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LITERATURE

MADNESS IN THE FAMILY IN REALISTIC AND ABSURD GUISE: MILLER'S *THE LAST YANKEE* AND PINTER'S *MOONLIGHT*

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In this essay I propose to analyse the presentation of the family by two dramatists who are arguably *the* modern classics in their respective countries. Both plays premiered in 1993, so one line of investigation will be how the two playwrights present the family unit in the 1990's. For both the family has been an overriding concern in their entire oeuvre; a glance back at its presentation in their earlier work for comparison will be helpful. The greyish zone at the borderline between sanity and insanity is a central feature in both plays: in *The Last Yankee* it is patently obvious, since the wives of the two male protagonists are inmates of a mental clinic; in *Moonlight*, Andy, the dying father, is teetering on the brink of insanity; we're witnessing "a dying man's half-paranoid dream", as Benedict Nightingale put it (Nightingale 1993: 4). Just as in Miller's play, abnormal behaviour is making an inroad on what used to be the happy family. Pinter still chooses the family home as a setting, while Miller has already transferred the locale to a mental institution.

The fundamental question underlying all of Miller's plays is: "How can a man make of the outside world a home?" (Miller 1978: 73). In a slightly altered fashion this existential need also underlies most of Pinter's plays: it features most signally in *The Room, The Birthday Party, The Homecoming and The Caretaker.* The proverbially Pinteresque pattern is that of an intruder threatening the brittle security of the characters' home. His latest play has been called a "coming home to *The Homecoming*", his primary concern being "of the family and not of the state" (Nightingale 1993: 4). But this home is disintegrating: it is not just the dying father who is "on the way out" (Pinter 1993: 71), but the dream of the happy family which characters like Bridget still cling to at the be-

ginning of the play. Miller's change of setting from the Kellers' backyard to a mental institution points in the same direction.

Another issue which has to be tackled is that of the dramatic mode of representation. In his penetrating study of the family in American drama, Tom Scanlan claims that the American family play is predominantly realistic (cf. Scanlan 1978: 6), whereas the European theatre displays more varied styles, which he subsumes under the umbrella term "expressionistic": by this he means the "principal anti-realistic devices" (1978: 14) which suggest "the subjective, inner, or dream life" (1978: 15). In his theoretical writings Miller has stated that a pure family drama like *All My Sons* calls for an Ibsenite realistic mode (cf. Miller 1957: 19-21; Miller 1978: 71). This is not entirely in keeping with his own practice, since expressionist or Brechtian elements feature prominently in his major family dramas like *Death of a Salesman, After the Fall* or *A View from the Bridge*; but, as I'm about to demonstrate, he actually moves in the direction of realism in *The Last Yankee*. Pinter, on the other hand, has always been connected with the theatre of the absurd and his iconoclastic break with the realistic tradition is one of the hallmarks of his work. Reality and fantasy are inextricably intertwined in his plays; as we shall see, his latest piece follows suit.

1. *The Last Yankee*

Let me first investigate these elements in Miller's play. As hinted at in my introductory remarks the transfer of the setting of the play from the family home to a state mental clinic is highly symbolic. The interface between the private and the public realm has always been at the centre of Miller's plays. In *All My Sons* the setting is "the backyard of the Keller home in the outskirts of an American town" (Miller 1988: 58). But in the play the family backyard is not a purely private space: it is enveloped by society, the neighbours constantly enter the family grounds, and society at large interacts with the family-clan.

At this point it is useful to introduce some sociological terms to define different family types. After the perusal of a great many works on the sociology of the family I opted for the terms developed in one of the few books linking sociological and drama studies, namely Tom Scanlan's *Family, drama, and American dreams*. He distinguishes between two types of the nuclear family, namely the "family of security" and the "family of freedom":

> The family of security means love, warmth, protection, and mutuality, but it may depend on self-destructive sacrifice which corrodes one's vital will and independence. To flee this domestic tyranny means individuality, free will, and self-expression. Yet such freedom may rely on a brutal disregard for others which eventually isolates and crazes (Scanlan 1978: 152).

More recent sociological studies point out that the notion of the "family of security" is part of the general human tendency towards a mythic idealisation of childhood: "The further our memories have to grope back to the past, the more transfigured they become", states Hettlage (1992: 41, my translation) and goes on to point out that only bourgeois families which had escaped "the permanent struggle with [material] scarcity" were in a position to idealise the family as "community", "a refuge" or "a place of recovery" (1992: 48). This view of the family as a counterworld to society is largely a product of romanticism (Hettlage 1992: 41-42). However, viewed as a projection prevalent at specific stages of the development of the capitalist society, Scanlan's dichotomy is a useful tool to categorise the different kinds of families represented in my plays. Scanlan emphasises that the "family of freedom" is an ambivalent mirage of "apocalypse and hope" (Scanlan 1978: 27) in the indefinite future, the "family of security" a nostalgic remembrance of things past. From the 19th century till today the actual family has been in a kind of vacuum or limbo between these two projections.

All My Sons is a good example: at the end the enclosed domain of "the family of security", which in keeping with the ideology of the Puritan settlers "had separated itself from society" stressing "family solidarity" (Scanlan 1978: 26), is invaded by the moral imperatives of society. Chris and Larry reject their family obligations in favour of their duty to society. Joe Keller has to recognize that his paternal responsibility is not restricted to his two natural sons, but extends to all their young American coevals: he comes to the shattering conclusion that the pilots he indirectly killed were "all [his] sons" (Miller 1988: 126). The play illustrates the change from one "ideal model" of the family to another: the "family of security" with its opposition to society and emphasis on clan-solidarity is replaced by the "family of freedom" (Scanlan 1978: 27) which is supposed to suit the needs of the acquisitive society and consists of "self-sufficient, self-reliant ... individuals" who "separate themselves from the family" (Scanlan 1978: 26).

In *The Last Yankee* the erosion of the old notion of the family of security is embodied by the setting: the wives, the seconds-in-command of the Puritan family unit, who had the function of providing the feeling of warmth and security in the family home, have abandoned the fortress of the private home for the public space of a state mental clinic. The breakdown of the nuclear family resulting in mental illness is on public display. Pat's depression can be interpreted as an escape from the "self-destructive sacrifice" (Scanlan 1978: 152) demanded from her by her husband and seven children. Her depression is like a haven from the exigencies of her family. In her case being stranded at home, cut off from her personal needs by the overwhelming demands made on her by the family of security, does not carry the reward of economic prosperity every Puritan wife would have expected: her husband is only a blue-collar worker incapable of charging his customers enough. She can only envy her "well-to-do relatives"

(Miller 1993: 6) while she must "ride around in a nine-year-old Chevrolet which was bought second-hand in the first place." (Miller 1993: 16). For her the family she's trapped in demands sacrifice without providing protection and financial security. According to her husband Leroy her own family "were so close, they were all over each other." (Miller 1993: 25). They all had a "very high opinion of [themselves]; each and every one of [them] was automatically going to go to the head of the line just because [their] name was Sorgenson." (Miller 1993: 25). Embedded in the Sorgenson family of security was the American dream, "a success mythology which is both naive and brutal" (Miller 1994: 92), as Miller himself put it in the essay appended to the play in the Penguin edition. When it didn't come true Patricia's brothers committed suicide, which is the one way of admitting defeat more extreme than mental illness.

Karen, her fellow-inmate, represents another family type: her husband is an economic success, an individualist who in spite of his lack of education amassed a fortune. But the marriage is sterile; there are no children at all. In Frick's case the pursuit of his personal economic goals precluded the possibility of a family: "We kept putting it off, and then it got too late, and first thing you know ... it's just too late." (Miller 1993: 4). In the 1994 version Frick, in ironic analogy to Leroy, has "seven trucks on the road" (Miller 1994: 67) instead of seven children. The change from the "twelve trucks" (Miller 1993: 34) highlights the symbolic contrast. Frick's egotistic freedom seems to rely on a "brutal disregard for others" (Scanlan 1978: 152): in the economic sphere his social-Darwinian slogan "if they'll pay it grab it" (Miller 1993: 8) seems to bring him success, but in the domestic realm this attitude "crazes" (Scanlan 1978: 152) his wife. He is even too mean to put her in a private clinic, although he "could afford it" (Miller 1993: 6).

