A TEACHING PLAN FOR OEDIPUS REX, THE WILD DUCK, AND WINTERTSET BASED ON THE THEME OF "PERSONAL CODE"

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

If it is true that all the world is a stage and each man in it is merely an actor, then it must stand to reason that each man has his own particular role to play. This role will be determined by many things, but the most important criterion is the man himself. The conceptions he has of his relationship with the world, his definition of what truth is in life, his values, goals, and ideals, will be the motivation for his actions and decisions and comprise his "personal code."¹

The purpose of this study was to prepare critical analyses of three dramas: Oedipus Rex by Sophocles, The Wild Duck by Henrik Ibsen, and Winterset by Maxwell Anderson; and to develop a plan for the teaching of these dramas centered around the theme of personal codes, suitable for a college-preparatory group of high school sophomores or juniors.

The procedure was to prepare a critical analysis of each of the three dramas, including a review of criticisms by recognized critics; and to develop a teaching plan for the three dramas centered around the specific theme of personal

¹Term taken from Scholastic Book Services Literary Unit.
codes, including a list of audio-visual materials which could be used in the study, and a student bibliography.

A value of studying drama in the high school lies in the students' opportunity to see a character faced with a conflict in his life as a result of his personal values. Drama, perhaps more than any other genre, allows the student that opportunity.

It is the nature of human-kind to act, and once you begin to do so you are likely to encounter hardship, hence conflict. That is why drama interests us: we participate in its "stories."¹

Oedipus Rex, The Wild Duck, and Winterset are good examples of dramas in which each of the main characters is faced with a personal conflict or crisis as a result of his values, beliefs, and ideals. How he benefits from that conflict or is consumed by it affords the students an excellent opportunity to see the need for establishing a proper perspective concerning their relationships with their world and the value found in a meaningful conception of what truth is in life. All of the main characters in the three dramas are possessed by a similar personal code: a desire for the truth to be revealed and for the achievement of a self-identity. Placed in conflict because of their faulty

conceptions of truth, all three come to realizations of what their relationship with the world really is.

In addition to dealing with similar personal code elements in the three plays, the unit also allows the students to study the differences present as the three dramas belong to a literary genre. Studying drama as a separate genre of literature, the student becomes aware of a particular mode of literary expression and the techniques involved in creating a specific type of literature. Because the three dramas are written at different periods of time, the students can see how the construction of the drama has been altered, how the basic concept of the dramatic experience has changed, and most of all, how the essential truths of human life and causes of human behavior have remained the same throughout history.

In conclusion, these three dramas provide an excellent opportunity to stimulate the students' thoughts concerning personal values. They impress upon the reader the necessity of acting from one's convictions no matter what the consequences. These three dramas pass the test of "being good for the students who read them in the sense of contributing to their moral, social, and personal development."¹

The plan for teaching *Oedipus Rex*, *The Wild Duck*, and *Winterset* reveals the interrelationship of the language arts (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) as applied to a unit of literature and focuses attention on the learning activities necessary to accomplish the objectives of this drama unit.
CHAPTER II

ANALYSES OF DRAMAS

I. ANALYSIS OF OEDIPUS REX

Oedipus Rex is the story of a man who searches for truth and suffers in its revelation. In his search to find the cause of the plaque upon Thebes, Oedipus is at the same time searching for his true identity. His quest for both answers reflects both his concern for the welfare of the citizens of Thebes and his need to find the answer to every riddle, to get to the heart of every mystery. Oedipus Rex is an excellent drama to include in this personal code unit because it deals with the question of what determines Man's life: Fate, or the individual through his own actions.

The question of whether Oedipus has any control over what happens to him has been argued by many critics. Some see him as merely a puppet of the gods' will, while others feel he is completely responsible for his actions as a free agent with a free will.

Bernard Knox noted that the Greeks had many subtly differentiated conceptions of fate. He makes the distinction between the interventions of the gods as either purely causal

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or merely predictive. If the intervention is purely causal, a man's actions have already been determined and he is merely following the will of the gods. But if the intervention is only in the form of a prediction, the individual, to a great extent, determines his own actions.\(^1\) Knox noted that in *Oedipus Rex*

Sophocles has chosen to present the terrible actions of Oedipus not as determined but only as predicted. The divine will is represented in the play by the prophecy and the prophecy alone.\(^2\)

It has been suggested that the gods merely represent the universe as it actually is and that accordingly they are not subject to blame for the misfortunes of men. The conclusion of such an argument is that even though the gods are not subject to blame, neither is Oedipus guilty.\(^3\)

Some critics, such as J. E. Harry, saw Oedipus as completely innocent and merely a plaything of the gods. Harry stated, "The great king cannot escape his destiny."\(^4\) Others, such as W. N. Bates, felt that the gods do not control

\(^1\)Ibid., pp. 34-35.

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 38.


Oedipus' actions directly, but have given him the qualities of character which would make him act in the way he does.

Bates wrote:

Fate has a part in the tragedy of Sophocles; but it is fate brought to its consummation through the character of the individual.\(^1\)

Philip Harsh cited Aeschylus' interpretation of Oedipus' downfall as due to the sin of his father and the family curse, but added that Sophocles has eliminated this justification. Harsh felt that it is Oedipus' character combined with the determined will of the gods that results in his downfall.\(^2\)

Another view, expounded by Albin Lesky, is that

The prophecies of the gods only inform and leave wide scope to the thoughts and plans of man. Man is not a passive sacrifice to his destiny; he takes an active part. But the gods have so arranged it that every step which he takes in the hope of avoiding his fate brings him nearer to it.\(^3\)

Professor Kitto felt that what happens to Oedipus is a natural result of the weaknesses and virtues of his character. He stated:

Sophocles is not trying to make us feel that an inexorable destiny or a malignant god is guiding


\(^2\)Harsh, op. cit., p. 119.

the events. These people are not puppets of higher powers; they act in their own right.¹

Kitto cited the Chorus' ode at the end of the play as evidence that Sophocles did not mean that the gods display their power by ordaining this life for Oedipus.

The Chorus says not that the fate of Oedipus is a special display of divine power, but on the contrary that it is typical of human life and fortunes.²

Knox felt that Oedipus' will is absolutely free and he is fully responsible for his catastrophe.³ He cited the use of the myth to support his opinion.

[Sophocles has arranged] the myth in such a way as to exclude the external factor in the life of Oedipus from the action of the tragedy. This action is not Oedipus' fulfillment of the prophecy, but his discovery that he has already fulfilled it. The catastrophe of Oedipus is that he discovers his own identity; and for this discovery he is first and last responsible. The main events of the play are in fact not even part of the prophecy: Apollo predicted neither the discovery of the truth, the suicide of Jocasta, nor the self-blinding of Oedipus. In the actions of Oedipus in the play "fate" plays no part at all.⁴

Knox noted that even if Apollo is traditionally the god who sends pestilence, he is not the cause of the plague because the Priest calls on Apollo to rescue Thebes from the plague.⁵

²Ibid., p. 138.
³Knox, op. cit., p. 5.
⁴Ibid., pp. 4-5.
⁵Ibid., p. 9.
He pointed out that the Chorus says Ares ("the fire-beating god, hateful pestilence") is responsible for the plague and concluded that the plague "is not" Apolline interference intended to force the discovery of the truth. It is not the working of "fate". The only role which divine interference has played in the tragedy of Oedipus is that it has placed him at Thebes. By placing him there, through the death of Laius, the gods have forced him to act in some way. But anything done from that point on is Oedipus' complete responsibility and is not governed by any intervention from the gods.

L. R. Lind also felt that Oedipus' will is entirely free. He stated, "Oedipus is forced to act in no way except the one he chooses." Agreeing with Knox, who felt that it is actually Oedipus' will that is fate, Lind suggested:

In Oedipus we have a headstrong, self-willed, impulsive, arrogant, and wholly sincere man who illustrates admirably Ibsen's frequently dramatized contention about the harm that good men do. He is a man who will not let well enough alone, who will not let sleeping dogs lie, who wants to know the truth at all costs. Given such a character, almost any of the wrong choices he took along the way would have led to a subsequent series of wrong choices. Reason cannot prevail with those who believe they are more right than anyone else in the world, who can even out-guess the Sphinx.

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1 Ibid., p. 10.
3 Knox, op. cit., p. 12.
4 Lind, op. cit., p. 114.
The arguments as to whether the gods have destined Oedipus to doom or whether he is a free agent responsible for his own fate are endless. The author would agree with those critics who give Oedipus complete control of his actions because in order to truly appreciate the function of drama, one must concentrate on the development of character and attribute the action of the play to the characters in it. If the heroic stature of Oedipus and his final discovery in the play is to be appreciated, he must be depicted as a free agent. Oedipus is a man completely controlled by his own values as well as by his temperament. To identify with Oedipus as a man and not as a puppet, one must give him the right to make his own decisions. Lind concluded, "The concept of human suffering as it is presented by Sophocles loses all meaning if his characters have no free will."\(^1\)

In Sophocles' plays, character development supersedes all else. A. E. Haigh noted that while the form of Greek drama was being modified by Sophocles, with his introduction of the third actor and curtailment of the Chorus' action, "a transformation of even greater importance was effected in its inner spirit and significance."\(^2\)

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1Ibid.

