RE-STAGING THE PAST: MORAL INQUIRIES
IN SHARON POLLOCK'S
MEMORY PLAYS

by

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ABSTRACT

Sharon Pollock’s plays have made a significant contribution to Canadian drama over the last three decades; however, the majority of scholarly research on her work has concentrated on one particular play—Blood Relations—and for the most part these studies focus on feminism and metadrama. My thesis examines Pollock’s use of the memory play and how within this genre the playwright metaphorically places one (or more) of her characters under investigation. The notion of memory is present in practically all of her plays, but to focus my argument I select dramatic works where a rememberer distinctly guides the audience from the play’s present into the past. Because several of her memory plays are based on historical events I use an historiographical approach to illuminate her texts.

In the six Pollock works that I examine a crime or social wrongdoing has taken place in the past, and one of the central characters needs to revisit the injustice from the play’s present. Through memory, the past is restaged and the character who experiences the inquiry tries to understand, justify, and/or defend his or her position in the events. Instead of determining if the characters are legally responsible for the crime or wrongdoing, my investigation focuses on their level of moral responsibility in the social injustice. I propose to examine the moral inquiries within Pollock’s work in the context of three types of memory plays, and these form the basis of my three main chapters: third-person memory (Walsh, The Komagata Maru Incident), first-person memory (One Tiger to a Hill, Moving Pictures), and multi-person memory (Doc, Fair Liberty’s Call).
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Prologue

Memories are not ready-made reflections of the past, but eclectic, selective reconstructions based on subsequent actions and perceptions.

-David Lowenthal, The Past is a Foreign Place 210

My first exposure to Sharon Pollock was seeing Blood Relations at the Neptune Theatre in 1988, but it was not until reading Doc during my Masters program at the University of Toronto that I became truly fascinated by her work. The complexity and layers embedded in the script forced me to re-read the play several times, and each time I discovered more about the characters and issues. My interest in the memory play evolved out of an Independent Study I completed under the direction of Professor Jerry Wasserman at the University of British Columbia, during which I read over fifty Canadian plays. The intent was to read five plays from each province, then select eight plays that I would teach for a hypothetical third year course in Canadian drama. What I came to realize after reading the selected plays was that the ones that resonated most with me were memory plays (The Glace Bay Miners' Museum, Lilies, Play Memory, Doc, The Hope Slide, Albertine, in Five Times, to
name a few). While preparing my paper for the course I realized how little research was available on the memory play. In fact, I could not find one single article or book that dealt primarily with the use of memory in Canadian drama. That was the beginning of my decision to study the Canadian memory play.

The idea of writing about the memory play was firmly planted, but it was only while auditing Professor Sherrill Grace's graduate seminar on Sharon Pollock that the work through which I would examine the memory play became clear. By reading all of Pollock's published plays (and enjoying them thoroughly), I came to realize the extent to which Pollock makes use of memory in her plays. I now decided that I would examine Pollock's work and investigate the various memory models incorporated in her plays. This dissertation marks the beginning of an investigation into the various types of memory plays, and I hope to pursue this study further by examining other Canadian plays. Also, I hope to spark some interest in the memory play, so that this fascinating genre becomes explored and studied from various points of view.

I wish to thank, first of all, Jerry Wasserman for the numerous suggestions, questions, insights, and editing during every phase of the process. I also wish to thank Sherrill Grace for asking probing questions, offering valuable feedback when I most needed it, and introducing me to Sharon Pollock personally. My gratitude goes to the late Peter Loeffler for being a careful listener and a wonderful sounding board for my preliminary ideas for the dissertation and throughout the PhD process. I would like to thank my wife Sue, who had to endure my endless mutterings about applying concepts that I barely understood to plays she never read. Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to my brother, Don. Though his body rests in the Rocky Mountains, his soul and being rest ever-present in my memory.
Chapter 1

The Rules of the Game

If I didn’t write plays, I would be in jail, I’m sure. I see my work as an attack on society. Not an abusive attack, but a creative form of criticism.