Karen regresses into a childish state: for one thing she no longer dares to leave the safe haven of her home, not even for shopping; on the other hand she wants to attract her husband's attention and admiration by her tap-dancing, which acquires an almost grotesque note given her age and lack of physical shape. She expects her husband to forego his personal needs and get up at 2 a.m. to admire her pathetic attempts at self-expression.

As always in Miller this pitiful pageant of two broken-down families has a general validity beyond the two particular cases at hand. Leroy Hamilton is descended from Alexander Hamilton, one of the Founding Fathers, who drew up the American constitution together with Jefferson. Frick questions Leroy about his ancestry and the social prominence and wealth concomitant with it. But Leroy's career represents a constant falling-off: not only has all wealth and fame disappeared from his clan in earlier generations, he even went a further step down from his lawyer father to the ignominious rank of a blue-collar carpenter who can hardly make ends meet. Leroy calls himself "the last Yankee" (Miller 1993: 28), which implies a farewell to the breed of self-assured victors of the Civil War priding themselves on their economic success and independence. They used to discriminate against immigrants like Patricia's Swedish family who, according to Leroy, have now taken over New England: "If you walk around town today there isn't a good piece of property that isn't owned by Swedes." (Miller 1993: 28). So Leroy's social descent is a symbol for the decline of an archetypal breed of Americans. But there is a blueprint of this downward slide in Leroy's illustrious ancestor: Alexander Hamilton also had seven children and ended up a poor man leaving his wife and children heavily in debt after his untimely death in a duel. Like Leroy, Alexander Hamilton was "made striking by elegant clothes" (*EB* 31): Frick takes Leroy for a "college man" (Miller 1993: 7) because he is dressed in "subdued Ivy League jacket and slacks and shined brogans" (Miller 1993: 1).

The play presents two family models which are both exposed as failures: Leroy stands for the old type of the family of security, whereas Frick represents a family of Freedom writ so large that the egomaniac pursuit of economic success and personal liberty results in no family at all. What is left out is the American dream of the well-to-do nuclear family consisting of attractive, loving parents and two healthy, successful children who still have a sense of belonging together. Frick's business mentality may beat the country's economic depression, but it leads to sterility and depression in the psychological sense. Leroy, on the other hand, is the craftsman with artistic leanings who is hit by the economic depression, which also results in clinical depression. In both cases the wives bear the brunt of this baleful socio-economic development. For both family types society is the enemy: Frick is a typical representative of Reaganite monetarism who is too stingy to pay for a private clinic because he wants to profit from the taxes he pays to the government, enemy number one of the free entrepreneur: "I could afford it, but what are we paying taxes for?" (Miller 1993: 6). Leroy is under constant pressure to live up to the ideal of the affluent society, to realize the American dream of success and prosperity implanted in his wife by her family. Both roads lead to the public mental institution. The final tableau epitomizes the play's message: in spite of the bout of vitality of Karen's tap-dancing and Patricia's resolve to go off drugs and to leave the clinic, "[t]he PATIENT on the bed [next to Patricia and Karen] remains motionless. A stillness envelops the whole stage, immobility seems eternal." (Miller 1993: 38). The immobile patient stands for American society: one particular patient's dismissal from the clinic is only a temporary respite. In the revised Penguin edition published a year after the production, as opposed to the production text printed by Methuen, Miller toned down the sense of hopelessness by changing the stage-direction as follows: "The woman on the bed stirs, she falls back and remains motionless. A stillness envelops the whole stage." (1994: 74). There are

"stirrings still"; the immobility of depression is no longer diagnosed as eternal, but as in Beckett's text they may be the last signs of life before the eternity of death. In the appended essay in the Penguin edition Miller acknowledges the general implications of Patricia's and Karen's depression for the whole of Western society:

> But while Patricia Hamilton, the carpenter's wife, is seen as an individual sufferer, the context of her illness is equally important because, for one thing, she knows, as do many such patients, that more Americans (and West Europeans) are in hospitals for depression than for any other ailment (Miller 1994: 93).

Patricia's last words are a joke fraught with irony about her prospects at home: "Between the banjo and that car I've got a whole lot to look forward to." (Miller 1993: 38). The car is the run-down old Chevy, which according to Leroy has only "very little rust" and has been "checked out" (Miller 1993: 38). But earlier she complained to Karen about the social ignominy of having to ride around in a "nine-year-old Chevrolet" whose "rear-end collapsed" for "the second Easter Sunday in a row" (Miller 1993: 16). There is an allegorical strain here: instead of resurrection we have collapse, the vehicle which is supposed to get Patricia out of the clinic for good may break down on the way home. The banjo accompanied Karen's grotesque tap-dance, which has a somewhat lunatic touch: she "is dressed in satin shorts, a tailcoat, a high hat, tap shoes, and ... pulls out a collapsible walking stick, and strikes a theatrical pose." (Miller 1993: 35). But as Leroy speeds up the song, "with an unrelieved sadness, Karen goes into her number, does a few steps, but stops." (Miller 1993: 37). Patricia, "her face ... charged with her struggle against her self-doubt" (Miller 1993: 37), is symbolically wedged in between Karen's mad scene and the unreliable, patched up car. Bad omens for a stable, happy future.

The symbolism of the text undercuts Miller's own hint in his essay on *The Last Yankee* at a possible "recovery" (1994: 92) of Patricia's and Leroy's marriage and the contention that "the theme [of the play] is hope rather than completion or achievement" (1994: 95). As Miller himself admits, "hope is tentative always" (1994: 95).

It seems to me that in *The Last Yankee* Miller's development has come full circle: he is back where he came in, analysing the connections and conflicts between the family unit and society. *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman* tackle this subject head on. In his middle period, especially in *A View from the Bridge* and *After the Fall* he concentrated on the individual and his struggle with the family. In the latter case he endowed the protagonist's desperate attempt to escape from family guilt with an archetypal quality, brushing aside the relation between the family unit and society. This archetypal, timeless level is even more

prominent in *The Creation of the World and Other Business*. In *A View from the Bridge* and *The Price* the family takes centre stage, the setting is in both cases a family home. By shifting it to a public mental institution and by highlighting the symbolic validity of the plight of the two families portrayed, *The Last Yankee* foregrounds what is rotten in the state of America. It catches the mood of economic and psychological depression gripping large parts of American society in the late eighties and early nineties. Oblique echoes of the Depression of the 1930s, which scarred Miller's personal life, are lurking in the wings. These amount to distinct intimations of the decline of the west.

2. *Moonlight*

Let me now turn to Pinter's play to investigate the state of the family. Admittedly there are differences between the sociological development of the American and the British family, but certain key factors remain: with the onset of industrialization and urbanisation the extended family with its strong kinship-network was replaced by the nuclear family, which could be characterized as follows:

> The modern family ... cuts itself off from the world and opposes to society the isolated group of parents and children. All the energy of the group is expended on helping the children to rise in the world, individually and without any collective ambition: the children rather than the family (Ariès 1962: 403-404).

This sociological definition is a good yardstick to measure the shape of the family in *Moonlight*: the two estranged sons have severed all links with their parents, and even when told that their father is on his deathbed they're not ready to retract. The exposure of the complete breakdown of all filial piety is the scene where Bel rings Jake and Fred to notify them of their father's critical condition: they put up a charade pretending to be a Chinese laundry. The children of Pinter's family haven't risen in the world either: Andy rightly brands them as "a sponging parasitical pair of ponces. Sucking the tit of the state." (Pinter 1993: 36). Their only interest in their progenitor is revealed in the comically absurd tale of a father bequeathing his personal fortune to "his newborn son the very day of that baby's birth." (Pinter 1993: 12). Jake's blown-up rhetoric exposes the unrealistic, absurd nature of this cock-and-bull story:

> It was an act, went on the vicar, which, for sheer undaunted farsightedness, unflinching moral resolve, stern intellectual vision, classic philosophical detachment, passionate religious fervour, profound emotional intensity, bloodtingling spiritual ardour, spellbinding metaphysical chutzpah – stood alone (Pinter 1993: 12).

The sons' rhetorical pyrotechnics leave a smokescreen which should conceal their vacuity and lack of human substance, their speech being a classic example of the kind of language Pinter himself called "a constant stratagem to cover nakedness" (quoted in Esslin 1977: 46). Behind the dazzling display of different registers and mere verbiage it is possible to fathom the way they perceive their father. In a later passage Fred refers to him as if he were merely an acquaintance; after a delicately balanced apportioning of praise and blame ("a leader of men" (Pinter 1993: 61), "some say ... that he was spiritually furtive, politically bankrupt, morally scabrous and intellectually abject" (Pinter 1993: 60)) the father is presented as a brutal torturer who "knew his beer and possessed the classic formula for dealing with troublemakers: ... a butcher's hook." (Pinter 1993: 62). The family picture is rounded off by Fred asking Jake to tell him about his mother. Jake's devastating reply is: "Don't talk dirty to me." (Pinter 1993: 62).

So much for the real sons. However, Andy yearns to see his (probably non-existent) grandchildren before his death. Immediately after the brutal rejection by his real sons Andy screams: "Where are they? My grandchildren? The babies? My daughter?" (Pinter 1993: 75). But their existence is far from being a clear reality. When he claims in Maria's presence that he has "got three beautiful grandchildren" (Pinter 1993: 71) his plea to Bel for confirmation is first answered by stony silence and then by Bel's disconfirming remark to Maria: "By the way, he's not well. Have you noticed?" (Pinter 1993: 71). Furthermore, in a flashback scene taking place in the third area of the stage Bridget is fourteen and Jake eighteen. In the list of characters, however, it says that Jake is "a man of twenty-eight", while Bridget is "a girl of sixteen". The obvious conclusion is that Bridget died eight years ago aged sixteen, which accounts for the increase in age-difference from four to twelve years. This virtually rules out the possibility of Andy having three grandchildren.

But in spite of the obvious disruption of family links the myth of the happy family lingers at the back of the characters' minds: in the first scene, which takes places in the third area of the stage reserved for dream-like visions, Bridget behaves like an exemplar of filial piety at great pains to preserve her parents' sleep: "I don't want to wake my father and mother. They're so tired. They have given so much of their life for me and for my brothers. All their life, in fact. All their energies and love." (Pinter 1993: 1). This portrayal of ideal, self-sacrificing parents is not matched by the couple we actually see on stage: Andy boasts about his professional qualities as a civil servant, he claims to be "an inspiration to others" (Pinter 1993: 17). But he adds the qualification that he was not loved, using a language abounding in worn clichés and academic vocabulary which is his linguistic hallmark when talking about his job: "Love is an attribute no civil servant worth his salt would give house room to. It's redundant. An excrescence." (Pinter 1993: 17). At home he sounds a different note: "I would never use obscene language in the office ... I kept my obscene language for the home, where it belongs." (Pinter 1993: 18). Bel confirms this claim: "Yes, it's quite true that all your life in all your personal and social attachments the language you employed was mainly coarse, crude, vacuous, puerile, obscene and brutal to a degree. Most people were ready to vomit after no more than ten minutes in your company." (Pinter 1993: 19-20). This certainly does not square with the ideal parents Bridget hallucinates about in the opening scene. Far from being a harmonious couple living a healthy family life, both Bel and Andy accuse each other of being on the brink of madness. In the same scene Andy exclaims that he sometimes thinks that is married to a "raving lunatic" (Pinter 1993: 19), while Bel speaks of Andy's "demented exterior" (Pinter 1993: 20). The nuclear family is a battleground for power and domination, the mental clinic is just round the corner. Another disrupting force is the free-ranging sexual drive of both partners: both Andy and Bel entertained a "healthy lust for Maria" (Pinter 1993: 20), Andy even claims to have "had" (Pinter 1993: 39) Maria on the marital double bed. In a manner reminiscent of *The Homecoming* sexuality is a weapon in the constant jockeying for position of the characters, and a harmonious family life is a projection without factual base. But in *The Homecoming* the family unit was strengthened, albeit in a somewhat unconventional fashion, by Ruth who "rules the household" (Esslin 1977: 154), gathering the subjugated males of the clan at her feet. In *Moonlight* there is no such final union: after the first lengthy scene between Andy and Bel Bridget appears again in the third area of the stage. This time she sees herself "walking slowly in a dense jungle". First she is "surrounded by flowers, hibiscus, oleander, bougainvillea, jacaranda". But in order to reach the paradisal sphere of poetic beauty she had to cross "many fierce landscapes ... thorns, stones, stinging nettles, barbed wire, skeletons of men and women in ditches." (Pinter 1993: 22). She had to survive the family battlefield with its toll of casualties to reach a safe shelter which is most probably the beyond. There are no indications that Bridget is still alive. The last scene of the play is set again in the third area. Bridget tells the tragic tale of the end of the family:

> "Once someone said to me – I think it was my mother or my father – anyway, they said to me – We've been invited to a party. You've been invited too. But you'll have to come by yourself, alone." (Pinter 1993: 79).

But instead of a party she finds "the house, the glade, the lane bathed in moonlight. But the inside of the house was dark and all the windows were dark. There was no sound." (Pinter 1993: 80). The painful, noisy throes of the birthday party in Pinter's earlier play have been replaced by soundless darkness. What was supposed to be a reunion of the nuclear family turns into a solitary wake. The only option Bridget is left with is to wait for the dim, cold moonlight, which is

only a reflection of the life-giving sun, to go down as well. Even if there is a symbolic hint at the dawning of a new day, the shattering final image of the play is a solitary daughter abandoned by her parents.

According to sociologists like Talcott Parsons and Robert Bales the nuclear family has the twofold function of "the primary socialization of children" and "the stabilization of the adult personalities of the society" (1955: 16-17). The family is supposed to be a secure haven which gives the adults the strength to cope with the demands of society, in Scanlan's terminology the "family of security". Pinter's family represents a complete reversal of this pattern: the fault-lines between the spouses and between the parents and the children run so deep that the family unit destabilizes the adult personality, pushing him or her to the brink of insanity. The spouses suspect each other of incipient madness, the sons pretend not to know their parents.

3. Towards "visionary" realism?

To conclude, let me turn to the issue of the dramatic form employed by the two playwrights for this requiem for the family. In his latest play Miller adheres to his programmatic statement from the fifties that the pure family drama requires the realistic mode (cf. Miller 1978: 71). As in his classic family plays *All My Sons* and *The Price*, the realistic framework is never breached by expressionistic presentations of "the inside of [the protagonist's] head", which was the original title of *Death of a Salesman*. In *The Last Yankee* "the natural passage of hours" (Miller 1988: 5) is followed, and indeed "the style it enforces is pressed toward realism" (Miller 1988: 6). While *Death of a Salesman* and *After the Fall* "explode the watch and the calendar" (Miller 1988: 6), this play is consistent with the mainstream of American family drama, which is realistic (cf. Scanlan 1978: 6). However, it is not a typical American family play in which "connections with an outer society are tenuous" (Scanlan 1978: 6). I would argue that in this very short and seemingly slight piece Miller achieved the "fusion of individual, family, and society" (Scanlan 1978: 142) which Scanlan perceives in *Death of a Salesman*, but misses in Miller's later plays. The "un-realistic ... self-consciously symbolic" (Miller 1978: 71, 73) strain Miller pronounced to be inherent in social plays emerges only fleetingly, but it is there: Karen's tap-dance is still part of the realistic action, but it does contain a symbolistic element reminiscent of Lucky's dance in *Waiting for Godot*; Karen's inexpert dabbling also symbolizes the pathetic failure of the underdog to live up to the human potential. Lucky is said to have been able to dance "the farandole, the fling, the brawl, the jig, the fandango, and even the hornpipe." (Beckett 1973: 104). Now he's reduced to some jittery capers. Karen would have been fit for tap-dancing thirty years ago, when there might have been more than only "a short stretch with a promise of grace" (Miller 1993: 36); now her attempt to regain some youthful fire and energy is pitiful and grinds to a halt in "unrelieved sadness" (Miller 1993: 37). Both Karen and Lucky end up paralyzed, caught in a "net" (Beckett 1973: 104) under the punishing looks of their respective masters Frick and Pozzo. There is an absurdist element there, as in the jumping of Karen's mind (cf. Miller 1993: 17-19), which in her conversation with Pat about shopping results in a kind of cross-talk similar to that of Beckett's or Pinter's characters. Miller himself hinted at the kinship to the absurd dialogue of Beckett's plays in his essay "About theatre language" when commenting on the opening dialogue between Leroy and Frick (cf. Miller 1994: 93). So the absurd, expressionistic element is lurking under the surface of the realistic mode of Miller's typical family drama.