The aim of Sophocles was to humanise tragedy, and bring it down to a more earthly level from the supernatural region in which it had previously moved, without at the same time impairing its ideal splendor. The nature of man, and his various passions and struggles, become the main object of attention in the tragic drama. The characters are transformed in a corresponding fashion. While retaining the grace and strength of the old race of heroes, they come nearer to human beings in their emotions and weaknesses. ¹

Sophocles' center of interest is found in human nature. His characters are thoroughly human characters, swayed by human passion and emotions. Haigh concluded:

He prefers to let the audience concentrate their attention on the development of character and on the ethical significance of the action. His main concern is to bring into the clearest light the passions of the human beings whose fate he is relating and the pathos of the situation in which they are placed. ²

Oedipus' character has multiple facets. He is both humble and egocentric, methodical and rash, thorough and reckless, benevolent and malicious. But his predominant quality is his pride. It is from his pride that his insistence on the revelation of truth stems.

Oedipus initially refers to himself as "the world renowned and glorious Oedipus" (p. 118). ³ In the prologue, where Oedipus is called upon to rid Thebes of the plague, he

¹Ibid., pp. 141-42. ²Ibid., p. 145.
vows that, "not for the sake of some distant friends, but for myself I will disperse this filth" (p. 128). Even before the Chorus comes to him, he has already taken steps to find the cause by sending Creon "Unto Apollo's Psythian halls to find/What I might do or say to save the state" (p. 119), and by calling on Teiresias: "Even this I did not neglect; I have done it already" (p. 124). Oedipus must reveal the truth to maintain his own ego. His pride in his past accomplishments and in his present position compels him to always be right. But Oedipus' pride does not blind him to the needs of his people. Part of his greatness lies in his compassion for the citizens of Thebes. He alternates between exalting himself and placing the welfare of Thebes above his own concerns. He charges Teiresias "to bring all this to pass for me, and for the god, and for our land" (p. 123). But later, he pleads to Teiresias to "save yourself and the state; save me as well" (p. 125). But his pride does blind him to the type of truth to which he aspires. This blindness is evident in his attack on Teiresias.

In his taunting of Teiresias, Oedipus does not hesitate to remind him who it was who saved the city:

How is it, when the weave-songed bitch was here you uttered no salvation for these people? Surely the riddle then could not be solved by some chance comer; it needed prophecy. You did not clarify that with birds or knowledge from a god; but when I came, the ignorant Oedipus, I silenced her, not taught by birds, but winning by my wits (p. 126-127).
Teiresias, the blind prophet, aspires to an intangible truth—the truth which lies beyond the physical. In this way he is different from Oedipus and Oedipus fails to realize that Teiresias never bothered to answer the riddle of the Sphinx because such mundane truths are of no importance to him. Teiresias initially hesitates to tell Oedipus what he wants to know because of his loyalty to both Oedipus as his king and the welfare of the state. He only does so when he is humiliated and accused of being a traitor. Oedipus does not initially react to Teiresias' revelations because he is never aware that any difference in the kinds of truth aspired to by both men exists. His only response can be that of a man who is much too proud; he shifts the blame to others.

In the second episode, we see the rash, impetuous Oedipus in contrast with the judicious, reasoning Creon. Immediately accused of being a traitor, Creon retaliates in a rational manner. He attempts to reason with Oedipus that he has all he could ever want as an equal partner in the rule of Thebes without the headaches of being king. He asks Oedipus to stop and think—to investigate what he has done—and then, if he is found guilty of treason, to be put to death. But Oedipus is unwilling to wait. He must always be right and as king, must never be questioned. When the Chorus asks Oedipus to be reasonable, he retorts, "You ask [for] my death or exile from this land" (p. 132).
Creon is much like Teiresias. They both realize that Oedipus' flaw lies in his insistence on supreme authority. They also are aware that Oedipus lacks the necessary insight to differentiate between inner truth and surface truth. Where Creon is different from Teiresias is in his tolerance of Oedipus. Creon only hints at Oedipus' fallibility; he never accuses Oedipus. He tries to let Oedipus come to his own realizations. But his subtleness, like Teiresias' bluntness, cannot affect a man who is as arrogant and blind as Oedipus.

Being proud, Oedipus must search out every tale to discover the cause of the plague and to discover his own identity. But in his meticulousness for detail, he never achieves, until it is too late, the perspective to assemble a greater view of where he is leading himself.

At the end of the second episode, in his talk with Jocasta, who reveals the secret of her infant son, Oedipus realizes that his condemnation of the defiler of Thebes might be a condemnation of himself and that he has been rash in his proclamations. But he is never fully aware of the significance of what has been revealed. He has not yet associated Laius as his father. He is wretched because he may have defiled another man's wife and home but he does not yet realize that Jocasta is his mother. In his insistence on truth, he proceeds with a step-by-step investigation. But in his deductive approach, he never assimilates the facts because
he is blinded by the type of truth to which he aspires. It is not until the very end of the play that he realizes, with full force, that Laius was his father. He states, "I am terribly afraid the seer can see" (p. 132), not realizing the full significance of Teiresias' prophecy. It is from his discussion with Jocasta, that Oedipus concentrates all his energies on discovering the truth about his part in Laius' murder and each step he takes reveals an additional clue to his identity.

The messenger from Corinth reveals that Polybus has died and Oedipus, realizing that he had no hand in his death, thinks he is free of the oracle, but he insists on discovering who he really is. He blames Jocasta's flight from the stage as an act of class-consciousness and vows, arrogantly, "...I shall search out my descent" (p. 132). Oedipus fails to realize that Jocasta has become aware of her son's identity. She, like Teiresias and Creon, has the ability to recognize what is real. Oedipus still does not; and in his blindness, he arrogantly plunges himself into disaster.

His insistence brings the old servant to the scene and the truth is physically forced out of him. "If you will not speak freely, you will under torture" (p. 144). "Will someone quickly twist back this fellow's arms?" (p. 144). Even realizing that he is "on the brink of horror," Oedipus exclaims, "But still it must be heard" (p. 144), and when the
truth is revealed, Oedipus realizes, "Alas, alas! All things are now come true" (p. 144).

For Oedipus, all things have come true. His guilt in the murder of Laius, his marriage to his mother, and his incest have all occurred. But for Oedipus, something greater has been revealed. He now knows that he has been blind in the type of truth in which he had complete faith and that because of his arrogance and pride, he has brought this end upon himself. His own blinding is symbolic because it demonstrates his realization that a man does not need eyes to see the real truth in life. A man does not need his eyes to sense reality.

Knox interpreted Oedipus' self-destruction as the supreme test of his greatness:

The discovery of his identity is the most catastrophic defeat imaginable, but there is a sense in which it is also a great victory. It is better that he fall by self-destruction than by self-betrayal.1

The final change in Oedipus is demonstrated in his final scene. He realizes the evil in his character and by revealing it, comes to a new perception of himself in relation to the gods and the world; he acquires a new wisdom.

Stating, "A festering of evils, my father has raised in me" (p. 149), he realizes that he has been vain, arrogant, and presumptuous in his attempt to raise himself to the level of the gods. He is now aware that man has his own place in

1Knox, op. cit., p. 52.
relation to the universe and that he has tried to circumvent the will of the gods. Aware that he is a mortal being, with human emotions, passions, and weaknesses, Oedipus realizes that any man who is too sure of himself and attempts to rise above the type of life commensurate with his human lot must fail in his attempt.

Becoming aware of this great truth about life, Oedipus discovers the fallibility of his character. It has not been his aim to merely achieve the highest possible development within the limits set by the gods, to attempt to understand and adhere to the divinely ordained laws of existence, or to accept the restrictions of the human condition. It has instead been his aim to defy his limitations as a mortal being and to achieve the greatness of the gods. But Oedipus discovers that, "As it is I am godless, child of unholiness, wretched sire in common with my father" (p. 149), recognizing that he has been evil in not accepting his conditions; that he has foolishly aspired to be like the gods in power; and, most importantly, that he has not been controlled by the gods at all but instead is completely responsible for his own fate.

It is in this final realization that Oedipus becomes great. He accepts full blame for his end regardless of his inability to understand the forces which ruled his life. He makes no excuses in blaming the gods: "The hand of no one
struck my eyes but wretched me" (p. 148). He invites banishment from Thebes in hopes that "this city will never be condemned--because I live within" (p. 151). He places the concern of his daughters' future above his own suffering and asks that Jocasta be given a just burial. He never asks forgiveness for himself. It is in his humble yet courageous moral acceptance of his fate that Oedipus gains value to his life.