- Sharon Pollock in Hofsess, “Families” 52

Sharon Pollock has been creatively criticizing society through her plays for the last thirty years. Noted as “Canada’s pre-eminent playwright of conscience” (Hofsess, “Sharon Pollock Off-Broadway” 3), Pollock continuously probes moral, social, and ethical dilemmas by re-examining preconceptions and assumptions from the past in her re-staging of significant historical and domestic events. She worked as an actor and director before turning her attention to writing, which, as she attests, began out of frustration:
I felt I had no voice, even though I was working as an actor and playing in plays. I was always assuming the voice of somebody else, telling somebody else’s story. I moved into writing out of anger and frustration, and out of a need to confirm that the work I was doing was important (Zimmerman, “Towards a Better” 36).

The numerous national and international stage productions of her work over the last three decades, two Governor General’s Awards (among other national and international honors), and the critical reception and interest from scholars and journalists confirm that her work is indeed important. Her plays appeal to practitioners and scholars largely because she uses theatre “as an instrument of moral inquiry, to project (though seldom to achieve) a better world with a better set of values by which to live” (Salter xi). Most often in her plays a crime or social wrongdoing has taken place, and one or more of her characters need to revisit the traumatic incident in an attempt to understand, defend, justify, and/or accept their past actions. Who committed the injustice, and, more importantly, why? What are the circumstances that provoke men and women to these crises, then force them to use violence? Who is morally responsible? These questions generally drive her dramas.

In reference to Blood Relations Pollock mentions that “all of us are capable of murder given the right situation” (Wallace and Zimmerman 123). Her plays frequently re-stage these “right situations,” where characters are at the breaking point and react violently to some kind of social or domestic oppression. In turn, these critical moments
reveal the political and/or personal inner tensions that generate the need for a moral inquiry. In the legal profession, an inquiry, like a trial, seeks to find the truth. However, unlike a trial, an inquiry tends to be more informal, less bound by strict legal parameters, and, most importantly, it does not necessarily try to indict a guilty party. Instead, an inquiry usually takes the form of finding out what happened—to repair a wrong—and if there is substantial evidence a full blown trial may follow where the case then focuses on retributive and adversarial approaches in lieu of reparation. Pollock’s re-examinations of past crimes take various forms (trials, inquiries, hearings, inquests); however, the term inquiry appears to be the most flexible and appropriate for my study. It should be made clear that I use the term in a metaphorical sense, in that the judicial system or lawyers rarely figure in the inquiries I examine. The moral inquiries become a metaphor or lens for me to illuminate Pollock’s socially conscious texts. Therefore, rather than studying her plays as literal courtroom dramas, my analysis focuses on how her dramaturgy can be elucidated when examined through the scope of metaphorical moral inquiries.

A common feature in each of the Pollock plays that I examine is that at least one of the central characters faces a moral dilemma, and in order for them to understand or justify their present state they need to look to the past in hopes of discovering the forces and circumstances that led them to this state. Unlike the archetypal murder mystery play, Pollock’s plays rarely offers any final or clear resolutions; instead, her dramaturgy relies heavily on ambiguity. A character may appear responsible for the social wrongdoing, but
some of the circumstances surrounding the crime are debatable—they are morally guilty, but there are always some reservations. Her plays often blur the line between truth and lies, fact and fiction, right and wrong, past and present, which makes it difficult to morally indict a character with any certainty. Furthermore, because the inquiries are most often self-propelled and conducted via memories, the individual who is caught in the moral dilemma often provides most of the evidence and testimonies. The subjective nature of the testimonies makes it challenging for the audience to comfortably determine whether or not the character can be deemed fully responsible for the social injustice.

The ambiguity present in the plot (content) is paralleled in her innovative use of staging techniques (form); in fact, according to Pollock, “[t]he structure is a way of maintaining the ambiguity” (Wallace and Zimmerman 123). For example, by setting Fair Liberty’s Call four years after the battle at Yorktown and having the events that led to the defeat of the American Loyalists remembered by various individuals in the “Remembrance Ceremony” (50), Pollock problematizes the notion of truth. The structure parallels the content, because the various voices within the play maintain the ambiguity of what actually took place during the American Revolution, in particular Major Williams who tries to glorify the past and Daniel Wilson who attempts to forget the misdeeds. In using memory as a device to structure and re-stage the past, Pollock emphasizes the ambiguity and the uncertainty of recorded history, because “even the event closest to us personally can be known to us afterwards only by its traces: there is
no such thing as the reproduction of events by memory” (Hutcheon, “History” 179). The notion that the past cannot be accurately reproduced, a relatively recent development in historiography, will be discussed later in this chapter and in conjunction with Pollock’s historically-based dramas.

Most of Pollock’s dramatic works make use of memory, but I chose to investigate the ones that I deemed made use of a memory play structure. For instance, Ev and Catherine in *Doc* clearly remember and re-stage the past through memories. Ev plays himself in the remembered scenes in an attempt to re-member or reconstruct the past, and the text openly acknowledges that the inner play (past) is guided by memory. A play such as *Generations* contains many examples of remembering (Old Eddy and Charlie reminiscing about their hardships as farmers [146-49] and their sons in the war [172], Young Eddy looking back [163], Margaret recalling her youth [188-89]); however, the play’s structure shows no indication of being framed by someone’s memory. *Blood Relations* is more problematic because on the surface it appears to be an ideal play to be discussed as a memory play. Though the play is set in 1902, most of it takes place in 1892 with the Actress and Miss Lizzie re-staging the past with the help of memories. However, *Blood Relations* takes the form of a metadrama and not a memory play. The “dream thesis” is a re-enactment of what may have happened and Pollock deliberately avoids having Miss Lizzie offer her perspective of what took place in Fall River in 1892 within this inner frame. The playwright highlights the fact that it is a play within a play.
and aside from a few brief (albeit important) interchanges between Miss Lizzie, the Actress, and Emma at the beginning and end of the play, Miss Lizzie takes the role of the maid Bridget rather than recreating/re-living her past like Ev and Catherine deliberately do in Doc.

Pollock's memory plays generally present two time frames: present and past. In the present frame various rememberers recollect parts of the crime or social injustice, and eventually lead the audience into the past time frame to present what may have happened. The memories of her characters provide most of the content or evidence for the moral inquiries, yet the facts and circumstances become questionable because memories, as Lowenthal states, are “selective reconstructions” (210). Several of her memory plays contain more than one rememberer, which complicates the inquiry even further because each perspective offers its own interpretation, thereby undermining the possibility of a single truth. The fragmented, mediated, and selective nature of memory emphasizes the challenge of solving the dilemma; nonetheless, potential truths or explanations for the crime or wrongdoing hover somewhere in among the multiple perspectives offered through the memory structure.

In the remainder of this chapter I provide a context for Pollock’s work and an introduction to my methods of analysis. Then, in the following chapters, I closely investigate six of her plays and examine how her desire for moral and social justice manifests itself in the memory play through her use of inquiries. I suggest three models
within her plays: third-person memory (*Walsh, The Komagata Maru Incident*), first-
person memory (*One Tiger to a Hill, Moving Pictures*), and the multi-person memory
(*Doc, Fair Liberty's Call*). These three memory play structures enable Pollock to draw
her audience "directly into the dramatic action, so they become, together with the
characters, the main subjects of the playwright's ethical investigation" (Salter xi).

**A socially conscious playwright**

As a Canadian, I feel that much of our history has been misrepresented and even hidden
from us. Until we recognize our past, we cannot change our future.

- Sharon Pollock

This often-quoted passage from the introduction to *The Komagata Maru Incident*
hints at why Pollock's plays frequently re-stage and re-examine the past. Her political
desire for 'getting it straight' and deconstructing myths about an unblemished Canadian
past is at the core of her earlier plays. Canadian playwrights have represented our history
on the stage for well over a hundred years; nonetheless, in the wake of an intense surge
of national consciousness in the early 1970s, Pollock and her contemporaries were re-
staging history as a way to address recurring public and social concerns, and at the same
time "challenging the conventions of theatrical aesthetics in their determination to
establish a native drama” (Bessai, “Sharon Pollock’s Women” 126). During the 1970s Canadian playwrights were in the process of defining an indigenous Canadian theatre and, in doing so, discovering a new Canadian consciousness. Vital to this process of discovery was the need to challenge or re-examine mainstream national myths and dramatic forms that existed at the time and, to a lesser extent, still persist today—myths and forms that Richard Knowles describes as “oppressive or colonial in impact” (230). There was a sense among the playwrights of the necessity to replace in the theatre all that had been borrowed from or imposed by political and cultural imperialism and to reach into the Canadian past in an attempt to create an authentic Canadian theatre. This preoccupation with the past was not unlike that which initiated the early plays of modern European playwrights such as Ibsen and Strindberg. Several years before the appearance of their domestic classics *A Doll’s House* and *Miss Julie*, the troubled historical past of Scandinavia was the focus of Ibsen’s *The Vikings of Helgeland* and Strindberg’s *Vasa* trilogy.

During the late 1960s, while Pollock was an actress touring British imported plays with the Prairie Players, a distinctively Canadian theatre was beginning to find its voice.² Plays written and performed by and for Canadians emerged *en masse* in grassroots theatre companies, with the help of government assistance programs. This alternate movement in Canada, which in other cultures “tended to mean experiments in form or language,” Don Rubin points out, “came simply to be associated with the
production of work—either collectively created or fully-scripted—by Canadian authors” (16). While the established theatre companies such as the Stratford Festival, Théâtre du Nouveau Monde, and the majority of regional theatres continued to produce British and American imported plays, the alternate movement created and produced new Canadian plays, and it gained momentum and importance across the nation. Paul Thompson and Theatre Passe Muraille were experimenting with their collectives about Canadian events, David French was writing about the challenges of growing up in Newfoundland and living in Toronto, Michel Tremblay was poetising a Québécois street language and celebrating the world of the Plateau Mont-Royal, George Ryga was giving a voice to the indigenous people, Carol Bolt, Margaret Hollingsworth, Rick Salutin and James Reaney, among others, were creatively dramatizing events from our history. In many ways the early 1970s marked the Golden Age of Canadian drama; in fact, the 1971-72 and 1972-73 seasons saw more than 200 new Canadian plays receive full-scale productions (Rubin 16).

Eugene Benson and L. W. Conolly point to the alternate theatre movement as an “international phenomenon that manifested itself in diverse ways” (85). In the United States, for example, musicals and plays such as Hair and Dionysus in ’69 were celebrating “sexual promiscuity, drugs, communes, and political protest”; whereas in Canada, the alternate theatre saw writers prompted more by “a groundswell interest in Canadian history, culture, and institutions” (85). Pollock’s work became instrumental in
the fostering of the alternate theatre movement in Canada with the premieres of Walsh in 1973 (Theatre Calgary) and The Komagata Maru Incident in 1976 (Vancouver Playhouse). It is ironic that mainstream regional theatres produced these two Canadian historical works, considering how Pollock identified herself and her work with the alternate movement. The fact that both of these premieres were produced by regional theatres was an anomaly, because most Canadian content productions were performed by so-called alternative companies: Toronto’s Theatre Passe Muraille, Tarragon Theatre, and Factory Theatre Lab; Vancouver’s Tamahnous Theatre and the New Play Centre; Calgary’s Alberta Theatre Projects; Edmonton’s Theatre 3 and Theatre Network, among others.

Like those of many of her contemporaries, Pollock’s history plays were part of a “national celebration” (Rubin 21), but not necessarily one where playwrights were championing past heroes. Instead, Canadian playwrights were beginning to demystify the past, often painting so-called Canadian heroes in non-flattering ways for their audience. Anti-heroes such as Walsh and Hopkinson were not unusual, because these playwrights revisited Canadian historical events that displayed discriminatory, racist, and non-humanitarian behavior. Plays that presented Canadians in anti-heroic roles included Theatre Passe Muraille’s The Doukhobors (1971) and 1837: The Farmers’ Revolt (1974), James Reaney’s Donnelly trilogy (1973-75), and Carol Bolt’s Buffalo Jump (1972). During an interview with John Hofsess in 1979, Pollock asserted that “Canadians have
this view of themselves as nice civilized people who have never participated in historical
crimes and atrocities. [ ] But that view is false" (Hofsess, “Pollock is an exception” T03).

Pollock distinguished herself from her contemporaries by focusing on a
particular individual rather than a group. A common approach of the Canadian history
plays of the 1970s was to rely on an ensemble, especially in the collectively-created
pieces, with the focus on a group of people—the Doukhobors, the Farmers (Holder 132).
In Pollock’s early history plays, we can observe an individual, no doubt in conflict with
an outside group, but even more with himself. In this way, her plays resemble the
chronicle and historical dramas of the Elizabethan era where often the focus rested on the
downfall of a tragic hero. One of the greatest tensions within Walsh stems from the
internal battle in the title character, between his roles as White Father and Superintendent
of the NWMP, his humanity and his duty. A similar tension governs Hopkinson in The
Komagata Maru Incident, an inner racial struggle that eventually renders him powerless.

Several Pollock scholars look to these early history plays as her public phase or
what Pollock refers to as the “outside plays,” where public issues and institutions are
investigated (and attacked). Scholars mark the publication of Blood Relations in 1981 as
a turning point, when her plays begin to examine domestic or private dilemmas, the first
of her “inside plays.” Many of these critics argue that, after 1980, Pollock turned away
from an examination of public social issues toward a focus on internal family issues, or
the politics of the home. In an article for Books in Canada in 1983 Hofsess argues that
the plays before 1980 are passionately humanitarian whereas the plays after that date contain “a narrower range of concern: they are primarily character studies” (“Sharon Pollock Off-Broadway” 3). A few years later, Diane Bessai suggests that this turning point marks a shift towards feminist interest, because prior to Blood Relations, women characters basically played supporting roles to the men. In addition, Bessai argues that Blood Relations “subsumes its issues entirely within personal character conflicts,” which emphasizes the shift from public to private (“Sharon Pollock’s Women” 127). In an interview with Cynthia Zimmerman, Pollock disagrees with these neat categorizations, saying, “I don’t see any difference in the outside plays and the inside plays. In essence they’re all about the same things” (Zimmerman, “Towards a Better” 38). She reveals what she means by the same things during an interview with Judith Rudakoff and Rita Much:

All of my plays deal with the same concern. I think I write the same play over and over again. It’s a play about an individual who is directed to or compelled to follow a course of action of which he or she begins to examine the morality. Circumstances force a decision, usually the authority (family, society, government) is removed emotionally or geographically from the protagonist, and it usually doesn’t end very well. (Rudakoff and Much 210, my emphasis)

Jerry Wasserman concurs with her statement, but takes it one step further in
asserting that the play she has been writing over and over again is “a play about fathers or father figures betraying the trust of those who depend on them” (Modern Canadian Plays 1994, 125). In her plays, these ‘father figures’ are frequently identifiable as fathers, but abstractions such as imperialism, government, patriarchal society, and the upper class can also be viewed as oppressive paternal figures. Therefore, whether the play takes place in the social or family arena, the central conflict remains a moral dilemma in which an individual feels disillusioned and trapped, and from this position they must decide whether to break free or remain complacent.

The so-called private or family plays turned Pollock into one of the most produced playwrights in Canada during the 1980s. Practically every major theatre in the country staged productions of her plays, particularly Blood Relations and Doc. By the 1980s the alternate movement seemed to have become the norm—even the mainstream—because regional and civic theatres across the country were producing Canadian plays. Benson and Conolly suggest that even “by the late 1970s the lines of demarcation between alternate and civic (or mainstream or regional) theatres were becoming blurred” (103). Playwrights such as Sharon Pollock, George Walker, Michel Tremblay, David French, and Ken Mitchell were produced along with the British and American imports in the regional theatres, and their work achieved national attention with numerous productions and awards. However, toward the end of the 1980s, and particularly after an unpleasant tenure as the Artistic Director of Theatre New Brunswick (1988-90), when
she was forced to leave because of differences of opinion with the Board of Directors, Pollock seemed to slip away from the national limelight.

"Whatever happened to Sharon Pollock? In the 1980s she was one of Canada's leading playwrights," yet she "hasn't enjoyed a big premiere in the last decade" (Taylor R1). Critic Kate Taylor's opening comments in a feature on Pollock in the *Globe and Mail* on March 9, 2000, reflected the thoughts of many theatre people across the country.

Pollock responds to Taylor by saying that she "would like to be done by major companies, but I really feel the industrial, corporate assembly line doesn't work for creating art" (R5). During another interview, the strong-willed Pollock reflects further on her dissatisfaction with larger, institutional theatres:

> Theatre grows out of chaos and it moves to institutionalization. The more successful you are, the more you move towards that end and there lies death. I believe you have to find the line that enables you to create and grow and at the same time, does not breed the kind of pigeon-holing and specialization that institutionalization brings. (Telenko 14)

Her work from the 1990s has yet to achieve the exposure of some of her earlier plays; nonetheless, Pollock's work in recent years clearly indicates that she continues to be prolific. Six new stage plays have been produced since 1990: *Getting It Straight* (1990), *Saucy Jack* (1993), *Fair Liberty's Call* (1993), *Moving Pictures* (1999), *End Dream* (2000), and *Angel's Trumpet* (2001). What can be said about the 1990s phase?
In 1982 Pollock projected that the plays that I’ll write in the future will be more about women. I know there’s a play that follows Blood Relations about what happens to the woman who is unable to kill either her father or her mother or, indeed, even herself. Obviously it’s about women and madness. The closer the plays get to me, to something that I really feel, the less polarized I become. The more I move inward, the more ambiguous I get. (Wallace and Zimmerman 118)

In a recent essay, Craig Stewart Walker argues that Pollock embraces the theme of women and madness in several of her plays during the early 1990s, particularly in Egg (a play that was never produced) and Getting It Straight, which is arguably the play (along with Doc) that follows Blood Relations—where a woman is unable to kill her husband or herself, and therefore goes mad. Her plays from the 1990s retain the external oppressive forces, yet her characters appear to be acting in as opposed to “acting out,” as Knowles suggests her characters do in her earlier work. Knowles comments that, in her early history plays of the 1970s and her more personal plays of the 1980s, Pollock “developed an increasingly complex dramatic mode of ‘re-cognition’ through a style of theatre that presents itself as ‘acting out’” (237). Pollock’s plays from the 1990s present a deeper focus on the individual at war with herself, with an emphasis on the protagonist desperately trying to reclaim agency (especially in Getting It Straight and Moving
Pictures). Furthermore, the majority of these recent scripts depict women as the central figures, a shift that has occurred gradually over her career. This third phase in Pollock's dramaturgy could be called the personal, yet its overriding concern continues to be characters at the breaking point who are forced into making moral and ethical decisions. In her current association with Theatre Junction in Calgary, for which she writes and directs, her commitment to seeking social justice continues. Her last three plays depict women desperately trying to reclaim their identity within patriarchal societies. 6

Inquiry and Historiography

The shift in subject matter from institution (public) to family (private) to individual (personal) coincides with her continuous movement toward finding more complex and ambiguous (post-modern) structures for telling her stories. In 1986, when asked about her future vision of form, Pollock responded:

We’re no longer talking about an audience that is used to having a linear and sequential evolution for the theatre experience. We are talking about pattern recognition. I am doing more work writing “non-linearally”[sic] than, I think, someone who is writing the equivalent of the “Ibsenesque” play today. What I’m doing is having you invest more in the experience
than you used to invest in the old kinds of theatre. (Dufort 4)

Her non-linear writing begins with Walsh, but the sophistication and complexity with which Pollock plays with form and structure has increased exponentially since that early play. In her recent works, the audience cannot be expected to piece together every moment and know the causal effect of each incident in a first viewing. Plays such as Moving Pictures and End Dream build on, yet go beyond, the structural complexity of Doc and Blood Relations by fragmenting, splitting, and destabilizing past events through memories and dreams. This does not diminish the social concerns. Her politics still prevail in her later plays, despite being deeply embedded in multi-layered memories and dreams. Cynthia Zimmerman points out that “in all of her plays Pollock manipulates the frame: structure, point of view, and the way of telling” (Playwrighting Women 69).

Pollock is not the only Canadian playwright experimenting with form and memory. Playwrights such as Michel Tremblay, John Krizanc, