme, Ferris quotes Renaissance writer Matteo Bandello's observation about the double standard as applied to women, "It is great cruelty that we claim the right to do whatever we will list and will not suffer the women to do the same. If they do anything which does not

please us, there we are at once with cords and daggers and poisons" (qtd. in Ferris, 111).

Macnamara demonstrates the inequities of the double standard in *Love-Fibs*. With Jinny's sudden realization of George's false sense of truth, she becomes galvanized into action and obtains the strength to confront his hypocrisy. In turn, George reveals his internalization of the double-standard by expressing a sense of privilege to excuse himself from any wrong doing. Yet, he audaciously cites his beliefs in women's culpability for the same kinds of indiscretions that he has been accused of as he proclaims:

So I do – in a girl. In meself – it's so slight. I don't take no notice.
And if I chance to say or not say anything to prevent giving the girl
away – well that is what you might call a love-fib – a gentleman's
idea of a love-fib (29).

Reiterating his inexorability with an unabashed grin, George's predisposition becomes more apparent to Jinny at this point. Indignant of his deceitfulness, the young woman erupts in fury and demonstrates a new strength of conviction. In a proceeding contest of strong wills, she rivals his contemptible assertions by hurling his condescension back upon him.

Jinny finally demonstrates a firm enough resolve to act with conviction as she mutters for him to leave with bitterness. As she turns away from him, he pauses at the doorstep and looks back at her with incredulity. Maintaining distance from him however, Jinny remains uncompromising. The young woman's courageous reversal of roles illustrates her desire to separate from her previously subordinate position.

George now displays remorse as he has become relegated to the periphery for the first time. In script notes, Macnamara indicates that he stands at the door “with lowered head and hat dangling limply from his hand” (31). The cultural forces that have so strongly propelled Jinny toward marriage no longer retain their stronghold as Jinny now perceives George as an undeserving recipient of her trust and admiration.

Jinny has begun to evaluate George more objectively and thus displays newly acquired strength as she exercises her own judgement rather than remaining merely an object of his scrutiny. As Inez Bensusan indicates about male/female relationships that “when role reversals occurring within such a previously stratified relationship, the male begins to feel the weight of examination” (Stowell, 49). Bensusan defines the male’s position by the manner in which he feels entitled to embark upon his “valuations of women as objects to be dressed up or dressed down as men see fit” (Stowell, 49).

Although the playwright ends this drama auspiciously for her leading character, this play reflects a tragic occurrence in Macnamara’s personal life. Her adopted daughter, Irene, experienced a sense of inferiority and alienation from the small community in which they lived. The young woman subsequently committed suicide when she was rejected by her betrothed. Macnamara evidently based the play upon Irene’s experience but hoped to conceal the circumstances of Irene’s death that she might uphold her honor. Macnamara may have also wanted to illustrate the despotic tradition of male/female relationships to which her own adopted daughter, Irene, fell victim.

In a letter to Elizabeth Robins, Macnamara mentions a plan to write a drama addressing the subject matter of a woman's potential to lose self in a male/female configuration. In the same letter, she elaborates her intentions to write about her adopted daughter's fateful involvement with one whom she deemed capable of delivering her from isolation. However, Macnamara remains so apprehensive about revealing the actual incident that the play was based upon that she only uses Irene's first initial when referring to her in the letter to Robins. It must have been difficult for Macnamara to write a triumphant ending for the main character of her drama knowing that Irene had not been able to realize such a possibility in her own life. By creating a propitious ending, she proposes the means in which the girl's abnegation of life could have been avoided.

Though in real life Irene has died, Macnamara ends the drama with the promise of the young woman's ability to regenerate her sense of self. Although Macnamara has Jinny reject her betrothed at the play's denouement, she also writes an alternative ending in the script notes to provide a director with an option. In this second ending, she allows George to return and for the couple to start anew in a more balanced relationship. Thus, the playwright shows that within any given situation, many satisfactory resolutions are possible.

Feminist Transformation: *The Witch*

Helene Keyssar's theory of transformation proves relevant as a way of connecting *Love-Fibs* and *The Witch* since both of these plays advocate women's need to transform self from a stance of subjugation to others into a more viable

independence of spirit. Keyssar suggests that feminist dramatists often depict women who experience a desire to effect change as they experience individual growth. As Keyssar elaborates, "Drama that embraces transformations inspires and asserts the possibility for change, of roles and role playing (xiv). Macnamara shows that the women of *The Witch* could change their identity of self and others but choose not to. Stuck in old patterns, they resent the representation of change in one amongst them.

Macnamara's *The Witch*, makes a paradoxical shift as exploitative forces come from within a group of women towards another in their midst. However, the dramatist places their action within the context of oppressive modes. In *The Witch*, events unfold as unhappy women become malevolent toward another resident of the boarding house in which they live. Loathing themselves as outcasts of a patriarchal society, their hatred becomes projected upon one who resides amongst them. Avoiding reflection of their own actions, these women seek to escape from their alienated status by developing a malignant focus upon another. With reinforcement of each other's growing hatred, they begin to hunt down one of their members. Rather than evaluating differing notions, they neutralize their projection of revulsion with dark rationalizations.

Macnamara demonstrates the violence inherent in derision of another as a member of the human race or community. In the reviled character's fatal ending, Macnamara metaphorically suggests that the replacement of human charity with enmity and scorn invites a morose disintegration of human interconnectedness, a form of violence in itself. Macnamara insinuates that members of the group had a

responsibility to resist such violent configuration of power. In feminist terms, *The Witch* indicates how these women project society's misogyny upon one in their midst. They elevate their own sense of stature through maligning another and their anxiety expatiates as the process gains momentum.

The play is set in a boarding house for ladies on the south coast of England and the playwright sets up an atmosphere of Gothic intrigue at the play's onset. She creates an ominous mood by starkly contrasting a bare white balustrade against a background of endless darkness. Since stage lights soon reveal a steep stairwell ascending from murky shadows below, the audience abruptly becomes aware of the deck's foreboding height. To augment the striking imagery, Macnamara delineates that the "sky and sea are merged in a background of deep blue-black" while "sounds of a scarcely moving surf" emerge from the darkness below (5).

As the "aggressive and vulgar light" of a large lantern interrupts the vast stillness of the play's nighttime setting with its bouncing glare, the gaunt shape of "a small, skinny, thin-lipped woman of forty" comes into view (Macnamara, *The Witch* (6). With this jagged silhouette, audience members are presented with another image of severity. In conjunction with the lone white balustrade that is set against the darkness, the woman's angular figure evokes an enigmatic quality. As the light from the lamp shines eerily upon the jolting form, the dramatist seems to play with prohibitive shapes as she creates a threatening atmosphere for the play's beginning.

The heavy breathing of another individual laboriously climbing the stairs from the darkness below and soon a portly woman comes into view. Her cumbersome

footsteps provide a blatant contrast to the first figure's light tread. While a visual representation of sharpness marks the first woman's entrance, aural signs of disproportion herald the arrival of the second woman. As her rounded form appears at the top of the stairway, she confirms the dramatist's foreshadowing. Before a word of dialogue has been spoken, the playwright has conveyed a sense of intensity and extremities by the first two characters' introductions.

Subsequently, Macnamara's describes the second woman, Mrs. Limber, as a "widow of fifty whose weeds have run to seed" (11). Since "weeds refers to a widow's mourning attire and "gone to seed" means someone who basically "lets it all hang out" in British colloquialisms, Mrs. Limber has apparently dropped the front of bereavement and presumably chases after new prospects for matrimony whenever the opportunity presents itself. The playwright indicates that Mrs. Limber has lost all inhibition and become forceful in her interactions with others. Soon after she pauses to take a breath near the top of the stairs, the piercing sound of rotting timber resonates from underneath her hand. Pulling away quickly from the collapsing banister, she clutches wildly to the other side. After making it safely to the landing, she collapses in a chair among the other women. As they all speak with horror of the thirty-foot depth of such a fall, they predict the certain death of whoever would be so unfortunate as to experience it. Sharp lightning and a "low growl of thunder" complete the drama's ill-omened beginnings (11).

Each of the other residents of the boarding house demonstrates a lack of social poise. Through their isolation perhaps, they have acquired peculiar mannerisms.

Although they are dismayed at Mrs. Limber's near accident, the topic of their conversation soon drifts to another boarder who remains conspicuously absent from the group gathering. Since this boarder, a Mrs. Jernyngham, has made comments that they find offensive, she has become an object of the women's collective dislike. Even though this woman proceeds with her own business without disrupting their lives, she has become a popular topic of conversation that consists almost entirely of bitter epithets from the group. Amplifying her failures as their conversations become embellished, they develop an intensive hatred of the unsuspecting Mrs. Jernyngham. Their growing assault upon her character leads them to call her a witch.

In this play, audience members find neither traces of hollow entertainment nor prospects of consolation as they learn of the characters' actions and attitudes toward another member of their group. Instead, viewers are likely to find themselves disturbed by these characters' seeming lack of capacity to show tolerance for someone who represents differences. Anticipating Brecht, Macnamara offers audience members a chance to observe the characters' display of bigotry toward another while recognizing similar capacity within themselves. Given the human propensity for scapegoating others, Macnamara emphasizes how easy it is to become part of such a biased movement rather than stand against it. She also shows hatred's inevitable culmination in evil through the women's ill treatment of an individual. While providing viable rationalizations for the women's behavior, Macnamara refuses to excuse or defend it. As the dramatist holds up a mirror to the worst aspects of human nature, she also leaves room for audience interpretation rather than encouraging idle

curiosity of morbid subject matter. Not permitting audience members to remain passive observers then, Macnamara probes them to discern the play's moral calling. The playwright hopes that audience members find vice in the enforced isolation of these women by society while also citing their act of condemnation towards another as inhumane.

As in *Light-Gray or Dark?*, socialist ideology remains an integral part of *The Witch's* basic theme. Many people in the 1920s looked toward changes in the social structure as a way of working towards a better world. On the same token, others clung just as firmly to past perceptions hoping to recreate the more familiar atmosphere of pre-war Britain. In this play, the women at the boarding home first indicate their discontentment with Mrs. Jernyngham as they reflect upon a comment she made regarding a young member of the hired cleaning staff. Instead of condemning the girl's insufficient performance, Mrs. Jernyngham suggests that each resident could help to lighten her load by doing small tasks themselves. In contrast to Mrs. Jernyngham's concern, several of the other women hold on to their slightly elevated status with vehemence. Their contemptuous stance toward the servant girl's difficulties represents a recoil against egalitarianism in society. In a similar manner, their objection to Mrs. Jernyngham's independence of spirit indicates their uneasiness with feminist propositions.

Macnamara's astute depiction of how easily a case can be constructed against another person's character with little substantiality asks the audience to consider a group mentality that reinforces corrupt patterns of persecution. Macnamara

illustrates how such a mindset can begin with a person's projection of hostility and spread through a group like a forest fire. In this play, the sparks of the fire are ignited when Mrs. Limber first expressed how Mrs. Jernyngham offended her deeply by suggesting that she and her daughter save the servants from over exertion by carrying out small tasks themselves. Mrs. Limber believes that Mrs. Jernyngham implied her inferiority and relegated her to the level of cleaning staff when she made such a statement.

At this juncture, Macnamara intertwines a class-consciousness theme into more personal matters of identity and self-esteem. Since Mrs. Limber lived more affluently in past years, Macnamara suggests that it is her preoccupation with her own decline of social status that caused her initial irritation with Mrs. Jernyngham rather than the woman's suggestion. Mrs. Jernyngham's assertion had less to do with her awareness of Mrs. Limber's sensitivity to the subject as with her propensity to think of herself on equal terms with the servants. However, her viewpoint undercuts Mrs. Limber's consideration of class as a primary determinant of value. Thus, Macnamara depicts the unwillingness of middle class to relinquish their status. Her illustration depicts how prejudice destroys humanity's greater capacity for growth and development. Since lessening of the boundaries between classes was a primary goal for advocates of socialism, we can see how the play's theme evolves from Macnamara's interests. The women's tendency to build a strong case against their neighbor demonstrates their arrogance with regards to class designations. It

also shows the need for developing the capacity to live harmoniously and cooperatively with others.

Another issue of importance for these boarding house women is their status as single women in a society that expresses scorn toward them. We can easily discern that the contempt placed upon them by others has merely been redirected onto a member of their own group. Since they strongly desire to identify themselves as an integral part of the social apparatus, even though they are relegated to a secondary status as boarding house widows or spinsters, their frustration with self and society evolves into anger against Mrs. Jernyngham.