He becomes aware that truth is reflected in many ways: by physical facts; by loyalty, trust, and unselfishness; by those necessary illusions a man needs to exist. But more importantly, he becomes aware that the type of truth to which he has aspired has been faulty. He has been limited in his view of what truth means, where it is found, and how it enables man to exist. He realizes that it has been his striving to achieve godliness which has caused his failure to see the differences in truth.

Once this realization occurs, Oedipus discovers that the real truth in life is an individual's knowledge of who he is and of the world in which he lives. After blinding himself, Oedipus' statement, "For why should I see, when nothing sweet there is to see with sight" (p. 148), emphasizes his discovery of the importance of possessing wisdom and summarizes his knowledge of his earlier flaw in not perceiving the possibility of evil in himself. The statement also affirms the need for
a man to search and study himself in order to establish a meaningful relationship with his world. Creon's indictment of Oedipus' lack of proper perspective of his human condition, "Fear to display so great a pestilence, which neither earth nor holy rain nor light will well receive" (p. 150), serves also as a caution to man to be aware, by insight and understanding, of what his state in life is and to achieve the highest possible development only within those limits. He also suggests that Oedipus' haughty invincibility and blindness to truth should not be imitated; but rather that the way to human happiness is through reverence and humility. The Chorus echoes this thought when it says to Oedipus, "For you would be better dead than living blind" (p. 149).

In *Oedipus Rex*, we see a man who is initially unaware of his identity and mistaken in his conception of his relationship with the world. Because of Oedipus' pride and insistence that the truth be revealed, he suffers. But at the same time, he gains great wisdom because his misconceptions are revealed to him and replaced by an awareness of man, of truth, and of life. He discovers that a man's character and perceptions of himself and his world are solely responsible for his fate.

Like *Oedipus Rex*, *The Wild Duck* and *Winterset* deal with these perceptions of truth, man's insights into his relationship to his world, and the gaining of or failure to gain greater wisdom in the light of tragedy.
II. ANALYSIS OF THE WILD DUCK, BY HENRIK IBSEN

Ibsen's plays have been recommended for study in the high school. Referring to her students, Joan Bissell stated that Ibsen's plays were excellent reading for developing personal values because "he forced them to evaluate his characters in the light of contradictory values and actions." ¹

The Wild Duck is about a man whose attempt to alter the values of his friend, replacing them with his own values, results in tragedy; and it is an excellent drama to include in a personal code unit because it contains a contradiction of values. The main characters in The Wild Duck are motivated from personal codes founded primarily on two opposing principles: Man must face reality, and Man can live peacefully in illusion. All of the characters in The Wild Duck are of two opposing types: those who wish to live in a world of illusion and those who must reveal the truth, no matter what the consequences. Both types of characters have different conceptions of what truth is in life. With these opposing principles in mind, a careful analysis of the personal codes found in the play can be made.

All of the main characters in The Wild Duck are motivated by their ideals, in the common lexical sense that

idealism is "the tendency to represent things as they might or should be rather than as they are, with emphasis on values, the pursuit of high principles." John Northam suggested that, when discussing Ibsen, we should forget "a definition of idealism as being directed by positive traditional moral values and so forth--like Truth, liberty, and love." Even though Ibsen does draw on some of these values in his plays, he does not confine himself to stereotyped values. And, according to Northam, that is what traditional moral values are--noble stereotypes, but stereotypes. Although some of Ibsen's idealists do not pursue traditional moral aims, they do pursue ideals which nevertheless contain very positive value of a different kind. According to Northam:

the idealism of Ibsen's heroes is not a pure, uncontaminated idealism; it is moulded by the very circumstances it tries to transcend. There is no such thing as a pure idealist in Ibsen; no one, that is to say, who is motivated by an urge that flows from a purely personal, uncontaminated inspiration. Ibsen's idealists do not act from a pure idealism in this sense—they react against circumstances.

Ibsen does not see his idealism as a mere impulse, but rather as "a specific response to the specific circumstances of a


2Ibid.

3Ibid.

4Ibid., p. 17.
particular individual, a specific reaction to a particular
relationship with society."¹

The idealism of Old Ekdal, Hjalmar, Hedvig, Old Werle,
and Dr. Relling is founded on the belief that life can be
lived behind a "vital lie" and is opposed to Gregers Werle's
idealistic view that truth is the most important element in
life. It is this basic difference in personal codes that
precipitates the crisis in the characters' lives.

Old Ekdal's idealism is founded on the need to live in
a world he once knew—a world of the uncivilized, of natural-
ness, of spontaneity. It has been a great many years since
Ekdal was an ambitious young businessman, and the attic, with
its wild duck and many other treasures of illusion, serves as
Ekdal's contact with his ideal. For him, the wild duck is a
symbol of the most authentic part of the surrogate wild life
in which he can still see himself leading the primitive
sportsman's existence where he had been happiest.²

Ekdal, like the wild duck, accepts the garret and its
contents as an adequate substitute for the past. Robert
Raphael felt the attic might be considered to be a metaphor
for the Christian paradise for Ekdal. It performs in his

¹Ibid., p. 18.

²Brian W. Downs, A Study of Six Plays by Ibsen
life exactly the same function as a traditional church does
for many people. It provides him with a world of pure value,
a realm of nearly perfect orientation.1

What the attic is for Old Ekdal, Hjalmar's great invention is for him.

When I decided to devote myself to photography, it was not my intent to do nothing but take portraits of all sorts of ordinary people—I made a pledge to myself that if I were to give my powers to this profession I would raise it so high that it would become both an art and a science. That is how I decided to make some remarkable invention (p. 362).2

This striving to achieve something great is Hjalmar's conception of the ideal—to become remarkable and famous and to be able to sustain that greatness. But, Raphael pointed out, "Hjalmar is an imitator: no artist, only a photographer who is sustained by an illusion of some great invention that never comes off."3 It is Dr. Belling who suggests the idea of the invention to Hjalmar knowing that whatever talent Hjalmar ever had "was thoroughly extirpated in his boyhood" (p. 376). He also knows that Hjalmar only had talent for "pretty declamations of other people's poetry and other


3 Raphael, op. cit., p. 122.
people's thoughts" (p. 376). It is Werle who suggests photogra­phy to Hjalmar. Any values that Hjalmar possesses have been introduced to him by Werle and Dr. Belling.

Hjalmar's pursuit of things as he would wish them to be includes his delusion of belonging to a social class into which he does not fit. After the dinner party at Werle's home where Hjalmar was made a fool of in his actions and conversa­tions, he invents a description of his action to Gina:

Gina. You didn't tell them that though, did you?
Hjalmar. Well, I don't know about that. They were told a thing or two--right to their face. That's how they got it—Yes, but I don't want to talk about such things. One doesn’t talk about such things (p. 352).

And he has delusions of grandeur when talking to Hedvig:

Hedvig. You look very well in tails.
Hjalmar. Yes, don't you think so? And it fits me perfectly. As if it were tailor-made. Possibly a trifle tight in the armpits, that's all (p. 352).

But Hjalmar's coat is only borrowed and must be returned, just as his ideal can never be attained. It is this idealism, this illusion of perfection, that leads Hjalmar to reject Gina and Hedvig at the end of the play. He never realizes his self-deception as to who and what he really is; and it is this lack of realistic attachment that is responsible for Hjalmar's loss.

The wild duck is also used as a symbol of Hjalmar, who has dived down deep into the mud and buried himself in his great invention, his self-delusion of belonging to a social
class he has never reached, his imitation of Gregers' vernacular and sophist proverbs without really knowing what they mean, and his acceptance of an undefined ideal imposed upon him by Gregers.¹

Hedvig's behavior, like that of the other Ekdals, is based on what she would wish things to be. The old clock that no longer runs and closets filled with interesting books like Harrison's *History of London* with its numerous illustrations of castles and churches and "big ships that sail the seas" are her contacts with the world of illusion.

The attic and especially the wild duck are also symbols of Hedvig's illusion. Downs stated:

Hedvig loves the wild duck partly because it has been wounded and is thriving again under her care; partly because it is the rarest, most authentic aristocratic denizen of the attic and her very own property; partly because there are about it the romantic fairytale associations of having lived its wild life a long way away and "been down to the depths of the sea."²

In a sense, just as "time has stopped in there where the wild duck lives," so has Hedvig placed herself in her own timeless world—a world where fantasy and idealism thrive and external experience founders. Even her failing eyesight can be construed to demonstrate her lack of orientation in the world of reality.


²Downs, *op. cit.*, p. 162.
Old Werle's idealism is founded in his conscience. Because he knows that things are not as they should be, he tries to right his guilt by over-paying Old Ekdal, setting Hjalmar up in business, and offering a position at home to his son. Werle feels that the truth need not be completely realized; it can be merely assumed and glossed over by financial substitutes.

Finally, Dr. Relling lives in illusion. But he is different from the others because he realizes that illusion is valuable and must be contrived to withstand reality, as further explained on page 27.