In fact, my observations are borne out by Miller's own comment on the play in the essay referred to above, which is included in the Penguin edition:

> So the two patients ... are not at all unique. This is in accord with the vision of the play, which is intended to be both close up and wide, psychological and social, subjective and objective, and manifestly so. To be sure, there is a realistic tone to this exchange - people do indeed seem to talk this way – but an inch below is the thematic selectivity which drives the whole tale ... The play's language, then, has a surface of everyday realism, but its action is overtly stylized rather than "natural" (Miller 1994: 94-95).

Miller consciously enriched merely "tape-recorded" (Miller 1994: 93) realism with "stylized", i.e. symbolic elements: the particular stands for the general. Nonetheless, Orm Overland's (1987: 62) plea that Miller, after the experiment in "comedy and pure fantasy" of *The Creation of the World and Other Business* may "return to the kind of work that has placed him in the front rank of contemporary dramatists", namely "realism" (1987: 63) has been heeded. *The Last Yankee* justifies Overland's claim that realism "has proved to have a strong hold on Miller, and it is the mode with which, the evidence of his plays suggests, he is most at home." (Overland 1987: 63). But it needs to be emphasized that Miller's mature style is not the purely mimetic realism he admits to have been restricted to in his "first playwriting attempt" (Miller 1994: 81), *The Man Who Had All the Luck*, but rather the "enhanced visionary realism" (Miller 1994: 87) he perceives in Tennessee Williams. This somewhat vague term is defined more clearly in a comment on Williams's *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* in the essay "The Shadow of the Gods":

> As the play was produced ... in an atmosphere ... of poetic conflict, in a world that is eternal and not merely this world – it provided more evidence that Williams' preoccupation extends beyond the surface realities of the relationships ... We are made to see ... a pantheon of forces and a play of symbols as well as of characters (Miller 1978: 190-191).

To my mind this is an apt description of *The Last Yankee*.

Pinter, on the other hand, has always been connected with the expressionistic drama which *pace* Scanlan is much more common in European than American theatre (cf. Scanlan 1978: 5-6). Indeed, "illogicality; self-conscious symbolism ... unstable shifting, and dissolving personalities, locales, and time frames ... action and dialogue of non sequitur" (Scanlan 1978: 15) are the hallmarks of Pinter's work in general and of *Moonlight* in particular. The borderline between reality and fantasy is blurred, not just in Bridget's symbolic appearances, but in the central characters' statements about their past. We cannot know for sure if the alleged promiscuity between Andy, Bel and Maria is just a strategic fantasy in the couple's power-struggle or if it's reality. The much longed-for grandchildren are most likely the product of Andy's sick mind. Indeed, we are confronted with a waste land of the 1990s, largely a "dead land" where "mixing / Memory with desire" (Eliot 1969: 61) seems to be the dominant mode of discourse. The sons' absurd cross-talk which surfeits on the intoxicating chime of English surnames and foreign family names in English phonetic guise has its precedents in many of Pinter's plays like *The Birthday Party* or *No Man's Land*, but also in *Waiting for Godot*. After the realist stint in *Mountain Language* and *Party Time* he has come home to what also might be termed an "enhanced visionary realism", albeit with a strong presence of expressionistic, absurdist elements. In contrast to Miller, Pinter approaches this mode not from mimetic realism but from the expressionistic, symbolic side. As a result these features are much more pronounced than in Miller, but the mixture has always been Pinter's theatrical trademark: almost all of his characters act out their subconscious, dreamlike fantasies on a stage cluttered with the realia of contemporary English life.

Moreover, there is one thematic point which these specimens of predominantly realistic American family drama and largely expressionistic European theatre have in common: the decay of the nuclear family is the message in both theatrical conventions and both plays are requiems for the demise of the family.

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