These women project their own arrogance as a trait of Mrs. Jernyngham rather than as a shortcoming of their own. When Mrs. Jernyngham shows a simple preference for spending time alone, they perceive her inclination towards solitude as an indication of her snobbishness towards them. Of course, placing such designations upon Mrs. Jernyngham's character is much easier than recognizing the biases within themselves. Since Mrs. Jernyngham withholds information about her personal life, she must be rebuffing them. As they become more cohesive in their condemnation of her, they frequently indulge in derisive laughter as they speculate how her correspondent must be a married man who's "probably laughing at her in his sleeve" (14). Macnamara's allegorical spin highlights how each person's contribution to the group's dynamic coalesces into a spiraling motion that attains increasing magnitude.

Next, the women hypocritically cast aspersions upon Mrs. Jernyngham's physical appearance even though they have been described as less than optimal in

that category themselves. After they connect her plain appearance to her career as a teacher, Mrs. Limber indicates, "She's of no position – a high school mistress!" (9). Women's work during this time period suggested low pay and status as well as little opportunity for advancement even at the professional level. Full-time employment indicated either desperation or unconventionality to these women. By relating Mrs. Jernyngham's appearance to her work, they express their belief in marriage and family as the only fulfilling or appropriate role for middle to upper class women. In the "separate spheres" formulation, proposed during Edwardian years by conservatives, women remain equal as long as they remained within the home and left the work place to men. Cicely Hamilton writes about her philosophy and the meaning of such plays as *Marriage as a Trade* and *Diana of Dobson's*, "What I rebelled at chiefly was the dependence implied in the idea of 'destined' marriage, 'destined' motherhood – the identification of success with marriage, of failure with spinsterhood, the artificial concentration of the hopes of girlhood on sexual attraction and maternity" (Hamilton, 65).

In Sue Ellen Case's book, *Feminism and Theatre*, Audre Lord writes about anger as it relates to racism, addressing a different kind of prejudice. It seems that ostracism and scorn produces the same result in any setting. Lorde writes,

We cannot let fear deflect us nor seduce us into settling for anything less than the hard work of excavating honesty. Anger is a grief of distortion between peers, and its object is change (qtd. in Case, 99).

Thus, the women's anger stems from their relationship with society. They experience anger and its manifestation because of being outcast as single women in the 1920s.

Since their exile reflects a return to conservative thought, these women have come to turn their anger back on themselves and regard any signs of progressiveness as a reminder of their status. Thus, Mrs. Jernyngham and her unconventional habits of living becomes a target for their anger. The women's criticism of Mrs. Jernyngham's preference for reading intellectual material as a masculine occupation reveal the most hardened perception of social proprieties so far underscored by these women.

As Sue Bruley describes interwar feminist trends, "Deeply fearful of the unfolding possibilities for radical change, dominant forces in society asserted the need to return to what was held to be 'normal life'" (Bruley, 70). Ironically, these women have become tyrannical in their judgment and regard women's intellectual activity as inappropriate because the advancements that it indicates a clash with their need to be part of the trend of returning to traditional ideals. Their castigation distends more repugnantly as they proceed to blame Mrs. Jernyngham for all recent incidences of misfortune amongst them such as influenza, asthma attacks, and even bad weather.

As these women merge astrological ideas with their ideas of religion, they eventually determine that Mrs. Jernyngham must be the subject of today's astrological warning of witchcraft. After linking contemporary society's dismissal of the existence of witches with "mod'n incredulity and atheism", they show a distrust of progressive ideas and ironically reach back to medieval beliefs (16). Now that they have called Mrs. Jernyngham a witch, her blameworthiness and their hatred indicate foreseeable harm. Since Mrs. Jernyngham explicitly represents the subversion of the social order

that these women fear, she undermines the rightness of male domination by her manner of living independently.

The basis of the group's conflict with Mrs. Jernyngham lies in her non-conformist nature versus their overwhelming desire to reconcile their negligible status to social standards of respectability. To emphasize society's judgment against them and their extension of it upon another, Macnamara depicts its final manifestation in Mrs. Jernyngham's death by falling. The women's concerted umbrage has originated from their need to preserve a false estimation of self rather than from any explicit ambition to harm another. Yet, they fear this individual's demonstration of independence since they remain deeply rooted in society's judgment.

The women subsequently repeat history's greatest atrocity against women as they call Mrs. Jernyngham a witch. Macnamara ties religion with witchcraft in her drama, just as historical identification of women as witches has always shown a tendency to distort religious precepts to arrive at these conclusions.

The incidence of the women's violence within the play therefore fuses their malicious act with historical ramifications of misogyny. Mrs. Jernyngham's death is caused by the women's decision not to warn her about the missing piece of railing and reflects the consequences that often await women who demonstrate independence from the patriarchal mode. In the 1920s world especially, women who exhibited signs of self-determination were regarded as odd. Therefore, Mrs. Jernyngham is effectively executed by those who cannot bear her representation of independence from the

social order. Though the women of the boarding house show signs of being discomfited just after Mrs. Jernyngham's fall, Macnamara has them quickly return to patterns of denial and blame and thus emphasizes the stronghold that society exerts upon them. Macnamara leaves the audience members with a sense of remorse about the consequences of these women's isolation from society.

In these three feminist plays, the women characters demonstrate a greater awareness of the role that they occupy within social constructs. They also explore philosophical concepts of arbitrary truths and learn better ways of handling newly observed realms of possibility. The play underscores Miss Pelling's manner of asserting her opinion forthrightly to representatives of authority and thereby challenging prohibitive notions of truth. Her assertiveness contrasts with Mrs. Bridger's manner of accepting oppressive forces. Yet, the latter woman's ability to regain her voice is celebrated by the playwright as she stands up to those that undermine her. The Curate's momentary relinquishment of status proves to be a hopeful sign of an increase in his awareness of others. For a brief interval at least, he becomes cognizant of people and situations that do not fit into his prescribed realm. The play's ending brings about hopefulness that Mrs. Bridger will continue in her quest for greater self-realization.

Macnamara's *Love-Fibs* conveys women's subordinate position within traditional male/female relationships. Since men have learned habits of controlling others by their traditional occupation of leadership roles, they have also developed a penchant for critique and assessment of others as part of that role. With men as

creators of truths, women have been forced to retain a status as the created or defined. Despite Jinny's initial fear, she shows the greatest transformation of a female character within these three dramas. As George stands outside looking in for the first time, he shows resolve to find new ways to make their relationship work.

In *The Witch*, Macnamara illustrates the results of women's refusal to develop greater awareness and tolerance as they become stagnant in their lives and patterns of thought. Unyielding in their beliefs, some women become stilted by their mounting rage toward self and others. Inevitably, these women realize little opportunity for growth and instead shift downward toward greater corruption of self by upholding patriarchal beliefs that reinforce their own oppression. Thus, these women prevent better prospects from coming to them.

Although socialism grew along with many other groups of liberal inclination, the 1920s indicates an estrangement from feminist and liberal thought as home and hearth became considered the preeminent place of refuge for recuperation from the stress of war. The subject matter of Macnamara's dramas proves remarkable for the time period, as does her style of realistic presentation that is interpolated with metonymic language. Macnamara presages the Brechtian "exercise in complex seeing" (Stowell, 101); not satisfied to remain within the confines of realism, Macnamara imbues her settings with depth of meaning, and utilizes shapes to accentuate symbolic meanings. Furthermore, Macnamara shows a particular gift for creating witty yet acerbic styles of dialogue. Like Shaw, her dramas become centered on conflicts of ideologies.

Macnamara's work reinforces Helene Keyssar's reiteration of the feminist saying that for women, the personal is political. Within Keyssar's definition of manifestation, women's drama does not reside on recognition scenes about "what is" but instead "asserts the possibilities for change, roles and role-playing" (Keyssar, xiv). In *Light-Gray or Dark?*, *The Witch*, and *Love-Fibs*, Macnamara shows how the women characters look at the world anew and begin to evaluate whether their role in it is oppressive or fulfilling. Correspondingly, she allows these women characters to take on new roles or suffer the consequences of rigidity. Maes-Jelinek characterizes the 1920s as a time when writers address the "collapse of the old world and the rejection by the individual of the meaningless standards which thwarted its freedoms" (Maes-Jelinek (2). Likewise, Billie Melman calls this decade a "chorus of discordant voices" (11). Both of these phrases inform themes of Macnamara's dramas in which the difficulty of transition proves challenging especially for women who would change the "gender rules" in a world in which the trend is to revert to conservatism.

Chapter Five: Macnamara's Adaptations of 19th Century Novels for the Stage

Toward the end of her life, Macnamara nostalgically returned to the setting of her Victorian childhood years to examine how her family life had been shaped by nineteenth century thought patterns. Her play *I Have Five Daughters* (1936) was based upon Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), and *The Miss Dodsons That Were* (1947) was derived from a section of George Eliot's *Mill on the Floss* (1859). The third play that she adapted in 1943 had the same name as Elizabeth Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters* (1866) and Nugent Monck successfully produced the play at his Maddermarket Theatre in Norwich, England. For the Austen play, Macnamara received a lifetime annuity of 200 pounds. Furthermore, it has recently been incorporated into the Burke-Austen Collection in Baltimore, Maryland and is still selected for production by amateur and semi-professional theatres in England and America. Macnamara's adaptations flourished perhaps because she proved able to retain each novelist's style while placing her own brand of wit and wisdom onto each piece. Her Victorian upbringing brought the intensity of personal attachment to the dramas while her twentieth century adult life allowed enough distance of space and time to make commentary upon the dramatic situation possible.

I Have Five Daughters

Macnamara's adaptation of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* for London's Stage Society was first produced as a "morning room comedy" or a living room comedy. In 1944, it appeared on the playbill with George Bernard Shaw's *The Doctor's*

Dilemma. It is obvious that members of the Society recognized the readiness of Macnamara's works for the stage with the level of technical support in costuming and setting that her production apparently received from the Stage Society. Yet, critics of this first production most notably praised the playwright's fullness of character development as well as the immediacy of her dramatic dialogue. Contemporary reviewer E. Martin Browne appreciated the artistry of the adaptation:

The remarkable feat of compression and research has resulted in an extremely workmanlike play which no society should omit to consider. Here, Elizabeth is not the heroine: all five daughters have good parts, and the Bennet family is a lively entity, vividly of its period. The title gives the theme of the play, which is made to afford scope for both humor and pathos, mixed in stimulating proportions, and the story of the book is clearly developed, the balance between its components, being so well held that one is always kept excited (Clipping, nd, Macnamara collection).

The reviewer notices the verisimilitude of Macnamara's piece and that all parts work together to make a coherent whole. Furthermore, his commentary about the playwright creating six substantial parts for women actors is important as a practical feminist step.

The reviewer's commentary upon the language reveals that Macnamara appreciated Austen's intricacy of language enough to preserve its original form. Since Austen's novels were written for oral readings during family gatherings, she developed a distinguished ability to compose brilliant dialogue for her characters. Macnamara took advantage of Austen's proclivity for developing lively speech patterns and fully magnified the author's language in her adaptations for the stage. Austen's works have often been regarded as one of the

greatest paradoxes of the Victorian world due to the complexity of her language and multiplicity of implied meaning in her works. Macnamara made her contribution to the adaptation by placing emphasis or accentuation where it best suited her purposes.

As Austen acknowledges the limitations of individual perceptions in her characterization of Elizabeth, she prefigures Lacan's theories that our unconscious can be shaped, but not fully contained, by language. When considering Lacan's insistence of the provisional nature of words, Austen's language becomes all the more remarkable for her striking ability to evoke many signifiers through wordplay. The novelist's complexity of language must have held particular appeal for Macnamara as she sought to highlight the inconsistencies of the Victorian world. Austen goes beyond a limited system of signifiers and proposes that knowledge of self and world can not be conclusive or inflexible. In her analysis of structure and theme in *Pride and Prejudice*, Folsom observes, "On page after page, Austen shows that objects, events, and people's behavior look different when viewed from different perspectives" (101).

Julia Prewitt Brown comments upon the ambiguity and intensity of Austen's prose as she writes that, "Pride and Prejudice is an exhilarating work because it turns us back continually on life by showing us the failure of language and the individual mind to capture life's unexpectedness" (55). Brown points to the opening sentence of the novel because it exemplifies Austen's style and hence

the contrariety of analysis that her work occasions, "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife" (Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 1). Brown surmises that depending upon the reader's inclination, the line could be read as a straightforward supposition, an ironic statement, or anything in between as she explains, "No matter how we read it, its finality is its irony (or comedy): it holds its truth and the resistance to its truth in one- the quintessential stance of ironic comedies" (Brown, 53).