The best example of idealism motivating the actions of a character is found in Gregers Werle. His quest to set Hjalmar straight about life is framed with the ideal of justice. But Gregers' concern for justice is not selfless. His revelations stem from injustices that have occurred to himself—-injustices for which there can be no satisfaction: his devotion to his mother which is attacked by his father's believed unfaithfulness to her; his suppressed knowledge of his mother's alcoholic addiction; and his parents constant estrangement. Gregers himself is plagued with being "an ugly person with an ugly name:"

...But when you're an ugly person with an ugly name, when you're cursed with a name like "Gregers" and then "Werle" after that--Did you ever hear of an uglier name? Ugh! I feel like spitting in the face of anybody with a name like that. But since it's my cross to be Gregers Werle, such as I am--- (p. 237).
Because he cannot directly correct the injustices done to him and because of his self-hate, Gregers turns to correcting those injustices done to others.

Admittedly seeking to cure his "sick conscience," Gregers comes with his "claims of the ideal." What he really means, Raphael pointed out, is the demands of his transcendental illusion. He is "gnawed by a guilt-laden conscience," and he decides to save Hjalmar from what he judges to be the falsehood and deception that are ruining him.1

Gregers is completely clear as to what his destiny in life is when he states, "[I am to be] the thirteenth man at the table" (p. 383). It is his desire to be "a really clever dog...an exceptionally skillful dog--the kind that goes down to the bottom after wild ducks when they've dived down among the weeds and the grass down there in the mud" (p. 357). It is his quest in life to seek the ideal and make sure others see it, too. In realizing the truth, Man becomes, rather miraculously, according to Gregers, able to exist in a greater harmony with the world and his spirit is uplifted. McFarlane suggested that the wild duck is also Gregers, who believes that he too will soon accustom himself to his new surroundings.

Gregers is the type of person who will go gallantly on or crawl a little further. He will keep on going

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1Raphael, op. cit., p. 122.
to the depths of the human spirit and hold fast to the reeds. He, like the duck, though wounded, still possesses the spirit of a self-will and determination.1

The wild duck is finally the object of Gregers' mission, the thing he will, like some extraordinarily clever dog, save from the depths.

Gregers' ideal of truth and the sustaining of "vital lies" by the other characters have been viewed as two different kinds of illusion--transcendental and traditional. Raphael defined illusion as necessary self-deception.

Its function is to provide the personality with fixed patterns of value, which are nothing but orientative patterns in the mind that guarantee a certain amount of meaningful continuity to it beyond the randomness and disturbance of external data and experience. These valuable orientations tend to sustain the personality in its constant struggle with reality, so that it is not surprising to find that against such strongly fixed patterns of illusion the reality often is as nothing.2

Raphael classified Gregers as a transcendentalist because of such "he questions the meaning and value of existence, in fact the very conditions of experience."3 Raphael stated:

Such questioning inevitably gives rise to the religious impulse, which is the impulse to "save" people from their traditional, low-bred orientations, in short, from themselves, by imposing on them a loftier illusion.4

1McFarlane, op. cit., p. 9.
2Raphael, op. cit., p. 120.
3Ibid., p. 122. 4Ibid.
Raphael concluded:

In this attempt at a noble synthesis of reality with a transcendental ideal, the missionary not only fails by destroying himself, but also ends up by wounding and finally destroying the personalities of those who are subjected to his vision.¹

Being a transcendentalist, Gregers wants to impose his own ideal upon the Ekdals. But in his idealism, Gregers fails to allow for human weakness and blindness. He feels that people can be placed in strict patterns, and his idealism is impractical in that sense. He destroys the illusions of these people in his quest, and in so doing, he destroys what little communication and harmony existed between Hjalmar and Gina and he destroys Hedvig.

The opposite of Gregers, Dr. Relling is the perfect example of a traditional illusionist. He believes that the cultivation of a stimulating and life-sustaining illusion is a remedy for the sick world.

Transcendental illusion, Relling knows, just like traditional illusion, provides a needed screen against the rigor and disturbance of reality; but Relling is keenly aware also that traditional illusion is more preferable, since it will not justify the violation of other personalities.²

Relling feels that illusion is important in life because it helps a man manipulate and sustain his self-deceptions. "Life would be fairly tolerable," the doctor says, "if only we'd

¹Ibid.
²Ibid., p. 124.
be spared these blasted bill collectors who come around pester ing us paupers with the claim of the ideal" (p. 383). Dr. Relling diagnoses Gregers' sickness as a bad case of "integrity fever," and adds, "[you are] always looking for something to admire outside yourself" (p. 377). Dr. Relling's whole point is that the attic allows the Ekdals to live, whereas Gregers' ideal is only destructive. Raphael suggested that Relling can bear more reality than most people because he can look at all the hell of the world and the personality without casting up strong defenses.¹

It is true that many of Ibsen's idealists end in death or destruction. Northam suggested that, if Ibsen's kind of idealism cannot find expression in living rather than dying, it must be considered defective.² But for Northam, the deaths or destruction affirms that some men would rather die in pursuit of an ideal than abandon it. He stated:

It is true that the constant defeat of the idealist in death or destruction of other people implies that...idealism will not be able to overcome the subtle, insinuating power of society...the balance of feeling, it seems, lies not on the defeat and the death; it lies with the astounding fact that an assertion has been made. Idealism is not abortive in Ibsen; in spite of disaster it is an affirmation.³

¹Ibid., pp. 123-124.
²Northam, op. cit., p. 19.
³Ibid., pp. 19-20.
Being concerned with the crises and conflicts of man's inner and private life, Ibsen uses visual suggestions or clusters of images in *The Wild Duck* to convey the conflict in the characters themselves and in what they believe. Throughout the play, brilliant light and shadow or shaded light are symbolic of truth and illusion. Many of the lamps are covered with green shades which enriches the feeling that superstition and self-deception are present on the stage. The green light absorbs the coloring of the ideal, the imaginary forest of Ekdal's runins, and mysterious depths of the seas where the wild duck has been (both symbols of illusion and deception). The brilliantly lighted rooms and movement of the characters toward a lamp or fireplace traditionally symbolize the movement into knowledge. The use of lights and shadows parallels a development or change in the characters' values in the play.

Whenever Gregers talks to Hjalmar in Act One, it is near the fireplace with a shaded lamp close by. The fireplace becomes a symbol of honest communication between the two men. Hjalmar is gradually turning to Gregers' idealism when his father enters and he "turns away toward the fireplace" (p. 346). Act One finds Gregers constantly "standing by the fireplace" (p. 347).

In Act Two, Hjalmar's illusional life is reflected in the description of his apartment, "a slanting roof with skylights, half covered by blue cloth...on a table is a lighted
lamp with a shade" (p. 350). Through the attic skylight, "...moonlight falls, illuminating some parts of the room, while others are in deep shadows" (p. 355).

After Gregers has visited the Ekdal household and Hjalmar has been stirred by Gregers' ideal, we find that "daylight comes through the skylight, the blue cloth having been pulled aside" (p. 358). And in the attic, "the morning sun is shining through the skylight" (p. 359).

In Act Five, when Gregers has finally persuaded Hjalmar and Hedvig of their duties, there is "cold, gray morning light" (p. 375). Hjalmar returns and "his eyes are dull and lusterless" (p. 378). Ironically, where there should have been brilliance when the truth was revealed, Northam noticed that:

> there is only dullness of a discovered deception. The happy phantasy of illusion is destroyed and grim, prosaic reality usurps the green obscurity, the moonlight and the idyllic sunshine of earlier scenes. 1

The use of light and shadow seem to say that something has been destroyed in the lives of these characters. It is the notion that whenever we destroy a part of our life essential to existence, we can no longer remain the same. Whenever our "vital lie" is revealed and we have no escape from reality, we shed our tears because that lie—that necessary deception--

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is a part of who we are. It is not saying that revelation
and truth are undesirable; only that when truth is revealed
to us, it must replace what is taken from us. When it fails
to do so, then we are all lost and life is shadowed with gloom.

Oedipus and Gregers are very much alike. In both
characters, there exists the flaw of being blinded by their
ideal--their search for truth. The imagery and metaphors
referring to light and darkness heighten the reader's aware­
ness of the aloofness of both characters from the real world
in which they exist. Teiresias is a foil to Oedipus because
he sees the truth, even though physically blind. Dr. Relling,
as a foil to Gregers, realizes that blindness to reality is
sometimes beneficial. In this sense, Teiresias and Dr.
Relling are very similar. Both can see the truth and still
accept the life as it is without stumbling.

This analysis of The Wild Duck shows that there exists
a conflict in the main characters' conceptions of what truth
is. A crisis occurs in their lives because of this conflict
of values and ideals. The imagery and symbolism employed in
the play support this conflict of values.

III. ANALYSIS OF WINTERSET, BY MAXWELL ANDERSON

Written in 1935, Winterset is one of Maxwell Anderson's
best known plays. It concerns a young boy's search for the
truth surrounding his father's imprisonment and death for a
crime of which he was not guilty. The play is a good one to include in this personal code unit because it contains character motivation based on the search for truth and a search for a self-identity.

Winterset differs from The Wild Duck in the type of truth aspired to. Whereas Gregers Werle hoped to destroy traditional illusion in life, replacing it with an even greater transcendental ideal of his own, Mio is searching for a tangible, legal truth concerning a man's reputation. Even though both Gregers and Mio act out of revenge, Gregers' is a subconscious motivation. Mabel Bailey said that Mio realized fully that his is an act "in the nature of guilt and legal and moral justice and the meaning of revenge."¹

Mio's personal code is focused on the conflict between revealing the external truth and establishing values by which he can live. He involves himself in a movement from social justice and personal vengeance to the re-establishment of new criteria for existence.

Vehemently seeking to reveal the real murderer of Romagna, Mio has a concern with truth which becomes fanatical like Gregers'. He can not be satisfied with only learning the truth; he must also be sure that everyone else knows it. It is this fanaticism which leads Mio to destruction.

When asked by Trock if the truth will go any further, Mio responds:

No further than the moon takes the tides... wherever men still breathe and think, and know what's done to them by the powers above, they'll know (p. 94).  

And when Mio is threatened by Trock that he will suffer if he repeats what he knows, Mio exclaims:

Let it rain! What can you do to me now when the night's on fire with this thing I know? Let it rain! Let the night speak fire and the city go out with the tide, for he was a man and I know you now, and I have my day! (p. 95).

Mio, unlike Gregers, has no conception of what his identity is. He has no knowledge of his destiny. But after discovering the truth about his father, he begins to establish new values. After the policeman leaves and Trock escapes in Act II, Mio has lost his thirst for vengeance, but he still has not found a hope—a glimpse of the ideal. He realizes through his love for Miriamne that justice is not the whole truth, the whole good in life. He states, "I came here seeking light in darkness, running from the dawn, and stumbled on a morning" (p. 111).

Bailey stated that the dawn is a metaphor of the ideal, absolute truth, the perfect justice Mio was seeking. She said:

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He was running from it, driven by the hate and bitterness which had made him unfit to be an instrument for righting the wrong which had been done. As a promise dawn is also an incomplete thing. It is not the full light of day.¹

And the morning is a metaphor for Miriamne's love. Bailey stated:

Running from uncertain struggle between darkness and dawn, between despair and desire of good, Mio stumbles upon love, upon the full light of morning. Morning is the light of the full day, not a theoretical good, but the light which shines upon the evil and the good, and conquers darkness by displacing it.²

Through Miriamne, Mio has established new values in life. He says:

Now all you silent powers that make the sleet and dark, and never yet have spoken, give us a sign, let the throw be ours this once, on this longest night, when the winter sets his foot on the threshold leading up to spring and enters with remembered cold—let fall some mercy with the rain. We are two lovers here in your night, and we wish to live (p. 112).

He means that he no longer wishes to live in the past but wants to emerge into the present. Darkness has burdened his emotions but it is through his love for Miriamne that he discovers youth and the joy of being young. He gains the knowledge that life offers more than endless disillusionment; more than constant searching for answers; more than depression, despair, and disappointment. His discovery is only a glimpse of the Mio he knows he would become because "his bitterness has already

¹Bailey, op. cit., p. 139.
²Ibid., p. 139.
laid a snare which is to trip him just as he emerges from the shadow of despair." But Mio, unlike Gregers Werle, has established a meaningful value in life even knowing that it cannot last. It is with this knowledge that he is unafraid to die.

Other characters in Winterset also aspire to the ideal of truth. Miriamne initially questions Garth's refusal to tell the police the truth of Romagna's death. She wants him "to be so far above such things nothing could frighten him" (p. 39). When she finds out the truth about Garth's involvement in the murder, she becomes concerned with protecting Garth and either convincing him to deny any involvement or lie about the truth entirely. And when she has her real chance to reveal the truth about Shadow's death and Garth's involvement, she chooses to say, "No, no--there's no one--there's no one there!" (p. 97). She has definitely chosen to try to maintain whatever relationship exists between the members of her family rather than destroy it by grabbing for the indeterminate straws of some elusive ideal. But when Miriamne tries to convince Mio that he should accept life as it has been dealt and go on from there "You dreamed something--isn't that true? You've dreamed--" (p. 98), it is from this point on that she realizes the necessity and value in truth. Mio

1 Ibid., p. 135.
gives up his quest to have the world know the truth when he
says, "Yes, by God, I was dreaming" (p. 98). He has submitted
to his love for Miriamne and everything she holds as important,
which results in him giving up his quest for truth.

When Miriamne sees the effect of this submission on
Mio, her love is returned by her reversal of roles with him.
She becomes the idealist and insists on the revelation of the
truth. It is this reversal of values, or more accurately,
the alteration of Mio's values, that heightens Miriamne's
awareness of the importance of truth in life. Her final act
of dying is based on a mixture of this heightened awareness
as well as a protest against Mio's death.

Another reversal of values is present in the play. Not
only does Miriamne replace Mio in his quest for justice, but
Esdras, a man who has always been aware of the value of truth
and justice, offers to help Mio escape safely even knowing
that his son will be incriminated by the evidence Mio will
offer. He, too, has come to the realization that the truth
will be heard and must be accepted.

Garth aspires to the ideal but never claims it. He
knows what he should do but it is his life that will be sac­
rificed if Mio exposes Trock. He, like any realist, chooses
his life over any ideal. In the final scene, Garth's guilt
causes him to condemn Mio's and Miriamne's values: "Why was
the bastard born?" (p. 114) and "Why must she be a fool?"
(p. 115).
Anderson employs the images of light and darkness, stillness and storm, and water to symbolize the opposition of truth and injustice. The use of names symbolizing light and darkness are found in Shadow (Darkness), Trock Estrella (Star), and Lucia (Light). Shadow is Trock's Negro accomplice. He is a crook and has no concern about truth. His only attempt at justice occurs in his "resurrection" and threat to avenge his murder. Trock Estrella flickers between trying to keep the secret of Romagna's innocence and desiring not to harm anybody else. The image of a star—at one moment dark (Trock's hatred and fear), the next moment brilliant (Trock's desire to leave the past as it is)—is present in his character. Lucia is a man of innocence. He knows nothing of the affairs surrounding the household of Esdras and ultimately of the world of evil. His piano playing is symbolic of the true spirit of a world in which harmony with all elements exists.

The images of light and darkness are initially evident in the opening setting of the play:

A single street lamp is seen at the left—and a glimmer of apartment lights in the background beyond. It is an early, dark, December morning. The river-bank...is black rock worn smooth...(p. 35)

Anderson's symbolic movement from light into darkness into light (search for truth into its irrelevance into the importance of truth) can be seen in the movement of the characters on stage. As Lucia enters in Scene I to speak to Trock, Trock "still stands facing Shadow" (p. 37) and goes
out without speaking. In Scene III, Miriamne is sitting outside while "a spray of light falls on her from a street lamp" (p. 46). As Judge Gaunt enters, he immediately "steps back into the shadows" (p. 48). After her initial glimpse of Mio, Miriamne is "sitting half in shadow" (p. 58). In the same scene "Miriamne pulls Mio back into the shadow of the rock" (p. 65). At the beginning of Act III, two gunmen "are leaning against the masonry in a ray of light" (p. 101).

Many other references to light (truth, knowledge, goodness) and darkness (ignorance, evil) are found in the play.

In Scene II, Miriamne remembers

...how you Garth dim the lights--and we go early to bed--and speak in whispers--and I could think there's a death somewhere behind us--an evil death--(p. 39)

and Esdras knows that

The days go by like film, like a long written scroll, a figured veil unrolling out of darkness into fire and utterly consumed. And on this veil, running in sounds and symbols of men's minds reflected back, life flickers and is shadow going toward flame. Only what men can see exists in that shadow (p. 45).

Miriamne responds, "But if it was true and someone died--then it was more than shadow--and it doesn't blow away" (p. 45).

In Scene III, Miriamne loves Mio and wonders,

Oh, Mio, Mio, in all the unwanted places and waste lands that roll up into the darkness out of sun and into sun out of dark, there should be one empty for you and me (p. 63).

In Act II, Mio asks of Esdras,
Will you tell me how a man's to live, and face his life, if he can't believe the truth's like a fire, and will burn though and be seen though it takes all the years there are? (pp. 75-76)

And referring to Shadow's last effort at justice, Trock hints that the light of truth will not be seen when he says, "I guess we won't see Shadow. No, that's too much to ask" (p. 87). In Act III, Mio refers to truth and death simultaneously as "that barrier of dark" (p. 107). Out of her love for Mio, Miriamne describes him as "brightness drawn across what's black and mear" (p. 10).

Mio's final conclusion was that he "...came here seeking light in darkness, running from the dawn, and stumbled on a morning" (p. 110). Esdras' final speech concludes:

On this star, in this hard star-adventure, knowing not what the fires mean to right and left, nor whether man can stand up, and look out blind, and say: in all these turning lights I find no clue; only a masterless night, and in my blood no certain answer, yet is my mind my own, yet is my heart a cry toward something dim in distance, which is higher than I am and makes me emperor of the endless dark even in seeking (p. 115).