Twentieth century critics began to regard Austen's work as satirical. Austen worked in subtleties of expression in order that her ideas could be more readily acceptable to those who held onto tradition. As Claudia Johnson concludes, "Austen's silence {on political subjects} was an enabling rather than inhibiting strategy. Austen may have realized that any presentation of an overt feminist agenda could have reduced her to scorn. As Johnson further surmises, "Under the pressure of intense reaction, they (women writers of the early nineteenth century} developed stylistic techniques which enabled them to use politically charged material in an exploratory and interrogative, rather than hortatory and prescriptive manner" (xxi). Austen, whether by necessity or preference, found it useful to encase ideology within aesthetic literature rather than expounding political agendas directly.

By adapting Austen's work, Macnamara found an outlet for artistic expression of her ideas without alienating the mainstream population. Although

the atmosphere of the early twentieth century was less prohibitive for women, Macnamara may have felt it beneficial to adapt a work already well received. Like Austen, she could parody certain aspects of a world merely by recreating them. Although a dedicated Fabian socialist, pacifist, and feminist, it may have been helpful for her to subvert her political agenda. She knew that many people still took a disparaging view of the growing feminist movement and considered it an extremist cause; many traditional women still felt uncomfortable associating with feminism. Therefore, Macnamara could introduce her talent to broader audiences and convey her ideology through Austen's ingenuity of language without being overtly political.

Virginia Woolf was one of the first critics to depart from earlier interpretations of Austen, "To Woolf, Austen was from the very start a committed artist "writing for everybody, for nobody, for our age, and for her own" and the most salient quality of her artistry is the effrontery of her laughter: "The girl of fifteen is laughing, in her corner, at the world" (Johnson, 29). Woolf's analysis of Austen presented a startling contradiction to those who believed that her purpose was to validate the world she knew. In accordance with Woolf's observations, scholars find Austen to be a quiet subversive who challenges the normalcy of every aspect of her world. The emphasis of Macnamara's adaptations coincides with Woolf's view and presents the normalcy of such a world as abnormal.

Austen's work remained controversial though as nineteenth century reviewers had expressed appreciation that the author stayed in her "rightful place within a woman's realm and away from more complex subject matter" (Johnson, xv). To show the range of different interpretations that Austen's work incurred, many early critics believed that Austen shared the mission of such nineteenth century writers as Hannah Moore who wrote the counter-revolutionary treatise for women entitled, "Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education" (Johnson, 19). In her pamphlet, she delineates strict codes of behavior for women and strongly advocates their subordination within marriage as the only means of maintaining the stability of family and society (Johnson, 19).

In the nineteenth century, Emerson defined Austen as a "sterile upholder of social conformities and social ironies, as an author who could not celebrate the soul's freedom from societal conventions, but Lionel Trilling countered his claim with the contention that Austen employed morality as a style rather than a code of conduct. Importantly Macnamara's version of Austen coincides with Auerbach's summation that, "Jane Austen's artistic world does indeed call insistent attention to its own limitations, but not, I feel in the spirit of contented resignation that these critics define" (Auerbach, 10). Unlike the novels and conduct books by Hannah Moore and Jane West that "advanced the strictest program for female subordination and the most repressive standards of female propriety to counteract the influence of progressive ideas about women"

(Johnson, 16). Austen's voice has been interpreted as one who took exception to many aspects of the life that she knew. Macnamara chose Austen's novels for their refinement in presentation of new ideas about women.

In her chosen title for her adaptation, *I Have Five Daughters*, Macnamara focuses upon the mother's position in relation to her daughters, husband, and society as a whole. Apparently, Mrs. Bennet has internalized the Victorian agenda for upper class women and believes that her daughters must follow along the same lines. As a product of the system that continues to exploit her, Macnamara describes Mrs. Bennet as, 'A woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper.....when she is discontented, she fancies herself nervous... the business of her life is to get her daughters married; its solace visiting and news' (9). Macnamara indicates that Mrs. Bennet reacts to constraints imposed upon her by becoming dependent and helpless. 'I'm not fit to be left alone for hours at a stretch. The only one who ever loved me was my poor dear Lyddie, and it's oh so many months since I've been without her? (In shrill anger) Can none of you be at the trouble to tell me how many months since Lyddie went to Brighton?' (Macnamara, *I Have Five Daughters*, 67).

Taking the cue from their father, the girls have acquired an image of their mother as an irrelevant figure to be either tolerated or catered to. Although they are respectful on the surface level, it seems to be more out of decorum than sincere regard. Their mother's behavior sometimes mortifies her daughters,

Elizabeth: Oh Jane! How can Momma behave as she does?

Jane: Her nerves do make her inclined to be irritable.

Elizabeth: I don't mind her nerves! It's her way of fishing for eligible young men with a great trawling net! Mr. Darcy obviously saw what she was about (26).

For her favorite daughter, Lydia, Mrs. Bennet's compulsion to have her daughters married off quickly has backfired since she has married a rather villainous older man who has taken her away from home. One wonders whether Lydia has internalized the projected role so that it will be detrimental for her. It is suggested that she has become subjected to a man who will treat her with even more disregard than her mother is currently treated by her father.

Although the focus of the play is not so much upon the father of the Bennet family, even though it showcases the patriarchal system, it is the father's absence and few droll remarks that speak so strongly about him. He neglects his wife and daughters by withdrawing into his study quite often, and though he can not be bothered by the daily activities, he ridicules his wife's manner of handling things. In a teasing fashion, he indicates his bearing towards her, "I observed another young man with Mr. Bingley. You must try to find out, Mrs. Bennet and what he is worth" (18). Of course, he refers to her preoccupation with finding husbands for her daughters condescendingly. As Macnamara explains their marital relationship in the script notes, "He long ago decided that he could endure the folly of his wife only by making her the butt of his wit" (14). By finding it difficult to focus or even comprehend her husband's sarcasm, Mrs.

Bennet allows her nervous condition to work as a defense mechanism for blocking out truths that would be perhaps too difficult to accept.

Elizabeth Refuses by Macnamara

In a one act version of the play that Macnamara entitles *Elizabeth Refuses*, the young woman resolutely rejects the idea of marrying Mr. Collins, the beneficiary of the family's fortune. Throughout the play, Macnamara highlights her inclination to develop her intellect, question her world, and make decisions based upon her own ethical judgment. Although Collins feels immense pride in himself for the gallantry of his intentions to keep the money in the family through marriage, Elizabeth is revolted by his air of presumption. Despite dramatic overtures from Collins and protestations from her mother, Elizabeth cannot accept Collins' offer. Instead, she shows an independence of spirit and determination to enter marriage as an equal partnership in contrast with the role of sacrificial martyr that her mother exemplifies. When she meets Darcy, she challenges many aspects of his life until she becomes convinced of his good character. At that point, she agrees to marriage and it has therefore been on her own terms. Both Macnamara and Austen make bold statements through their characterizations of Elizabeth.

Since she never married, Macnamara, like Jane Austen, knew about family life only through her childhood experiences and by remaining bound to her first family as an adult. When we consider E. Martin Browne's critique once again, it

is important to realize that he is comparing Macnamara's adaptation with two other adaptations of Austen's novel. Therefore, it is significant that Browne makes a special commendation of Macnamara's portrayal of the Bennet family as he writes that it is 'a lively entity, vividly of its period.' The structure and dynamic of the Bennet family closely resembles the reports of Macnamara's family left by relatives. Perhaps Browne's conclusion that the play left the, "the impression of absolute unity and genuineness" stems from Macnamara's familiarity with this kind of setting and situation.

The Miss Dodsons That Were

As the playwright takes on Victorian topics for study, her representation of the Dodson sisters from George Eliot's *Mill on the Floss* warrants commentary. Eliot's characters are as detailed as Austen's, and Macnamara must have found them to be colorful representations of Victorian life for the stage. Although Eliot delineates a middle-class society, her pastoral populace remains just as bound to their community and its values as Austen's. Although they are secondary characters, the Dodsons hold great significance in the novel since they represent the prevalence of the practical materialism that largely governs the inhabitants of the small English town of St. Oggs during the early nineteenth century. George Eliot conveys an admiration for the Dodson women's tenacity of will but she also suggests that their strict adherence to established values tends to crush those with a more idealistic nature like young Maggie, the novel's primary character.

With their absolute convictions of right and wrong, the Dodsons often pronounce their judgments upon the inadequacies of others. Still, they reveal a softer side as they offer advice or help in times of need. The novelist contrasts the sisters' outer context of reality with Maggie's more introspective and subjective approach to life. As Elizabeth Ermarth explains, "The Dodsons' faithfulness to admitted rules results in two equally dangerous habits: an utter inability to question themselves and a correlative habit of questioning everybody else" (588)

Macnamara follows George Eliot's intention to portrayal of the sisters with both humor and sympathy regarding their idiosyncrasies. The action of Macnamara's playlet revolves around the hypochondria of Mrs. Pullet, the former Sophia Dodson. As she tells her sister, Mrs. Glegg, about her latest visit to the doctor, she reveals her preoccupation with her perceived illness. Pullet and her husband, who Glegg refers to as "an uncommon patient little husband" (5) keep all of her empty medicine bottles arranged on a shelf in order that everyone who sees them may become aware of her long term suffering. In Macnamara's playlet, Mrs. Pullet enjoys the drama of reporting that the new young doctor has just "thrown up her case" (5) As she explains, "What he said was not meant to alarm me, but I saw through his device" (5). She tells her sisters that the doctor has told her that what she needs instead of "tonics, cordials, drops, lozenges, lotions, pick-me-ups, potions, plasters, and pills" is a

reason to run across the room with excitement (5). Of course, he indicates her illness is more psychological than medical, but she would rather believe that he meant her illness is beyond cure. With a morbid focus, she languidly comments upon friends and neighbors who have recently died and expects her own death at any time.

To further characterize Mrs. Pullet, we must be aware of the great satisfaction that she apparently obtains from keeping all of her valuable items under lock and key. Ironically, she often experiences difficulty remembering where her things are kept and they remain inaccessible to her. Her rituals for keeping things locked takes on ridiculous proportions as she instructs her sister, Bessie, to help her: "We'll pop this into the oak-chest for now...It's empty and the key's in the workbox. The key o' the workbox is in that inlay box. And the key o' the inlay box is on my bunch"(12). Turning potentially enjoyable experiences into causes for concern in her spirit of gloom, she debates whether the trimming on her new bonnet is even as she exclaims, "It's the hardest thing in life, to make up your mind for sure about the trimming on a bonnet" (13). As they unlock the many boxes to retrieve the bonnet for a second look, Mrs. Pullet wonders whether she'll live to wear it. Macnamara, like Eliot, emphasizes the irony of focus upon hoarding material goods for the pride of acquisition. Rather than allowing her valuables to add pleasure to her life, Mrs. Pullet only allows

herself to be content with the knowledge of having them stored away for safe keeping.

Mrs. Glegg takes great pride in her judgment and becomes easily angered if others do not respond gratefully to her pronouncements. Blaming her sister, Bessie, for the mistake of marrying a Tulliver or "a man that was to become a bankrupt!" she considers the taint upon the family name to be of much greater concern than the feelings of her sister over the painful experience (8). With a furious reaction to any suggestion that she provide her sister's husband with any financial relief, she claims, "Lend my money to pay for lawings! Not on no account! Spile the fortin' I've pinched and scraped to leave behind! Never! Never!" (7) Professing her revulsion for "lawings", Mrs. Glegg reveals her adherence to another traditional belief of the Dodson clan---- that going to the law is wrong---as she reprimands her sister, "Haven't I done my duty by you as your eldest sister, Bessie, and warned you to keep Tulliver off lawing?" (6)

Considering any excess of feeling a weakness, Mrs. Glegg likes to remind others of their obligation to duty. She firmly asserts that her inheritance will be divided evenly among family members upon her death as is fit and proper for a Dodson. Annoyed with her sister Pullet for giving into her condition, she upbraids her soon after entering the house by saying, "However low you may feel, Sister Pullet, it's hardly becoming to be traipsing about in a wrapper and night-cap this hour of the morning" (3). Reprimanding both of her younger

sisters for their diversions from the main topic of conversation, Mrs. Glegg becomes annoyed at their frivolous commentary. "Lord ha' mercy, this chatter o' skins and hair! Here's my sister's husband going headlong to ruin, and no way to prevent the disgrace to the family" (7). Seeing life as something that can always be planned and calculated, Mrs. Glegg finds it hard to sympathize with those who fail to heed their obligations.