Anderson's use of a rain storm during the play is meant to enrich the symbolic overtones of a storm in the characters' lives. The characters move from a position of seeming tranquility to gradual cloudiness of their values to a thunderous climax. Anderson's growing rain storm in the play parallels that development.

His initial setting hints at the possibility of storminess in the characters' climate with "a dark, December
morning” (p. 35). In Scene II, Garth cautions Miriamne to “stay in out of the rain” (p. 38). In Scene III, Miriamne sits outside, not yet meeting Mio, "heedless of the weather" (p. 46). Just when Garth and Esdras recognize Judge Gaunt, "a fine sleet begins to fall" (p. 59). Mio immediately notices that it "looks like rain" (p. 59). At the end of Act I, Carr comments, "God, it's cold here" (p. 68). In Act II, after Mio has had his confrontation with Gaunt, the Judge says, "A little rain shouldn't matter to me" (p. 83). After Trock and Mio have come face to face, "there is a brilliant lightning flash, followed slowly by dying thunder... the rain begins to fall in sheets" (p. 88), and "lightning flashes again" (p. 88). Just as the bullet-riddled body of Shadow enters, "the rain still falls in torrents" (p. 89). During the mock trial scene, there is "a flash of lightning" (p. 92), and "the thunder rumbles faintly" (p. 92). When Garth tries to leave the trial and escape his guilt, he "faces a solid wall of rain" (p. 92) and closes the door. As Act III begins, and Trock has just left the tenement just a little before Mio, "the rain still falls though the street lamps" (p. 101). The rain continues to fall until the end of the final scene.

The rain which falls throughout the final two acts of the play is symbolic of truth and purification. Whenever a character denies the truth or admits his part in Romagna's
tragedy, the rain and thunder become more intense. The rain falls on all of the characters by the end of the play and bathes them in the ideal of truth.

IV. SUMMARY OF ANALYSES

The foregoing chapter presented critical analyses of Oedipus Rex by Sophocles, The Wild Duck by Henrik Ibsen, and Winterset by Maxwell Anderson, centered around the theme of personal codes.

The personal codes of the three main characters, Oedipus, Gregers Werle, and Mio, were all founded on the desire for truth. Oedipus wanted to discover the reason for the Thebian plague; Gregers Werle attempted to reveal the truth to Hjalmar in hopes of shattering traditional illusions and re-establishing a loftier ideal of his own; and Mio initially sought to reveal the truth concerning his father's innocence. These three characters possessed similar conceptions of what truth really is: All three conceived truth as factual revelation. They all were initially concerned with discovering the facts about their own situation and making sure those facts were revealed to others around them. But in this similarity of discovering the factual truth are found dissimilarities as to why they must reveal the truth.

For Oedipus, revealing the cause of the plague upon Thebes reinforced his own arrogance and pride while reaffirming
his qualities as King. For Gregers Werle, when the truth was revealed, an uplifting of spirit occurred and man was to be capable of living in greater harmony with one another. For Mio, revealing the truth about his father meant that he cleared his name and avenged his death.

Dissimilarities also exist in the orientations of the three characters to the type of truth to which they aspire. Oedipus believes truth to be something one can see or reason out, like the answer to a riddle. Any other type of truth in life is never contemplated until his tragedy occurs. Gregers Werle is just the opposite: Truth to him is never the real, workable reality; but rather the transcendental, idealistic belief that all men exist harmoniously when they reveal everything about themselves. Mio, like Oedipus, initially sees truth only as precise and univocal, something to record in law books.

In the three plays, the main characters are faced with a crisis and when forced to come to grips with their particular conceptions of truth, they react to those conceptions by either realizing that their conception was wrong or by reaffirming it. Oedipus comes to realize that he was wrong in believing that truth was always apparent, and that because of his attachment to only one kind of truth, he has suffered. He states, "For why should I see, when nothing sweet there is to see with sight?" and "The hand of no one struck my eyes
but wretched me." Mio too learns that just one type of truth cannot be aspired to and rigidly followed by all people. He learns that truth is modified by a man's circumstances and a man does what he does because of those circumstances. He comes to the realization that in order to exist, a person has to live by his own ideals while respecting the ideals of others, even if they are contradictory to his own. He says, "I came here seeking light in darkness, running from the dawn, and stumbled on a morning." Gregers Werle, unlike Oedipus and Mio, never bends. He never relinquishes his idealistic belief in the good found in the transcendental, spiritual truth. He insists that he will always be "the thirteenth man at the table."

Even while the three characters suffer or cause suffering in their pursuit of truth, they do not all benefit from that suffering. Oedipus benefits from discovering his fallibility as a mortal being but only in the sense that he has gained in wisdom. But from his new knowledge and complete acceptance of his fate, he has become a greater person. His new awareness of life, the world, and himself is enough to enable him to accept his fate gallantly. Mio dies without regret because he finds that the love he has for Miriamne far outweighs his fear of physical death. But Gregers Werle, even in destroying the Ekdal household, never becomes aware of his lack of insight into real life and real people. He only blindly reaffirms his position.
All three characters are initially blind to the faults which lie in the type of truth to which they aspire. The imagery of light and darkness and references to sight in the three dramas enrich the symbolic overtones of that blindness. In Oedipus Rex, the constant references to light and vision heighten the reader's awareness that Oedipus is indeed blind to the underlying levels of truth and intensify the irony of Oedipus' lack of insight into his relationship with the world. Oedipus "never saw Laius"; he went to a land where he "should never see the disgrace" of the prophecy; he "plans to see the seed of his descent"; he realizes that perhaps he "should not shed clear light upon his birth"; he "struck his own eyeballs"; his blindness is a "cloud of dark"; the Chorus is "not his from him"; his eyes were "once bright" before he could not see. Ironically, he taunts Teiresias as blind: "your ears and mind and eyes are blind"; "you live in entire night"; "in his art he is blind." Teiresias tells Oedipus, "You have eyes, but see not where in evil you are," and prophecies to Oedipus, "He shall be blind who see." The Chorus refers to the information Oedipus gathers as "dark report," and comments that Oedipus is a man who has "lulled his eye to sleep." The Chorus concludes, "it would be better to be dead than living blind."

In The Wild Duck, the use of light and shadow imagery heightens the illusions shared by the characters in the play and particularly points out Gregers Werle's insistence on truth.
The Ekdal home is constantly "half in light and half in shadow." Gregers' is always in "brilliant light." Whenever Gregers comes into contact with the Ekdals, an illumination of the dark shadows of the apartment and the attic occurs.

In Winterset, the opposition of light and shadow falling on a character symbolized the movement from the importance of truth to its irrelevance as well as the movement from ignorance into knowledge. Before Mio enters, we see Miriamne "half in shadow, half in light;" Judge Gaunt is always "in the shadows;" Miriamne meets Mio and pulls him "back into the shadow." Only what man is aware of "exists in the shadow" of half truths. "Truth is life a fire." Miriamne describes Mio as "brightness drawn across what's black and mean." Mio comes "seeking light in darkness."

The references to light in Oedipus Rex and Winterset conclude with the knowledge that the characters have gained great insights into the need for properly oriented values. The Wild Duck, however, ends in a dismal grey setting suggestive of Gregers' persistent blindness in his aspiration to an ineffectual truth.

In all three plays are posed the questions of what truth really is, how man should accept his human condition, and what the relationship should be between man and his world. All three plays present misconceptions about the truth and the three main characters suffer or cause suffering because of
their misconceptions. Even though in Oedipus Rex and Winterset these misconceptions are resolved and two of the main characters realize that they have been wrong, in The Wild Duck there is no such discovery; but rather an affirmation of the same misconceptions of truth. What then is the value found in including these three plays in this personal code unit? The value of reading these three plays lies in the discovery that man must be aware of the various meanings and levels of truth in life. He must establish a relationship with his world which will enable him to aspire to greatness while still being aware of the human condition and human weakness. He must be assured that failure to become aware of himself and his world may lead to catastrophe. But most importantly, he must realize that should failure occur, greatness lies in bravely taking on the dignity and burden of complete responsibility for all one's acts.
CHAPTER III

A TEACHING PLAN FOR OEDIPUS REX, THE WILD DUCK, AND WINTERTSET

It was the purpose of this writer in this chapter to present a detailed teaching plan for Oedipus Rex, The Wild Duck, and Winterset, centered around the theme of personal codes, to be used with a college-preparatory high school group of either sophomores or juniors. Materials presented by the writer include activities for reading, writing, speaking, and listening for students studying this drama unit.

The three dramas were chosen because of their similarities of personal codes. It was hoped that through the study of this unit, the students would recognize the need to establish meaningful and enriching values and ideals in life and begin thinking about what values in life were best for them as individuals in their own world.

The writer would use three individual editions in the unit. Published by Houghton-Mifflin, Ten Greek Plays¹ is edited by L. R. Lind, whose introduction to Sophocles contains an excellent discussion of Oedipus as a free agent. In paperback, Four Great Plays by Ibsen² is published by Bantam Books.


In order to create the necessary atmosphere, interest, and mood, the instructor could prepare a bulletin board featuring scenes in which famous and unknown people are acting out of their own personal values. This display would be valuable in allowing the students not only to identify with famous persons but also to relate to other people like themselves. Perhaps these pictures could be backed and assembled along the chalk board or projected onto a screen by an opaque projector and briefly discussed as a motivation. The students could be asked the following questions:

1. What important choices must a person make in his life? How are these choices made?
2. In what ways are our values determined? By whom?
3. What differences in values do you and your parents share? What are the causes of these differences?
4. What values must a person possess to live in the world of today?

The instructor should then define what is meant by a personal code and introduce the three dramas, *Oedipus Rex*, *The Wild Duck*, and *Winterset*, as plays concerned with a conflict of values, identifying these questions as those which the students will find themselves thinking about as they read the three dramas.

The instructor might then distribute copies of the essay, "Reading a Play: An Essay for Students" by James Hoetker. The essay is excellent in its simplification of steps to follow in reading and obtaining the most out of a play. The reading of the essay should be followed by discussion of any questions that might arise.

Because the students may encounter many new words in their reading of the three dramas, the instructor should point out these words to the students for each play before the students begin their reading. A list of the vocabulary words for all three plays is found in Appendix A.

Beginning with *Oedipus Rex*, the instructor should prepare an introductory biographical summary of Sophocles, a brief discussion of Greek theatre, how Sophocles was a member of that theatre, and an explanation of the Oedipus myth. As an alternative introductory activity, the film, "The Age of

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Sophocles," could be shown. The film can be rented from the University of Iowa and deals with a discussion of Greek theatre and Sophocles' contribution as a playwright in that theatre. The instructor should explain that the play is divided into six scenes (or episodes) which deal with the play's action connected by the interventions of the Chorus. Oedipus Rex should then be assigned in its entirety for the students' first reading. The following questions could be given to the students as a guide for reading the play and could serve as the basis for a preliminary discussion after the play has been read completely:

Prologue (lines 1 - 150)

1. At what time does the action begin? How is the exposition handled throughout the scene?

2. How is Oedipus' present condition related to his solving the riddle of the Sphinx? How are the similarities repeated in the present situation?

3. What clues do you find to characterize Oedipus?

4. What is Creon like? How is he different from Oedipus?

Chorus (lines 151 - 215)

1. With what is the prayer of the Chorus concerned? About what else do they express concern?

2. How does the Chorus' intervention affect you?

First Episode (lines 216 - 462)

1. What does Oedipus promise to do?
2. Tiresias is a soothsayer. What significance is there in his blindness?

3. How does Oedipus taunt Tiresias?

4. Of what does Oedipus accuse Tiresias? Who else does he accuse? What is revealed about Oedipus' character in this scene?

5. How do you, as a reader who knows the truth, react to Oedipus' taunting of Tiresias?

Chorus (lines 463 - 511)

1. With whom does the Chorus agree concerning Oedipus' accusations?

2. Does the Chorus feel that Oedipus is guilty or innocent?

Second Episode (lines 512 - 862)

1. Why does Oedipus refuse to believe Creon?

2. Is Jocasta's defense of Creon based on loyalty for her brother or love for her husband?

3. How is Oedipus upset by Jocasta's recalling of the prophecy and death of Laius?

4. Why does Oedipus insist on the old servant being brought to him?

5. What confusion still remains in Oedipus' mind concerning Laius' death?

Chorus (lines 863 - 910)

1. What does the Chorus advocate as the only sensible way of life?
Third Episode (lines 911 - 1082)

1. What news reaches Oedipus concerning his father, Polybus? How does this news affect Oedipus?

2. How does the messenger's information change Oedipus' attitudes?

3. What physical feature does Oedipus become aware of which heightens his fears?

4. How is Jocasta affected by Oedipus' final discovery?

5. How does Oedipus interpret Jocasta's flight from the stage?

6. What does Oedipus vow to do more ardently than ever?

Chorus (lines 1083 - 1112)

1. How does the Chorus' song affect the tone of the preceding scene?

Fourth Episode (lines 1113 - 1185)

1. In what way is the old shepherd similar to Tiresias? How is he treated by Oedipus?

2. How does Oedipus react to the shepherd's tale?

Chorus (lines 1186 - 1222)

1. What does the Chorus say about Oedipus?

Exodus (lines 1223 - 1530)

1. What has happened to Jocasta?

2. What does Oedipus lament?

3. How does the Chorus' last chant relate to the tone of the preceding scene?
As a summary activity to Oedipus Rex, the film entitled, "The Character of Oedipus" might be shown. This film is directed to an audience of high school to adult level. The film may be rented from the University of Iowa at a reasonable fee for this purpose. As an alternative summary activity, the critically acclaimed film version of the Tyrone Guthrie production of Oedipus Rex could be shown.

As an activity which would be carried through the entire unit, the students could list those qualities which characterize Oedipus and examine how Oedipus' personal code affected his actions, stating any changes that occur in Oedipus' conception of the value of having an effective code of behavior.

As a concluding activity for Oedipus Rex, the class could write a composition on one of the following topics: the use of light and darkness in the play and its effect on our understanding of Oedipus' character; the particular instances in which the value of having a personal code is revealed in Oedipus Rex; the steps which Oedipus takes to discover his identity and how he becomes enmeshed in his own pursuit. This composition assignment allows the students to develop a theme by the use of examples. As an alternative concluding activity, the class could be divided into small groups, each given the task of deciding exactly how Oedipus' concepts of truth and man's state in life are faulty.
To begin the study of *The Wild Duck*, the instructor should prepare an introductory biographical summary of Henrik Ibsen, a brief discussion of Realism and how *The Wild Duck* is a part of that movement in the theatre, and an explanation of the characters in the play. As an alternative introductory activity, a student could prepare a presentation of the differences present in the concepts of fate, as viewed by the Greeks, and by the late 19th century world. *The Wild Duck* should then be assigned in its entirety as a reading assignment. The following questions could be given the students as a guide for reading the play and could serve as the basis for discussion after the play has been read completely:

**Act I**

1. What is the setting of Act I?
2. What use is made of lighting and shadow imagery throughout the act?
3. What type of life does Werle live?
4. What image do we get of old Ekdal?
5. What kind of person is Hjalmar?
6. How is the exposition handled in Act I?
7. What do we learn of Werle and Ekdal's past business relationship?
8. What do we learn of Gregers and his father's present relationship? How has the past affected this relationship?
Act II

1. Describe Hjalmar's apartment. What details would suggest his social class?

2. How does Hjalmar describe his evening? What impression do you get of Hjalmar in his discussion with Gina and Hedvig?

3. How do Gina and Hedvig treat Old Ekdal? How does Hjalmar treat him?

4. Describe Hjalmar as a host.

5. Describe Old Ekdal's attic. What function does it serve for him?

6. What does Gregers think of himself? What does he say he would like to be?

7. How has Hjalmar been initially affected by Gregers visit?

Act III

1. How does Hjalmar accept the responsibilities of his photography business?

2. How are Hedvig's attitudes concerning the attic and the wild duck revealed in her discussion with Gregers?

3. What is Hjalmar's "great invention?" What is his attitude about it?

4. What is Gregers' first reference to his mission in life? Why does he say that Hjalmar is like the wild duck?
5. What is Dr. Relling like? How does Gregers react to him? How does Dr. Relling affect the lives of the Ekdal family?

6. What is Gregers' mission as he reveals it to his father?

**Act IV**

1. How has Hjalmar's relationship with Gina and Hedvig been affected by his talk with Gregers?
2. How has Hjalmar's language changed?
3. What does Gregers expect to find when he returns to the Ekdal household? What does he find instead?
4. What hints are made in this act concerning the tragedy to come in the final scene?

**Act V**

1. What does Relling have to say about the character of Hjalmar? How have we seen this demonstrated in the play?
2. What does Relling say about the necessity of illusion in life? For the Ekdals especially?
3. What realizations does Gregers come to concerning Hjalmar? How has he failed in his mission?
4. What does Gregers say concerning his destiny in life?

To bring the play to life, it is interesting for the class to read parts orally as a dramatic skit. The following might be read: the scene between Gregers and his father in
Act I; the scene between Gregers and Hedvig in Act III; the scene between Hjalmar and Gina before Gregers' entrance in Act IV; or the final scene dealing with Hedvig's death.

The analysis of Gregers Werle's character could be handled in the same way as the character of Oedipus, examining differences or similarities present in the characters of both men.

As a concluding activity over *The Wild Duck*, select twelve students to serve on three panels. Assign the following topics to the panels:

1. Ibsen has carefully chosen the title for his play.
2. Whose illusion was most ineffective: Hjalmar's or Gregers'?
3. How is the light and shadow imagery developed in the play? What are its symbolic purposes?

As an alternative concluding activity for *The Wild Duck*, the class could write a composition on one of the following topics: describe in detail the Werle home, the Ekdal apartment, or the Ekdal's attic; or, as both newspaper reported and an eye witness, describe the incident of Oedipus' physical blinding. The composition assignment allows the student the opportunity to develop a theme by the use of details and allows the differences between subjectivity and objectivity in description to be explored. As another alternative concluding activity, the class could write a composition on the
topic: the similarities present in the faulty conceptions of truth of both Oedipus and Gregers Werle.

To begin the study of Winterset, a student might prepare and present an introductory biographical summary of Maxwell Anderson, followed by the instructor's brief discussion of the author's concern with personal values and social issues, and introduction to the characters in the play. Winterset should then be assigned in its entirety as a reading assignment. The following questions could be given to the students as a guide for reading the play and could serve as the basis for discussion after the play has been read completely:

**Act I**

**Scene I:**

1. What is the physical and psychological setting of the story?

2. What kind of character is Trock?

**Scene 2:**

1. How is the exposition handled in the play?

2. What is Miriamne and Garth's relationship? Would you classify either of them as a realist or an idealist?

3. What are Esdras', Garth's and Miriamne's attitudes concerning truth?

**Scene 3:**

1. What references are made to the weather? How do they relate to the characters' lives?
2. Why has Mio come to this place? What are his views on life? How have those values been developed?

3. What is your first impression of Judge Gaunt?

Act II

1. How has Miriamne's attitudes changed concerning Garth's involvement in the crime?

2. How do Mio's and Gaunt's views on truth and justice differ?

3. What is revealed about Mio's character after his talk with Trock?

4. For what reason does Mio relent to Miriamne?

5. How have Miriamne's attitudes toward truth and justice changed? Why?

Act III

1. What symbolic overtones could the rain storm have in the play?

2. What conclusions has Mio reached concerning his values in life?

3. How has Mio affected Esdras' values?

4. Why does Mio deliberately face the possibility of death? Why does Miriamne also choose to die?

5. What understanding about values in life (if any) is found in Esdras' final speech?

6. Why has the author chosen Winterset as the title of the play?
The students should prepare a list of those character traits of Mio and compare them to those qualities of Oedipus and Gregers Werle.

As a concluding activity for Winterset, the class could write a composition on one of the following topics: the similarities and differences seen in the radical's scene in Act I and today's campus protestors; Judge Gaunt's behavior as representative of today's legal system; the similar use of light and shadow imagery in all three dramas. The composition assignment allows the student the opportunity to develop a theme with the use of comparison and contrast.

As an alternative concluding activity, the student might be asked to take the place of either Oedipus, Gregers, or Mio and discuss how he would have acted in the final scene in contrast to the particular character he chooses. As another alternative concluding activity, the student might be asked to rewrite the final scene of one of the plays altering the impact the revelation of truth has upon the character.

A discussion period should be assigned to discuss with the students questions concerning all three plays as they apply to the personal code unit. Such questions could be:

1. Is Oedipus Rex the story of only one man in conflict or could he be any man?

2. What value is found in the protagonists' ideals if only suffering is the result?
3. What values do Oedipus, Gregers, and Mio share in common?

4. Gregers feels it must be "truth above all." In what situations might the truth be worse than lies?

5. In what professions would justice be of the utmost importance?

6. Under what conditions do you feel a person's values change the most?

7. Why would the values of a student necessarily be different than those of a teacher?

8. If an individual could be motivated from just one value, what single value would you deem the most important?

The study could then be closed by an evaluation administered to the students by the instructor. It would be hoped that the evaluation would reveal that the students have gained some insight into the lives and characters of Oedipus, Gregers, and Mio and the similarity of their personal values. But more importantly, it would be hoped that they have come to the realization that whatever a man does, he does it because of his own individual values. It would also be hoped that the students have been prompted to establish meaningful, purposeful values for themselves. The evaluation could consist of an essay on one of the following topics: discuss the values of Oedipus, Gregers, and Mio and consider the ways in which those
values are ineffective; the greatness of Oedipus and Mio is contrasted to Gregers' failure by the discovery of wisdom. Also included in the evaluation could be situations in which the student might find himself in conflict with the values of his parents and peers, and situations where he must make a decision based on what he thinks is right. The situations would offer alternative choices for action.

As an alternative concluding activity, a guest lecture could be presented by the school guidance counselor or a pastor of a local church, summarizing the need to establish meaningful conceptions of one's identity in relation to his world and the necessity of accepting one's failures or successes with complete responsibility.
CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY

It was the purpose of this study to develop a teaching unit suitable for a college-preparatory group of high school sophomores or juniors, centered around the theme of personal codes found in *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles, *The Wild Duck* by Henrik Ibsen, and *Winterset* by Maxwell Anderson.

The author presented original analyses of the three dramas, supported by criticisms of recognized critics. The analyses pertained to the discussion of the personal values motivating the characters in the three plays.

In the teaching plan for the three dramas, ideas for preliminary activities, learning situations, and culminating activities were included. The questions concerning the content and dramatic techniques of *Oedipus Rex*, *The Wild Duck*, and *Winterset* were directed primarily toward the above-average language arts student. Opportunities for supplementary reading, dramatic activities, composition work, and artistic activities were provided. Exercises to improve basic skills in the language arts and discussion questions to heighten the students' awareness of the necessity of having and acting from personal values were included. An evaluation sheet for testing purposes was also considered.
It was hoped that through the study of these three dramas, the students would become familiar with drama as a literary form, including its strengths and weaknesses. It was also hoped that the students would become aware of the importance of personal values in life and begin to think seriously about establishing meaningful values for themselves.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. BOOKS


**B. PERIODICALS**


APPENDIX A

VOCABULARY WORDS IN THE DRAMA UNIT.

Oedipus Rex

suppliant
supplication
suppliance
succour
prostrate
reproach
upbraid
defile
stealth

eradicate
indignant
machination
conjecture
capriciously
daimon
expiate
impious

The Wild Duck

transcendental
sanctum
chamberlain
fraudulently
misconstrue
filial
fruel
muscovy
resurrect
melancholia
impecunious
demonic
credulous

sporadically
predecessor
apathetic
consecration
impertinent
renumerate
retribution
suppurative
incipient
memoirs
abomination
pauper

Winterset

penology
prodigy
arpeggio
vestment
vagabond
unscrupulous
plagiarism
sleuthing
conjugal
dissolution
myrmidon

paucity
prerequisite
fatuous
circumnamb
requiem
purveyor
putrescent
claustrophobia
elegiac
aureole
calcimine
Winterset (continued)

commonweal
legerdemain
mawkishness
deprecatingly
precedent

probity
malefactor
admonition
casuistry
APPENDIX B

VOCABULARY LIST OF PERSONAL CODE AND LITERARY TERMS

integrity
verisimilitude
illusion
exonerate
acquiescence
motivation

paradox
irony
exposition
imagery
foil
symbol
prologue
myth
vital lie
APPENDIX C

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

I. Artistic Activities
   A. The students could construct a collage or montage centered around the theme of personal codes.
   B. Make a scrap book containing original scenes from the three plays, a vocabulary unit, original character sketches, and a discussion of personal values.
   C. Design costumes for Oedipus and Jocasta.
   D. Construct a model of the Greek stage.
   E. Design a mask that would have been used in Greek theatre. Explain the character's personality, social position, and age as symbolized in the mask.

II. Dramatic Activities
   A. A student or students could prepare a dramatic reading from one of the plays for interpretive reading.
   B. A group of students could present a single scene or act from one of the plays.
   C. After rewriting the final scene of one of the plays, a group of students could present their interpretation.

III. Written Activities
   A. Write a character sketch on one of the following: Old Ekdal, Mrs. Sorby, Tiresias, Judge Gaunt.
   B. Write limericks to describe Oedipus, Gregers Werle, and Mio.
   C. Write a theme on the topic: illusions are valuable means of existence.
D. Prepare a research project on one of the following:
"Sophocles was a typical Greek playwright," or
"Oedipus Rex is a typical Greek tragedy."

E. Write a report on either the development of Realism in the Modern Theatre or the value of imagery in dramatic compositions.
APPENDIX D

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

I. Bibliography for Students and Teacher

Hughes, Glenn. *A History of the American Theatre.*
Siks, Geraldine Brain. *Creative Dramatics.*
Weigand, Herman. *Modern Ibsen.*

II. Works Concerning Personal Values for Senior High Reading Lists

Dickens, Charles. *A Tale of Two Cities.*

III. Other Works of the Dramatists

Sophocles

*Electra*
*Antigone*

Henrik Ibsen

*The Doll's House*
*An Enemy of the People*
*Hedda Gabler*
Maxwell Anderson

Mary of Scotland

Anne of the Thousand Days

Key Largo
APPENDIX E

AUDIO-VISUAL MATERIALS

Films:

"The Character of Oedipus." Available upon request from the University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa.

"Oedipus Rex." The film version of the Tyrone Guthrie production.