After Mrs. Tulliver enters and exclaims her great shame and sorrow over the danger that her family is in, she soon reveals her manner of internalizing the Dodson values. Macnamara writes in script notes that as Tulliver enters the room, she "seats herself and masters her sorrow" (6). Expressing concern for the possibility of losing her monogrammed linen, silver teapot, and embroidered tablecloths, she suggests that they designate her status as a former Dodson. Though her two older sisters dominate her, she makes an occasional retort to their assertions toward her. For instance, she comes to her husband's rescue after Sister Glegg confidently asserts that he's certain to lose the case. As Glegg lectures about the uselessness of lawsuits, Bessie eventually breaks down into tears revealing the power that the mention of the Dodson standards holds in her life. Unable to stand against her eldest sister's admonitions, she accedes to avoid further difficulty and explains how she's warned her husband against such behavior. "I'm not one to set meself up against my husband's judgment," I've said, "but whatever you do, don't go to law" (6). Though Pullet mentions the

disgrace to Bessie, Mrs. Glegg brings the conversation back to the importance of the family name: "What a disgrace to the family! Never yet was it known among the Dodsons that one of them should marry a man as'd bring her to beggary!" (7).

In his article, Darrell Mansell points to the presence of tragic elements in George Eliot's *Mill on the Floss* as well as in her other fiction. Maggie Tulliver exemplifies the type of individual that is not well suited to a world that is ruled by the "inexorable law of consequences" and thus must face a tragic fate (Mansell, 168). Instead of making "prudent calculations", her tragic characters display strong temperaments, depth of conviction, and passion for causes that prove detrimental to them (Mansell, 168). In contrast, the small-minded Dodsons of *Mill on the Floss* are much better suited to a world that promises reward to anyone whose bank account is on the increase. Mansell indicates Eliot's admiration for George Bray's *Philosophy of Necessity* (1841) in which he gives a person's "duty" a moral weight (Mansell, 159). In a letter of appreciation to Bray, Eliot corroborates his theories by asserting that "the mind presents itself under the same invariableness of antecedent and consequence as all other phenomena" (Mansell, 159). Revealing her own struggle to conform to the Victorian emphasis on duty and the pressures of imposed standards, Eliot was known to struggle with bouts of depression and anxiety and evidenced, like her heroine, Maggie, the kind of vulnerability of one that has "a highly-strung,

hungry nature" (Mansell, 374). Through her life's work, Eliot reveals that these traditions are as much a part of her as inborn tendencies and firmly insists in the denial of self to attain a greater good.

Eliot responded to a 19th century reviewer that maligned the characters by explaining that she intended to give a fair treatment of all kinds of personalities:

I have certainly fulfilled my intention very badly if I made the Dodsons appear 'mean and uninteresting' or made the payments of one's debts appear a contemptible virtue in comparison with any sort of Bohemian qualities. So far as my feelings are concerned, no one class of persons or form of characters are held up to reprobation or to exclusive admiration. Tom is painted with as much love and pity as Maggie, and I am so far from hating the Dodsons myself, that I am rather aghast to find them ticketed with such very ugly adjectives (Haight, 299).

Yet Nina Auerbach finds that Eliot reacts bitterly to the Dodson women and enjoys the exaggeration of their eccentricities, "As for the Dodsons, occasional pious commentary about their honest virtues does not obscure the narrator's glee at the overwhelming ridiculousness of Aunt Pullet and Aunt Glegg and their muttering husbands" (Auerbach, 153). Since the novel is largely biographical, we know that these characters are based upon Eliot's relatives. While she may have intended to portray them evenly, her own sentiments perhaps mitigated her intention.

In Macnamara's treatment of the Dodson sisters in "The Miss Dodsons That Were", she shows the same delight in her emphasis of the aunt's idiosyncrasies. In her portrayal, she helps Eliot fulfill her intention to portray the

sisters with love. In Macnamara's version, the sisters become even more outlandish than threatening since they cannot be drawn in the context of young Maggie's oppression. Though we witness Bessie Tulliver's intimidation by her sisters, Macnamara's way of ending the piece emphasizes the impudence of the subjugated sister. As she tries on the bonnet and runs to greet Mr. Pullet, Mrs. Pullet forgets her "low sperits" and runs after her (4). Ending the piece on a triumphant note for Sister Tulliver, Macnamara underscores Pullet's hypochondria. Having fun with the characters as she also stresses Mrs. Glegg's flashy temper, Macnamara exposes Eliot's accentuation of these sisters' foibles and weaknesses perhaps more than the author felt comfortable enough to admit.

Nugent Monck and The Maddermarket Theatre

In 1921, W. Nugent Monck opened a theatre in Norwich, England that extended the experimental trend into the provinces. As part of the modern movement, Norwich departed from the Victorian age's actor-manager system and favored non-commercialized theatre. Realizing the potential of drama to exert influence over audience members, Monck sought to create works of literary and artistic merit. Especially remembered for his methods of staging Shakespeare that incorporated William Poel's practices of using the full text and minimal scenery, Monck's theatre eventually earned an international reputation (Hildy, 1). His theatre building in Norwich was the first permanent re-creation of an Elizabeth style playhouse in England. In a letter to Monck, George

Bernard Shaw wrote, "There is nothing in British theatrical history more extraordinary than your creation of the Maddermarket Theatre" (qtd. in Hildy 1).

Monck founded the Norwich players in 1910. First performing in his house and then in rented spaces, they had become successful long before a theatre building was constructed. As Hildy asserts, "For Monck, the beautiful simplicity and clear effectiveness of Poel's *Everyman* was the ideal toward which all productions should aim" (Hildy, 16). Monck was successful at training both his actors and audience members to appreciate a more austere style (Hildy, 16). Monck moved toward symbolic settings. Instead of providing the audience with elaborate sets, he hoped to spark their imaginations by suggestive pieces. As Hildy summarizes:

Pictorial realism tends to stifle imagination and thus works against most drama, verse drama in particular. Much of the language in a poetic play is intended to evoke images in the listener's mind and act as its own illustration. If the visual picture conflicts or simply provides an adequate substitute, such language becomes almost superfluous and does not hold the audience's attention (Hildy, 23-24).

Instead of intricate scenery, Monck used tapestry curtains, brilliant costumes, and mood lighting to stimulate audience members' imagination (Hildy, 24).

By their 1927-1928 season, Monck's theatre had earned an international reputation and had been asked to tour America and Germany (Hildy, 109). One of the stage designs had won an award in Paris and was exhibited in Oxford and London (Hildy, 109). The London Press spoke highly of the theatre and they had

been the only amateur company to be asked to perform at the London Theatre Arts Club (Hildy, 109). During the 1930s, the reputation of the Maddermarket Theatre continued to grow. Norwich newspapers admitted, “Norwich is known chiefly in the United states, for example, not for its old streets, its cathedral, or even for its manufacturing, but as the place where they run the Maddermarket Theatre (qtd. in Hildy, 114). In 1929, the Norwich Players made successful appearances at the Canterbury Festival which received coverage from over 200 newspapers. As Franklin Hildy outlines, “Over 6,000 people had seen their work and left with impressions of a level of performance that was uniformly exceptional. The Norwich Players had set a standard by which other groups would gauge their own work” (113). It was this theatre that chose Macnamara’s adaptation of Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Wives and Daughters* for production in December of 1949, a year before Macnamara’s death.

Wives and Daughters is set in provincial England before the Reform Bill of 1832. Unlike most of Gaskell’s novels of social critique, this story seems at first to be merely a romantic novel about a girl’s coming of age. Yet, social critique is interwoven into the novel’s evocation of class distinctions, related snobbery, and the economic valuation of the landscape. Henry James particularly appreciated *Wives and Daughters* and the year that the novel appeared, he commented upon “the gentle skill with which the reader is slowly involved in the tissue of the story” (qtd. in Wright, 186). The town of Hollingford faces the encroachment of

the industrial age and the move away from the simplicity of agriculture. In her novel, Gaskell treats “the seeming accession of social and moral knowledge” (qtd. in Wright, 186). The characters of Gaskell’s novels not only grow as individuals but they also develop greater awareness of the new world that is slowly changing the way of life as it was known before. The story is told through the perspective of Molly Gibson, the main character. Gaskell embarks upon a psychological study of the character that reflects her awareness of the social and political changes that take place in provincial England as it becomes modernized and industrialized.

Macnamara must have been drawn to Gaskell’s portrait of the lovely Molly Gibson, the novel’s main character. As the daughter of the town’s respected doctor, her family is designated as middle class and is therefore made to feel inferior to the landed gentry who have claim to generations of aristocracy. When Molly attends a party at The Towers, the home of the established Cumnor family of Hollingford, she finds herself disappointed by her experience of Society at the event and longs to return home. The people of the town still display a feudal allegiance to the Cumnor family due to their wealth and heritage, but Molly feels disillusioned as she watches the people eat and engage in meaningless conversation.

During Molly’s extended visit to the Hamley family, as her father takes care of personal matters, class distinctions once again become an issue.

Macnamara likely chose the novel for adaptation due to its social commentary. Squire Hamley and his wife remain cautious of allowing her presence near their sons due to her middle-class background. As much as they like Molly, they do not regard her as marriage material for them. Frequently boasting of his sons' attendance at Cambridge, the Squire remains fixed in his assumption of class differences. He often comments upon the physical characteristics of his son, Osborne, who most closely resembles his side of the family that is descended from a prominent Scottish clan.

Later in the story, Molly's father marries Hyacinth Kirkpatrick. After she disparagingly comments upon Mr. Gibson's habits of eating bread and cheese or drinking tea from a saucer, she asks him to reserve such habits for the kitchen since she considers them vulgar. Once again, the haughtiness of the upper class mentality is indicated by the novelist. The new Mrs. Gibson, now Molly's stepmother, has a manner that is reflective of the upper classes. Gaskell presents the woman as "the humorous and ironical appraisal of a vain and hopelessly petty nature" (qtd. in Wright, 187). She works hard to refurbish the house and change the way that Molly dresses and conducts herself according to Society's conventions. As Lansbury writes of the character, "Any decision she makes is always reduced to a consideration of her own comfort, but this is never done directly" (205-206).

Macnamara enjoyed depicting an instance of Victorian girlhood in which Molly's father, who shows genuine love for her, finds difficulty accepting her maturity as she changes into a young woman. He gives instruction to her governess about her education as follows:

Don't teach Molly too much: she must sew, and read, and write, and do her sums; but I want to keep her a child, and if I find more learning desirable for her, I'll see about giving it to her myself. After all, I am not sure that reading or writing is necessary... however we must yield to the prejudices of society, Miss Eyre, and so you may teach the child to read (Gaskell, *Wives and Daughters*, 32).

When one of his medical students expresses romantic interest in Molly, he becomes alarmed and determines to send her away for a visit. Molly's father represents the Victorian male as protective and patronizing to his daughter.

Macnamara appreciated in-depth characterization and Elizabeth Gaskell sharpens her image of Molly by a contrast with her new stepsister, Cynthia Kirkpatrick. Since Cynthia has attended a boarding school in Paris for most of her life, she has developed a degree of independence and sophistication that Molly knows nothing of. Admiring her new sister for her confidence and forthright qualities, Molly becomes willing to make personal sacrifices for Cynthia's happiness when she gets into difficulty. The novel contrasts Molly's goodness and simplicity with Cynthia's poise and cynicism toward life. By observing Cynthia, Molly realizes that she must sometimes look after herself instead of always putting others first. Cynthia's show of charm and flirtatious

with men is traced by the novelist to a childhood in which she experienced little love or affection. In comparison, Molly shows genuine integrity and the ability to experience deeper feeling. These characters must have come alive in Macnamara's able hand as a dramatist.

As Josie Billington indicates, Molly has turned her feelings of exclusion in society into a "complex, bridging sympathy" for others (70). She comforts others as a natural way of expressing her character. As Molly says to Cynthia,

You're over-tired," continued she, sitting down on the bed and taking Cynthia's passive hand, and stroking it softly – a mode of caressing that had come down to her from her mother – whether as an hereditary instinct or as a lingering remembrance of the tender ways of the dead woman, Mr. Gibson often wondered himself when he observed it" (Gaskell, 344).

According to Billington, this passage not only indicates the characterization of Molly, but also shows the impact of the past upon the present. The past remains a significant part of the story as it impresses its conventions and traditions upon the contemporary world that is changing, growing, and expanding into something new.

In Terence Wright's book about Elizabeth Gaskell, he detects mild protest as a characteristic of the novel in which most of the characters are grieved or confused over something or someone. He detects a tone of complaint through the book, a dissatisfaction of the way things are that is mixed with a fear of things unknown and forthcoming, "a strain of restlessness and longing,"

(Uglow, 603). Just as her characters observe the multifaceted aspect of the world around them, they show the same complexity within themselves. As Mrs. Gaskell once wrote to a friend about the conflicting aspects of her own personality, "One of my Mes is, I do believe, a true Christian – (only people call her a socialist and communist), another of my mes is a wife and mother... Now that's my social self, I suppose. Then again I've another self with a full taste for beauty and convenience which is pleased on its own account" (qtd. in Wright, 187). Society and human character are both shown as dynamic and manifold, a mixture of past and present, a combination of vice and virtue.

Macnamara must have found a rich source in *Wives and Daughters* to draw from for her adaptation for the stage. This novel of social critique with feminist implications must have suited Macnamara's sensibility well. That Nugent Monck chose the script for production at his Maddermarket Theatre speaks explicitly of the script's merit since he was known to have an ear for the way dialogue should be spoken and sought a sense of musicality in the overall performance. Known also for his taste for the visual, Monck must have found the script's early nineteenth century setting as a rich resource for visual imagery. Like Austen and Eliot, Gaskell brings many aspects of the Victorian world to life.

Specific facts about productions of these plays are unknown, although a clipping in the collection corroborates that her adaptation of *I Have Five Daughters* obtained an elaborate production (Clipping, Macnamara collection).

This play was also used in the United States by university theatres and there is a clipping that confirms that a production of the play won an award at an American College Theatre Festival event (Clipping, Macnamara collection). Since Nugent Monck's theatre was experimental, his selection of Macnamara's adaptation of Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters* indicates his desire to produce classics upon the stage. Perhaps, these plays received more productions because of the familiarity and acceptability of the novels that they were adapted from. In contrast, some of Macnamara's more radical feminist works have no evidence of production so perhaps it was difficult to accept a woman's rendition of controversial issues.

Macnamara may have been interested in revisiting nineteenth century themes partially because it was a popular trend at the time. In the unidentified clipping of the Austen piece that is found in the Bristol collection, the title reads "Three Dramatists in Search of an Author". In this article, Macnamara's rendition is compared with two other stage adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*. Another possible reason for Macnamara's interest in recreating nineteenth century settings may have been based upon an interest in how the prevalent trends of this former world impacted her own. Since one relative describes her father as a "typical Victorian patriarch", it may have been important for Macnamara to identify the trends that exerted an influence upon him. To recreate that world upon the stage may have had therapeutic benefit for her.

In the Jane Austen piece, Macnamara examines the same kind of mother/daughter conflict that she apparently experienced with her own mother. As the mother figure in *Pride and Prejudice* looks to her daughters' for completion, she places great pressure upon them to succeed in the way that she thinks is best –and that is by each of them making a good marriage. If one of the daughters failed to attain that designation, their disillusionment would be compounded by the shame that comes with the awareness that they have also profoundly disappointed their mother. In her adaptation of George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*, Macnamara focuses upon the humor found in the Dodson sisters' tendency to criticize and find fault. While Macnamara does not depict the desolation experienced by the little girl who has been subjected to constant criticism by these well-meaning aunts, the cleverness of her adaptation indicates that she had a comprehensive knowledge of the context of the piece. One comes to understand that she must have experienced something similar with the presence of eccentric aunts who were made from the same mold and thus believed in the absolute rightness of their decrees. Finally, the portrayal of Molly Gibson in *Wives and Daughters* tells the story of a girl who desperately attempts to fit into her world although many aspects of it do not come as naturally to her as they are supposed to.

In Macnamara's selection of these three novels, the choices that she makes sheds light upon the reality of her childhood trials or disappointments as

described in letters by relatives. While the other plays speak of her hopes and dreams for a better future for women and the world, these adaptations speak of the world inside her, the world of her formative years, the world that she rebels against. Her adaptations may have been successful because of their mainstream popularity, however I believe that she also brought the world alive easily because it was full of sentiments that she knew so well from experience.

Although Jane Austen wrote *Pride and Prejudice* in the early part of the nineteenth century, the notion that young women should marry still exerted a stronghold in the latter part of the century. Likewise, the thought patterns of the “proper” Dodson sisters and the stepmother of Molly Gibson remained integral to the life of nineteenth century women. Apparently, Macnamara struggled against these beliefs throughout her life and may have come to terms with them more easily as she approached her old age. The struggles of young women who strive to meet the expectations of others are a thread that winds through each of these adaptations.

Chapter Six: Macnamara and Florence Nightingale

Florence Nightingale's life was indeed unusual for a Victorian woman, yet Victorians honored her work and created a legend around her. As Longford notes, "Florence Nightingale was the only woman among Lytton Strachey's four 'Eminent Victorians,' and at eighty-seven years old, she received the British Order of Merit, the first woman so honored" (85). And Boyd summarizes:

In 1856, the Nightingale power was at its height. Children were named after her; the Staffordshire potters put out a figure entitled 'Miss Nightingale' showing her standing resolutely beside a soldier whose arm is sportily encased in a polka-dotted sling; poets eulogized her (188).

In contrast to the legend surrounding Florence Nightingale, Margaret Macnamara addresses the tragic aspect of Nightingale's life and work in her play about the Crimean War nurse. The playwright features a woman's struggle to reconcile aspects of self with the expectations of others and shows how Nightingale's inner conflict manifested itself in physical illness and emotional strain. Macnamara's life, as a progressive woman, showed some of the same kinds of struggles as Nightingale's and thus Macnamara strived to create a more realistic portrayal of the woman in her drama instead of relying upon the legend. In Macnamara's depiction, a heroine of much greater intensity emerges than the Victorian paper dolls or plastic figurines of Florence Nightingale dared to represent.

Parallels in Macnamara's Life with Florence Nightingale

Though times had changed as the vote for women was sought, early twentieth century women still experienced many of the same kinds of difficulties as Victorian women. For instance, spinsterhood was still looked down upon in many ways and certain career choices were considered less appropriate for women than others. As Macnamara chose an unconventional career as a playwright in association with the theatre, it was likely that many people around her regarded her life's path with skepticism. Likewise, Macnamara's drama about Florence Nightingale underscores the information that reveals how the Crimean War nurse fought against personal anguish and depression while forging a pathway in life that family members and higher Victorian society disapproved of. Macnamara, like Nightingale, remained painfully conscious of her differences in a society that extolled women's domestic role as wife and mother and therefore struggled to maintain an acceptance of self in a social setting that showed misgivings about her life as a single woman. As both women continued to pursue their dreams despite self-doubt, both showed bouts of foreboding and inner anguish as they moved forward.

Both women failed to achieve personal fulfillment even though they continued to pursue their goals. After her return from the Crimea for instance, Florence Nightingale worked relentlessly for healthcare reform although she suffered from an illness that she had contracted while abroad. Her mother could

not understand her daughter's determination to continue to neglect her personal life for the sake of her beliefs and worried that her daughter was bent on ruining herself. In the same manner, Macnamara postponed the development of her private life in order that she might do what she considered to be her rightful duty to care for elderly family members and manage the household. In doing so, Macnamara perhaps forfeited personal opportunities and remained isolated from her peer group.

Due to conflicted thoughts of self perhaps, Florence Nightingale often shunned public recognition and personal sense of reward. For instance, as she returned home from the Crimea, she rushed to her parents' home and thus avoided the cheering crowds. Queen Victoria interpreted her shyness as modesty and, as part of Florence's image, gave "homage to the canonical Victorian female virtues" as part of Florence's image (Boyd, 187). In like manner, Macnamara may have achieved fame and fortune with her play about Florence Nightingale and other works if she had believed in her work more explicitly or brought it one step further. Instead, she allowed the opportunity to bypass her as she remained stymied by circumstances or continuous beliefs that the play needed more work. Like Florence who lived in isolation and self-renunciation, Macnamara allowed self-doubt to overtake her. In the same way that she brought out the tragic elements of Florence Nightingale's life in her play,

her own life showed a lack of personal fulfillment perhaps stemming from a belief that she did not deserve it.

To corroborate the play's potential, theatrical producers' appraisal of it will be delineated. That Captain Reginald Berkeley's play *The Lady with the Lamp* appeared on the West End at about the same time was an unfortunate circumstance that caused producers to suggest that the timing for the play was not right. According to Macnamara's niece, Anne Engels, George Bernard Shaw, among others, advised her to put the play aside for awhile to circulate again at a later date (Letter from Anne Engels, 1953). When an appropriate amount of time passed however, Macnamara apparently did not push the play forward strongly enough. True, new information about Florence Nightingale's life had become known and Macnamara worked to integrate it into the script. Yet, her neglect to pursue it more diligently perhaps reflects her self-doubt.

Without further speculation, here is what producers had to say about their impression of the drama. A reader for Maurice Browne, the British founder of Chicago's Little Theatre, showed particular appreciation for Macnamara's play as he wrote to her, "It's a real beauty, a specimen of chronicle drama as it should be: carefully selected, rich in fact, accurate, quiet, neatly contrived as regards to situation and brilliantly alive" (Letter to Macnamara, December 9, 1929).

Norman Marshall, a London producer, wrote to Macnamara about the play, "It makes Florence Nightingale a far more real and likable personal without

introducing Berkeley's very cheap device of a love interest," (Letter to Macnamara (June 4, 1929).

Helen Hayes expressed delight with the script though she turned down the role deeming it unsuitable as she confirmed, "It is a beautiful play: witty and touching and distinguished in every scene" (Letter to Macnamara, February 8, 1938). Finally, a reader for Amner Hall, another prominent London producer of the time, indicated that Mr. Hall found the play to be one of the "most interesting plays to be submitted to him" but then expressed his belief that there was little possibility for a successful run so soon after Captain Berkeley's play on the same theme (Letter to Macnamara, December 9, 1929).

Tyrone Guthrie, a personal friend of Macnamara's, expressed his admiration for the play after reading a first revision. He writes to Macnamara in 1931, "It is so much better than the ordinary run of plays, and yet has in it, I believe, the possibilities of popular success" (Letter to Macnamara, February 9, 1931). As had been suggested by several people, Macnamara put the play aside during which time much new information about Nightingale's life came out. Consequently, Macnamara believed that a major revision of the script was necessary in order that she might incorporate the new data. She worked with Guthrie on a second revision in the 1940s. In one letter, Guthrie made an effort to encourage her by suggesting that she come to London so that they could have "several, long leisurely, discursive talks" about the reshaping of the script

(Letter to Macnamara, nd).

There must have been talk of a film version of the play because the collection contains a scenario for a screenplay. In a 1947 letter from Guthrie, he encourages her again to keep working on the script as he writes, "I am extremely impressed by Flo Nightingale. It has remarkable force and quality" (Letter to Macnamara, October 19, 1947). Despite Guthrie's support and encouragement, Macnamara experienced difficulty completing the work due to her failing health as she was in her seventies (Letter from Anne Engels, nd). As a tribute to her efforts, this study of Macnamara's life and work will end with the analysis and discussion of her play about Florence Nightingale's life.

The Florence Nightingale Legend and the Victorian Feminine Ideal

Before embarking upon a study of the play and Nightingale's life, it is essential to delineate the standards to which a young woman of the nineteenth century was measured against. As Deborah Gorham indicates, "The characteristics of the ideal Victorian woman can be summed up in one word: she was *feminine*" (5). Queen Victoria set the standard in her depth of devotion to her husband, Prince Consort Albert and expressed disdain for the feminist movement. Many Victorians shared the Queen's sentiments and as fear of the feminist movement grew in Britain, Coventry Patmore's poem, "The Angel in the House" became pervasively popular since it reified the Victorian's ideal of the feminine woman in a domestic role. According to the separate spheres' ideal,

men belonged to the world of commerce and politics while women were to dedicate themselves to providing an atmosphere of love and rest for their husbands when they returned home weary from the world. As Patmore's poem indicates, women should be submissive to men as they were dependent upon them. As Gorham summarizes, "She (the Victorian woman) would be innocent, pure, gentle, and self-sacrificing. Possessing no ambitious strivings, she would be free of any trace of anger or hostility. More emotional than man, she was also more capable of self-renunciation" (Gorham, 4-5).

Unless it was necessary, women did not take paid employment outside of the home. It was considered preferable that a woman of middle to upper class stature remained within their parents' home until they married. In this social stratum, women participated in social events and charitable activities but kept their home life a priority. During leisure time at home, they could engage in music, painting, and needlework since servants did most of the housework. In lower middle-class homes, girls were expected to help with such housework as sewing, cooking, cleaning, and care of younger siblings.

Women who never married had the alternative of supporting themselves or remaining dependent in the household of their parents or relatives. Working as a governess was the most acceptable occupation for a girl or woman because it was done in a domestic setting. Nursing became a more acceptable profession toward the end of the century largely due to the reforms made by Florence

Nightingale. To indicate the entrance of women into the work force in the early decades of the twentieth century in comparison with nineteenth century,

Holcombe observes:

In the mid-nineteenth century, ladies who had to work for their living were a surplus and depressed minority, who were pitied and who pitied themselves. By 1914, middle-class working women, a respected and self-respecting group, were an essential part of the country's labour force (qtd. in Gorham, 30).

Throughout the century, the majority of women did menial labor outside of their homes to help sustain their family.

If women extended their domestic role to the larger world through charitable service, then their contributions to society could be considered acceptable. Three Victorian women who extend the angelic image of women to the service of humankind were Florence Nightingale, Octavia Hill, and Josephine Bulter. Their contributions were considered to be within the realm of the feminine ideal since they gave service to humankind. Just as the lady of the house exerted spiritual leadership over servants and children, these women who became heroes of the Victorian world extended the notion of the "lady of the house" to the public realm. In a popular Victorian book about household management, Isabella Beeton indicates the importance of women in their performance of domestic responsibilities as she correlated women's role in the home with Christian values:

As with the Commander of an Army, or with the leader of any enterprise, so it is with the mistress of a house. Her spirit will be seen through the

whole establishment and just in proportion as she performs her duties intelligently and thoroughly, so will her domestics follow in her path (qtd. in Boyd, 11).

Women were praised for their demonstration of “diligence, punctuality, thrift, and hospitality” when running a household (Boyd, 11).

Phillipa Levine writes of the integral connection between the womanly ideal and religious values. In the epistles of St. Paul, women’s submission to men was mandated. Early in the nineteenth century, the fear of revolution caused a rise in conservatism and religious revivalism. In this milieu, women were assigned the task of moral leadership in the home and this designation both elevated and delimited their status. With the responsibility of being a moral guide, a woman’s actions and attitudes were constantly measured. As Levine points out, women could use this designation to their benefit. “The sentiment of moral superiority became the leading edge of many women’s rights campaigns in this period” (Levine, 13). While women were honored for this position, if they deviated from this assigned function, they easily could be vilified.

The legend of Florence Nightingale fit with the angelic notions of womanhood. Nancy Boyd writes her interpretation of the legend:

The legend of Florence Nightingale contained much that people wanted to hear over and over again. It centred on two folk heroes the British soldier and the woman who serves him. It shows each in a noble light. Furthermore, it epitomized what the Victorians believed to be the ideal relationship between man and woman. The man to whom England owed her power and her wealth was long-suffering, brave, patient, and kind. The woman was hard-working and gentle; furthermore, she reached a

final fulfillment and happiness in a life of service, offering herself wholly to caring for the male (186-187).

Though she remained within the Victorian womanly ideal, she brought a new dimension to it as she showed how women could enter the world in a leadership role. Women did not have to wish to escape the clutches of domesticity, they could be intelligent and enterprising without shame. Still, their service had to be in the service of men.

The Real Life of Florence Nightingale

Most biographers of Florence Nightingale provide a vivid picture of her Victorian girlhood since it revealed so much about her. They find that young Florence resisted the inculcation of conservative values and the life of domesticity that her mother so wanted for her and did so at the expense of losing a positive identification with self. Her desire to have a career outside the home violated the standards for young Victorian women. Because of her father's Unitarian beliefs, Florence received a better education than most girls of her day since a Victorian girl was free to become a learned lady as long as her education "did not violate the norms of femininity" (Gorham, 24). Florence desired to utilize the education she had received for service outside of the home and by doing so, she transgressed codes of propriety and protested her mother's ideal of what was right.

The intensity of Nightingale's personality and her independence of spirit showed itself at a young age. A caricature of the Nightingales found in Elizabeth

Longford's *Eminent Victorian Women* illustrates Florence's relationship to her family. In the drawing, the tall figure of William Edward Nightingale (W.E.N.), Florence's father, strolls along with his two young daughters on either side of him. With his Victorian tailcoat and tall hat, he towers above what appears to be a three and five year old girl on either side of him. Dressed in coats and hats also, the small figure on the left walks alone while the child on the right diligently holds her father's hand. The caption beside the caricature reads as follows, "W.E.N. with his daughters. Parthe clings to her father, but Flo walks alone" (Longford, 86). As representative of their personalities, the caricature speaks volumes of Florence's tendency to be independent.

The caricature depicts Florence walking alone as an indication of the early signs of her strong-willed nature. From her earliest years, she stood apart from her family who, in turn, clung to her desperately. Wanting her to accept the conventional womanly role in the domestic sphere as wife and mother, her mother especially attempted to influence her away from ideas of a career. However, Florence's will was formidable and she could not be easily swayed. Apparently, her strong personality was inborn and her desire to take up nursing could not be easily dismissed.

Historian, W.L. Burn, refers to the mid-Victorian years as "The Age of Equipoise" (Burns, 1). Those were the years when English prosperity had reached its heights, and the predominance of middle-class values remained

unquestioned (Gorham, 153). As Gorham further summarizes, “The values of domesticity, the sanctification of family life and of femininity were at their most pervasive during those years” (153). Accordingly, Florence Nightingale’s mother raised her daughters as most upper middle-class women did and focused upon readying them for a good marriage.

Florence, like most Victorian girls, was prepared in childhood for the conventional domestic roles of wife and mother. Those women who ventured from that designation were considered strange and unusual. At 92, Florence’s mother was known to have said, “Poor Flo, I suppose she will never marry now” (Screenplay notes about Florence Nightingale by Margaret Macnamara, 5) Early in life, Florence evidenced a different social consciousness from her family. As Elizabeth Longford summarizes from Florence’s diary, “According to her own recollection, she was only six when the pointlessness of her home life began to dawn. Was she a monster? She frightened her mother with strange reserves and outbursts. In adolescence she decided there was something wrong with her home. Did not life hold better things than house-parties?” (87).

Florence and her mother had violent scenes of conflict over her decision to become a nurse—“bitter denunciations and recriminations, even physical battles” (Boyd, 170). For Florence to choose a life of work outside the home was against the codes of proper conduct for an upper middle-class Victorian female.

Disinclined to realize her mother's desire for her to have a propitious marriage, Florence replaced her aspiration with a unique vision of self that incorporated conservative myths as she gave her life over to the service of mankind. Still finding a way to be of service to men as she helps soldiers, Florence discovered the means of reconciling the importance placed upon marriage.

Nightingale incorporated popular Victorian ideals of femininity as she served as a mother to the world's suffering children in her work for health reform. She strove to be the angel of the world's house as she brought love and good cheer to those stricken with illness. In Deborah Gorham's book about the Victorian feminine ideal, she quotes from Marianne Farningham's story of girlhood published in 1869:

A sick daughter is often as an angel in the house. Brothers and sisters feel how dear she is, and for her sake strive to be good.. and then, if she be a Christian, how much she may do for her master. She may force all the careless ones to confess that after all there is something in religion, seeing that it can elevate her, even amid much suffering (qtd. in Gorham, 49).

Nightingale continued this pattern as she continued to work for her soldiers from a sick bed in a hotel room. Though her condition sometimes brought her close to death, she remained driven by a desire to do justice to the memory of many suffering soldiers.

During wartime, she was like the redeeming daughter so prevalent in Victorian literature (Gorham, 42). In a Victorian popular magazine for women entitled *The Mother's Companion*, one writer asserts that the "father of a family has

the right to expect smiling faces, cheerful voices, and a quiet happy welcome which will fall like a balm on his harassed spirit when he returns home from the outside world" (Gorham, 38). Indeed, Nightingale served her soldiers in the same manner as she offered them quiet words of solace as they suffered.

In an era when women were referred to in Parliament as "the sex" as a way of laughing off their increasing presence in many realms of life, even Queen Victoria denounced feminists for "forgetting every sense of womanly feeling and propriety" (Longford, 19). Victoria was speaking of Lady Amberley, a feminist leader and mother of Bertrand Russell, and announced that she "deserved a good whipping" (Longford, 19). Florence Nightingale reiterated Victoria's decree that women should not make a stir for their rights as she said, "The more chattering and noise there is about Women's Missions, the less efficient women can we find" (Longford, 19). After all, the good Victorian girl was defined by Anthony Trollope as one who "would listen much and say but little. She... had at her command a great fund of laughter, which would illumine her whole face without producing a sound from her mouth" (Longford, 19). Florence Nightingale, one must say, did not fit the image, but she attempted to. At a time when such ideas about women's behavior were ingrained from childhood, it is no wonder that many women in leadership roles opted to admit to no feminist sentiment although their lives indicated otherwise.

Though her experience of religion was unique, the social consciousness of her father's Unitarian faith emerges in Florence's work. Unitarians believe that humankind should set aside complex theological problems and concentrate instead upon creating a better life upon the Earth. Unitarians emphasize that an individual should arrive at their own sense of religious truth with the incorporation of ethical considerations. Known for their tolerance of other religious faiths, Unitarians believe that there is more than one way to attain salvation and that a person's faith should be measured by their actions instead of through a profession of any certain creed or dogma. In her methodical approach to the organization of nursing during the Crimean War, Florence showed the Unitarian's emphasis upon rational planning and scientific approach to problem solving. She also showed the influence of Unitarianism in her tolerance and appreciation of other religious faiths as she indicated great appreciation for the Catholic nuns that served as nurses.

In 1860, Florence completed a three-volume religious treatise entitled *Suggestions for Thought to the Searchers after Truth among the Artisans of England*. Very few copies of this work have been circulated and thus it remains in obscurity. Yet, it is important to realize that religious faith was a "central and moving force" in Florence Nightingale's life (Boyd, 198). She sent a copy of her work to John Stuart Mill who might not have shared her religious convictions,

but nevertheless expressed appreciation of her critique of middle-class society and thought the work should be published (Boyd, 198).

Upon receiving a copy, Benjamin Jowett cautioned that, "The enemy will say the book was written by an Infidel who has been a Papist" (Cook, 487). Jowett, who she corresponded with throughout her life, commented that the work reflected the writings of the early Roman church in combination with nineteenth century rationalism. Not finding it to be in publishable form, he believed that he had come across "the impress of a new mind" (Boyd, 198). In her 800-page work, Nightingale presented a scathing critique of society as well as an appraisal of the popular religions of her day.

Nightingale asserts that formality and apathy have replaced ardor and commitment among members of the Anglican Church. She wrote that many English people knew that they were in a state of "twilight faith" but could see no alternative other than stepping out into the state of darkness known as atheism (Body, 201). She observed that Anglicans had substituted "the cultural conformity of institutional religion" for a meaningful faith (Boyd, 201). In her work, she admired the way that the Roman Catholic Church offered its women a life of responsible service. Though not agreeing with much Catholic theological doctrine, she also expressed her disagreement with the doctrine of predestination and delineates its negative effects. Having discussed her painful conflict with her family, her efforts to shape her life into the Victorian mold, and her deep

religious faith, I will now proceed to Macnamara's play about the Crimean war nurse.

Florence Nightingale by Margaret Macnamara

In her play, Macnamara shows how Nightingale took on the suffering of those that she served even when it proved detrimental to self and thus she emphasized the tragic aspects of her life. For instance, Macnamara showed how, despite the negligible reputation of nurses, Nightingale trained to become a nurse and sought to establish new standards for the profession. Contracting the same fever that often plagued her soldiers and nearly cost her life, Nightingale nevertheless kept working while an invalid back in England in order that she might help raise the standards of care for the sick or wounded soldiers worldwide. As she took a leadership position among a hierarchy of men, Nightingale fell victim to the vast prejudices against women though she rarely acknowledged it. Macnamara showed that Nightingale's life of intense personal conviction never proved easy but that she remained driven to attain her objectives. She found her greatest happiness when she could divert her focus away from contradictory aspects of her own life and lose herself in service to others.

In the play, Macnamara shows that Florence experiences profound shame even though she makes great efforts to conquer aspects of self, like pride, considered to be sinful. Florence's mother had long ago branded her daughter's

visions of self-exaltation as revealing of her excessive pride. Like most tragic heroes or heroines, Florence recognized her great weakness but still struggled to overcome it. As Longford surmises that “spiritual pride is generally taken to be a sin against the Holy Ghost” in Christian thought (88), Florence’s concerns about her excessive vanity led her to express such sentiments as she does at the end of Act One, “Oh God, that I might die! No! O God, strengthen my self-command! I will have self-command! Help me also to conquer my vanity, and improve my character, and please my Mama”(12).

Not only was Florence concerned about showing vanity, her passionate desires for other women may have caused her anguish as she sought to deny what she called her “shameful visions’, a ‘shameful’ secret that she shared with no one, a threat to her mental balance, ‘my enemy’, ‘evil’, ‘sinful’” (Longford, 88). While her cousin, Henry Nicholson, expressed ardent interest, Florence’s attention was diverted by the intense attraction that she felt for his beautiful sister, Marianne (Longford, 87). Noting romantic fantasies about Marianne in her diaries, this experience must have caused great inner turmoil, frustration, and guilt for Florence. When Marianne became irritated by Florence’s treatment of her brother, their friendship abruptly ended (Longford, 88). She also demonstrated passionate feelings for another favorite cousin, Hilary Bonham Carter, as well as for Mary Clarke. If these attachments indicate Florence’s

romantic interests in the same sex, then her fantasies held more disturbing elements than the vanity that her mother identified as problematic.

Some scholars have interpreted her passion for Marianne as a mere adolescent crush, but others see it as more meaningful. Whether it was from a lack of passion for men or from her decision to focus upon her service to God and mankind, Florence Nightingale made the extreme decision to cut love from her life. Macnamara conveys this aspect of Florence's life in the play as she spurns the romantic overtures of Sir Arnold, "You may not touch me! I will call no man Master but in the service of God. Love?----I spurn it!" (34). Macnamara chooses to focus upon Florence's dedication to service and does not broach the topic of her sexuality. As Florence discusses the subject of love with Sir Arnold, she declares in Act II of Macnamara's play, "The strongest passion in human nature is for work" (Mac (87). Instead of showing interest in the social life that her mother worked so diligently to ready her for, Florence observed the superficialities of that world and had little desire to become a part of it. When she enters the parlor after having a profound religious experience in the garden, she sings aloud the church hymn, "The Son of God goes forth to War, A kingly crown to gain; His blood-red banner streams afar, Who follows in his train?" (8) Then, Florence asserts herself on a more personal level as she claims, "Oh, Mama, I have been called by God!" (8).

Macnamara lays the groundwork for a tragic drama as she opens with a scene that reveals how Florence's visions conflict with her parents' aspirations for her life. After seventeen-year-old Florence is discovered to be missing one evening, she suddenly appears again with an emotional proclamation of how she has been visiting the "deserving poor" (9). Florence then relates how she helped to bind the ax-cut of one of her father's workers by tearing her petticoat into strips. As her mother expresses doubts of her daughter's sanity, Florence cites the gospel passage in which Jesus showed a different inclination from his parents as he stole away to confer with the Doctors of the Law at the Temple.

Though Florence's father is somewhat humored by her misadventure, her mother is seriously offended and interprets her behavior as revealing vanity especially after Florence relates how the poor family compared her to the Princess Victoria. As her mother notices her scratching her scalp with the implication of lice, her father asserts that she has "brought punishment upon her own head" (11). At the scene's ending, Florence cries out in shame against herself.

In this scene, Macnamara sets up the basis for Florence's conflict with self as she shows Florence's inadvertent rebellion against her family as well as providing expository information. The age of Florence and her sister, Parthenope, are given as Parthe speaks of Victoria's ascendance to the throne, "A child, Mama! She is eighteen. Nearly my age, a full year older than Flo!" (6).

Florence's mother reveals her dedication and focus upon her daughters as she responds with "dreamy tenderness" when thinking about her daughters and thus shows her strong attachment to them: "To a mother's feelings, my Parthe, you and Flo are scarcely beyond babyhood. Even when you are married you will be my children still" (6). As Florence's mother and sister discuss how she so often becomes lost in dreams and cries over religion, they indicate Florence's differences from the world of her upbringing.

The entrance of Florence completes the exposition as she appears with the proclamation: "I don't mean a Vision or a Voice – but as I came up the path between the glistening white flowers, an inward conviction, oh!" (6). In this scene, we learn that Florence's mother cannot comprehend the actions of her eccentric daughter and her father inadvertently forsakes her by either withdrawing from the family conflict or mildly colluding with his wife's disapprobation. As Florence remains the center of everyone's focus, Parthe retains a subsidiary status to her sister and is jealous. To summarize the theme of Macnamara's first scene, we can quote from a statement of Mrs. Nightingale to a friend about her daughter, Florence, as she lamented, "We are ducks who have hatched a wild swan" (Longford, 93).

Macnamara shows Florence's passionate religious faith as different from any conventional style of religion and her Joan of Arc style of heroism to stand out as unique. Her expression of faith did not coincide with either of her

parent's religious practices yet incorporated elements of both. Her mother had been raised as a Unitarian, but moved to the Anglican religion since it provided greater access to society's elite. During the nineteenth century, the Anglicans focused upon the threat of damnation and repentance of sins. Therefore, Florence learned the fear of punishment for wrongdoing from her mother's religion.

Macnamara allows Florence to express to her mother's continued protests, "I am treading the path that God has marked out for me" (41). Florence Nightingale believed that man is the maker of mankind and it was her obligation to extend herself to the service of mankind in order that she might help to create a better world. Macnamara mentions her book in the play as Lady Herbert remarks that Mr. Jowett spoke highly of your book on religion and that he believed that "a book on the reform of religion would be as salutary for souls as your reform of nursing for physical health" (91).

Clifford Geertz, an anthropologist, denotes that "religious symbols shape a cultural ethos, defining the deepest values of a society and the persons in it" (Pearson, 211). Thus, the symbols become a social and political reality that have been created by the psychological attitudes that prevail at a given place and time" (Pearsall, 211). At a time when emphasis was placed upon material wealth as a sign of God's favor, Florence's personal and emotional religious calling would have seemed heretical. Her fervency and expressiveness would likely

have been frowned upon since the acquisition of wealth generally requires the workings of a solemn and controlled mind. Florence showed the kind of dutifulness that the Victorians valued as she engaged in her nursing work. Yet, thoughts of her calling almost always created an unbalanced state that was evidenced by a tendency to remain tragically isolated from others and by her struggle with depression later in life.

In the play, Macnamara shows how Florence's calling corresponds with the Unitarian emphasis upon service to humanity as an expression of faith. In a family discussion about Florence's request to take part of her travel time through Europe to work at a hospital, a friend of the family takes Florence's part as he asserts, "Believe me, I see no harm in the project. Rather the reverse. Her longing for effective charity needs an outlet" (27). As Mrs. Nightingale laments that Florence has no concern for such charities as society balls, concerts, theatricals, and bazaars, Sir Arnold humorously quotes Florence's summation of such events as "dust, thrown by fashionable women into the eyes of God, to blind him to their worship of Mammon" (27). Since Sir Arnold is a potential suitor to Florence, Mrs. Nightingale warms to his words and reconsiders Florence's request to take part of her travel time to serve at Kaiserwerth Hospital in Germany.

Macnamara represents the liberal nature of Florence Nightingale's religious faith as she has Florence subdue a "lady visitor" who adds to the

torment of a man who has long been disturbed by the notion that he is predestined to damnation. Although others warn this Christian worker, Mrs. Thwaites, that the man cannot be reasoned out of his religious obsession, she continues to try to rationalize with him. Escorted out of the hospital by Florence as she looks out for the patient's well being, Miss Thwaites cries out with threats that she will have her revenge. Thwaites later appears in Scutari in the same capacity, but this time she is prepared with an offensive and accuses Florence of being a Papist because of the Roman Catholic nuns in her service. Having just been in conflict with a nun who has taken her Evangelical tracts and thrown them into a fire, Miss Thwaites threatens Florence that "a powerful agitation is being worked up against you in Parliament and the Press" (55). In response to her allegations, Florence replies, "The rumor that I am a Roman Catholic or likely to become one is entirely false...." (56). As she opens the door for Miss Thwaites to exit, the woman continues her accusations and threats and thus reveals herself to be more vindictive than spiritual. Macnamara's scene illustrates Florence's disgust with hypocrisy and superficiality among those whose religion consists of more talk than action. As Florence expresses earlier in a discussion with Sir Arnold about the futility of the prayers offered by the clergy concerning the cholera epidemic:

And by order of the Queen and Parliament, the clergy are meowing before their altars. They offer prayers when God has demanded an offer of main drainage and a pure water supply. Such prayers are blasphemous. The great truth concerning the character of God discovered by modern

science is that He is inexorable. He punishes our mistakes until we learn by them. Given so much filth – cholera! Though the whole nation grovel in its pews when it should be up and digging (31).

Though not a positivist in the tradition of August Comte, Florence showed the Unitarian faith in the scientific method without extending their views to atheism.

Florence's faith has most in common with Soren Kierkegaard's critique of conventional Christianity found in his work *Fear and Trembling* (1843). He believed that the Danish church promoted a religion in which no personal conviction was demanded of the believer. Instead, they played a mindless game of going through the motions and attending church to make appearances. He emphasized the commitment required by faith and the inherent difficulty of adhering to Christian doctrine in a pagan world. He stressed the sacrifice required of the genuine follower and used the story of Abraham and Isaac to exemplify his theory. Kierkegaard admired those who demonstrated their faith in action and demeanor rather than by words. Instead of rationalizing their beliefs, Christian followers should show the kind of fear that renders them obedient to God's calling despite its difficulties or sacrifice. Macnamara's play reflects biographers assimilation of facts about Florence Nightingale as shown by her to struggle to show obedience to God's calling without necessarily understanding of all the aspects of her path.

The ironic elements of tragedy emerge in Florence Nightingale's position on feminism. Like Queen Victoria, she expressed her opposition to the women's

movement, "I am brutally indifferent to the rights and wrongs of my sex" (Boyd, 108). In contrast to this statement however, she often expressed sympathy for women's plight. As Langford summarizes her response to always being asked to do ladies' work, Florence wrote in a letter to her cousin, "There are hundreds of human beings always crying after ladies. Ladies' work always has to be fitted in, but where there was a man in the family, his business is the law (88). In regards to women having a career, Boyd indicates that Florence was bored by the Victorian women's routine of "walks in the garden, embroidery, reading aloud, and a succession of heavy meals" (171). And as Florence makes plans to bring nurses to the Crimea, she suddenly becomes alive with ideas and excitement for the future.

The legendary reputation that Florence Nightingale's work in the Crimea obtained made a whole new life for women possible without disrupting traditional notions of womanhood. The legend of Florence Nightingale brought comfort to the Victorian male (Boyd, 187). Without changing the fundamental suppositions about a female's place, the legend showed a hard-working woman that was dedicated to the male. However, the difference was that this woman worked in dangerous conditions and made important decisions about the situation at hand. She took on important duties and supervised both male and female in a way that was uncommon for women at the time.

Superseding incapacitating bureaucratic practices established by men, Florence was able to use the support of the Queen and the press to revolutionize the system and make it workable for the soldiers she served. Furthermore, Florence Nightingale exercised an absolute authority over her nurses and some did not like taking orders from a woman. As Longford establishes, "At times plain sex discrimination reared its Medusa head (99). As one nurse expressed, "Mrs. Nightingale was very wonderful but I could not get used to taking orders from a lady. To obey Dr. Hall seemed more natural" (Longford, 99) In Macnamara's play, Florence threatens to dismiss one of her most cherished nurses for disobeying her: "I must enforce discipline. To get rid of you---one of my best---may convince the others that I am not to be trifled with" (66). Though she allows Nurse Johnson to stay after she swears by the happiness of her daughter to obey the rules, Florence has exerted her authority under no uncertain terms.

While the war correspondent to *The Times* began the creation of the legend of the lady with the lamp, Queen Victoria consummated the process. It was as if Florence Nightingale was the Queen's representative to the suffering soldiers in the Crimea and thus Victoria supported her endeavors wholeheartedly. In a letter from the Keeper of the Queen's Purse in 1854, it is written, "Her Majesty wishes you to be made aware that your goodness and self-devotion in giving yourself up to the soothing attendance upon these wounded and sick soldiers

had been observed by the queen with sentiments of the highest approval and admiration" (Boyd, 186). The Queen's way of showing devotion to her husband accentuated her manner of being serviceable to the male and played down her attempts to exercise royal authority. Although the Queen praised Florence's modesty and thus kept her aligned with "canonical Victorian female virtues" (Boyd, 187), she privately showed more reverence for Florence's intelligence, determination, and ability to organize and assess the situation. As Prince Albert wrote, "She put before us all the defects of our present military hospital system, and the reforms that are needed" (Boyd, 187). And the Queen added, "I wish we had her at the war office" (Boyd, 187). Thus, while Nightingale was represented to the public as the meek gentlewoman that served the soldiers, her forceful manner of establishing new measures was not emphasized to the public. Victorians enjoyed the heroic ideal of a lovely and angelic woman who brought the domestic atmosphere to the soldiers in their misery. They created the legend of the lady of the lamp because that coincided with the way that the Victorians romanticized womanhood.

The legend of Florence Nightingale was based upon her unwavering dedication to the sick and wounded soldiers. Indeed, she stayed up late at night to sit by dying soldiers and record their last words in letters to their mothers or wives. She also spent hours writing requisitions for much needed supplies and reports of the horrendous conditions. Since the caliber of ammunition used in

the Crimean War went deep into a person's flesh and splintered the bone, amputation of limbs was often necessary. While a soldier was having an arm or leg sawn off without the benefit of an anesthetic, Florence would sit by his side with soothing words of consolation. She instructed her nurses to allow no man to die alone. She had the body of a dead horse removed from the source of the water supply. Furthermore, Florence ordered a decent burial ground to be arranged for her soldiers. Florence Nightingale became so legendary that soldiers began to believe that they could benefit by merely touching her shadow as she passed by them in the barracks.

In the play, *Macnamara* features the legend of Florence Nightingale in Act Three as soldiers speak of her reverently. Hillman relates: "Over at the front, it's common talk we'd finish the war in a week with her at the head, the same as Joan of Arc" (76). Hillman then confesses that he would give a month's pay just to be able to speak to her (76). Sayers explains to all the benefits of kissing her shadow if you haven't the opportunity of speaking with her. Jock corroborates the fact by relating how he had the softest sleep of his life after doing so. After Crump expresses his fear of the pit he'll be thrown into upon his death, Florence appears by his side saying that she has arranged for a stone wall to be built around a new cemetery for the soldiers. As Crump lays dying and thinks of the many things he should have been jailed for long ago before he entered the service, Florence assures him that his way of standing by his fellow soldiers in

the trenches would count on his behalf as he approached heaven's gates. As Florence says to him, "You will be given another chance. Make up your mind to try hard to serve God in the next life. Pray that you may try hard" (77).

Upon Florence's return to England, she is haunted by the needless dying of thousands of soldiers and she remains dedicated to make things right for them. Like Niobe, the proud mother who lost her ten children as a punishment from the gods, Florence Nightingale wept over her lost children. When Sir Sidney Herbert begs for Florence's understanding as he leaves his post at the War Office due to poor health, Florence cannot sympathize as she once again laments the needless loss of so many soldiers. She can only reply with bitterness:

Yes, your children have always been a joy to you, well-fed, well-clad, healthy. My soldier-patients were my children. I had to see them ragged, starved, filthy, tortured to death where they looked for healing Five years ago, you vowed to me that they should not have died in vain. Their blood still cries to me for mercy on the lads who are joining their old regiments – and you snatch from me the power for succour! (92).

As she continues to express her disappointment in others' wavering interest, she bitterly refers to Mr. Jowett's caveat that she had become too eccentric in her dedication to the soldiers. Instead of attempting to get him to continue with his work, she should accept Sir Herbert's resignation from his post because of his illness. Florence continues to speak acridly of Mr. Jowett's suggestion that she should "cultivate meekness" in the face of seeming impossibilities. Her response is to believe that she should not accept the continued murder of the soldiers until 'God's good time'" (92). Florence indicates her disappointment that

others are losing interest in hearing about the horrific conditions that the soldiers endure while in service to their country. If people believed that her persistent dedication to the cause was odd, than they should remember that her tenure in the Crimean was the “most eccentric post a woman ever filled” (92).

The play ends with Florence’s inability to comprehend the award that she received, the Order of Merit, due to her senility. As her nurse explains to her, “The grandest order in the Empire. And you are the only lady it has ever been awarded to” (105). Tragically though, Florence cannot fully comprehend what has happened and believes that Queen Victoria or the Prince-Consort has sent it to her although they no longer sit on the throne.

Though there are many elements of tragedy for Florence Nightingale, there is victory in this play for women and humankind. As Florence moves into a new realm for women, she offers a new scope for them although she cannot appreciate this herself. As she speaks against a religion of words, she provides testimony to a more meaningful faith through her own actions. As she resists her family’s threatening hold upon her, she showed the importance of individual conviction. While she remained unable to celebrate her accomplishments, the world benefited from the works of Florence Nightingale and turned her personal tragedy into a symbol of hope. Her social reforms had global implications for the medical and nursing professions, and her higher standards of patient care brought greater dignity to human life.

In many ways, Macnamara's life and career was analogous to the life and work of Florence Nightingale. From the subject matter of her plays, it is evident that the Victorian emphasis upon religion played a major role in her childhood home. With religion came the view of women as subservient to men. Though Nightingale received public acclaim, she could not appreciate it since it was not in the realm of what she considered proper for womanhood. Of course, Macnamara almost reached great heights with this play, but became too ill or discouraged to continue with revisions and promotion of the material.

In *Florence Nightingale*, Macnamara's work rises to the level of universal intelligibility. In this play, her success does not depend upon an understanding of a particular social issue, but shows a sophisticated interfacing of character and plot with such broader themes as socialism, pacifism, and feminism. The play does not address pacifist issues directly since Florence Nightingale's policy was to stay away from the political sphere except for how it pertained to health care issues. Yet, the drama magnifies the essence of interpersonal relationships and the importance of individual development and positive identity which are foundational to pacifist ideals. In the play, Florence struggles against the prevailing power structures in order that she might forge a new path for health care reform. She also handles conflict among her ranks as she proceeds with her work in a way that promotes human dignity and greater understanding. Her pacifism is also shown in the way that she accepts life and death, knowing that a

soldier is going to die she seeks to give him solace and comfort in his last hours. Instead of struggling against the sordid reality of death that the soldier faces, she helps them find peace while he faces for painful inevitability of his own death.

In the play, *Macnamara* deals with the source of conflict in relationships. As Florence struggles against her family to forge her own identity, the discord becomes quite painful. *Macnamara* shows the family's source of conflict as stemming from the parents' efforts to force their way of life upon Florence. Since Florence has strong convictions that are different from anything her mother would imagine her daughter's life to be, it causes great emotional turmoil in the home. Her mother imagines her daughter to be rebelling against her and constantly attempts to redirect her back to a more conventional pathway. While this is antithetical to pacifist views of resolving conflict between people, Florence remains caring and sympathetic to family members although she maintains her distance. Though the painful conflict has never been resolved, Florence's course of action successfully suspended the tension and anxiety associated with the conflict.

In *Macnamara's* life, she experienced the same kinds of difficulty with family members. Passed over for an opportunity for education by an eccentric aunt, *Macnamara* was forced to create her own intellectual life. She had been encouraged to retain a life of conventionality, caring for her younger siblings and elderly parents to the point of self-sacrifice. The only way that she resolved

these conflicts, in later years, was by separating from family members and ceasing to care for them full-time. Like Florence Nightingale, she pursued her own dreams. Though her calling was for dramatic writing and the dissemination of socialist and feminist values, she showed the same determination to achieve her goals as Florence Nightingale. Despite a conventional family life, Macnamara pursued her own dreams.

The play *Florence Nightingale* incorporates socialist ideals as Florence lovingly serves the soldiers. She rejects her life of privilege and cares for people of all classes equally. Reflections of socialist values also can be seen in Florence's determination to create better conditions for the sick and poor through health reform measures. In her aggressive approach to obtaining higher standards of care, Nightingale shifts from a concern for the immediate needs of the infirmed to plans for the restructuring of the entire health care system. Of course, her plans impacted the world as her ideas were put into place in England and emulated by leaders of other nations.

As the Fabian tracts educated and encouraged the public toward social action, Macnamara, like Shaw, wrote plays that illuminated socialist ideals upon the stage. Believing in the social influence of drama, Macnamara sought to create dramatic works that debated important ideas and issues. Presenting social problems for audience members' consideration, Macnamara created drama that imparted a consolidation of plot and character with provocative ideas. With a

combination of social critique and emergent wit, the playwright brought social problems to life in dramatic situations that featured poor housing, exploitative working conditions, judgment of society's poor, and a struggle for dignity among society's lesser members.

In *Florence Nightingale*, Macnamara brings forth feminist issues from Florence's Victorian girlhood. Although Florence was well educated, she was discouraged from using her education outside the home. Her strong religious beliefs convey a woman's place and therefore Florence extends the domestic realm to the wider world in order that she might make her career congruent with her beliefs. Similarly, Macnamara acted out her own convictions as she forged an unconventional life as a dramatist and socialist while living in the traditional surroundings of the farming community of Sussex County. Although writing was an acceptable profession, it could not be said to be commonplace for women to be dramatists in the early part of the century.

Macnamara's play *Florence Nightingale* incorporates feminist, pacifist, and socialist beliefs into a sophisticated rendering of conceptual artistry. Her ideology illuminates the plight of society's isolated, disadvantaged, poor, and oppressed. As Macnamara elicits feelings for these characters, she also inspires audience members' critique of the many aspects of society that cause suffering for them. As the play opens with Florence's pronouncement of her calling to help those in need, Macnamara prefigures the themes of her play by showing the

heroine's strength of resolve and determination. As Florence's later life represents the social displacement and oppression of single women, she incorporates the peace-loving nature of pacifist, Macnamara calls attention to their plight. By emphasizing Florence's commitment to activism, Macnamara incorporates the peacemaking of pacifists, the independence of women sought by feminists, and reiterates the dignity that should be afforded to the poor or disadvantaged.

In each of her plays, Margaret Macnamara (1874-1950) reveals her political agenda but also presents the difficulties that come with making life decisions that incorporate new patterns. Instead of presenting her political ideology overtly, Macnamara preferred to encase it in allegorical representations that reflect the complexity of the ideas that she wanted to express. Her artistic renditions contrast with such explicit treatments of political subjects as Elizabeth Robins' *Votes for Women* or Cicely Hamilton's *How the Vote was Won, Marriage as a Trade, and Pageant of Great Women* that were all published in 1909. Though Macnamara was greatly influenced by the style and subject matter found in the works of George Bernard Shaw and Harley Granville Barker, her drama conveyed her unique artistic vision.

Her political vision is clear as Macnamara philosophically examines the life of the working poor. Her plays present the everyday struggles of society's working class as they cope with inadequate housing, lack of government help,

and the condescension of others. Macnamara shows how society's condemnation of the poor results from a fear of seeing themselves in the same kind of vulnerable position. As she examines the reality of poor people's circumstances, audience members discover that their situation is often not as simplistic as they would like to believe. Instead of poverty being a result of mere laziness or lack of moral rectitude, situations beyond the characters' control are often shown to have played a seminal role in current circumstances. Thus, audience members come to the realization that it cannot be so easy to condemn the impoverished for their lack of resources. Macnamara's places great emphasis upon the setting of her plays. The stark and desolate setting of an apartment tenement in which two women dwell with five children in *Light-Gray or Dark?* provides an image of poor people's lives that contrasts sharply with the homes of society's more privileged members. As she depicts Poor Law's institutions in *Our Little Fancies*, she creates a vivid portrait of the lives of elderly women who cope within such an abysmal setting. As the aged men of the Poor Law institution are crowded together inside the walls, the manner in which they are separated from mainstream life is discussed philosophically. As the poor attempt to create meaningful lives, their surroundings confront them with their desolation. In all of these instances, Macnamara evokes audience members' sympathy through imagery as much as through words.

Macnamara speaks against the extremes of religious fanaticism as she points to the value of developing spirituality. In *The Gates of the Morning*, she creates the preacher in a way that shows his desire for genuine goodness as antithetical to his tendency to have an overblown ego. Macnamara creates a believable and complex figure by affording him with a subtlety of expression as well as having him tentatively vacillate between extremes. As he creates the same kind of tension in the drama that he would in life by his overbearing manner of relating to other characters regarding religion, his stance is examined philosophically. The character evokes audience members' empathy as they recognize that his belief in himself and his mission is genuine. Macnamara does not create a scoundrel, but instead draws a character that shows the same kind of eccentricities that ordinary people exemplify.

She examines the mother/daughter relationship in several of her plays. She shows the difficulty of bridging the generation gap, how the wants and needs of the mother can impact a daughter, how a mother's disappointment can cause great discomfort to a daughter, how a mother's values can be different from her daughter, and how a daughter can become disillusioned with her mother for not showing enough empathy and compassion towards her. Macnamara intelligently depicts the inherent difficulty in a mother/daughter relationship when both parties maintain lofty expectations of another. Since no

easy solutions to these problems can be found, the playwright can be said to examine these issues philosophically.

Macnamara examines how patriarchal standards are imposed upon women in nearly all of her plays. In one play, a young woman stands against her domineering male partner and thus foregoes former patterns of denying self as she moves into a mode of resistance. In another play, a group of women turn against another in a boarding house setting because the individual represents the progressive standards that underscore their differences in a society that looks askance at single women. In another play, a woman finally obtains the courage to speak against the representatives of institutions that either ignore or thwart her. In her three adaptations of nineteenth century novels, Macnamara shows that the so-called natural course of a girl's life can be strange to those that fail to fit into the prescribed mold.

In all of her plays, Macnamara distinguishes herself as a literary artist at the same time that she establishes herself as a social, political, and philosophical visionary. Because of her representation of the era and the Independent Theatre movement, she should be read, studied, and produced along with Shaw, Robins, and Granville-Barker. Her works have a timeless quality and could offer much to contemporary theatre practitioners and scholars as they seek to broaden their understanding of the time period. Her conceptual artistry places her work among the best dramatists of the era. As a woman who experienced the fight for

women's suffrage, two world wars, and the revolution of the modern theatre movement, Macanamara leaves a chronicle of women's struggles and triumphs that must be heard.

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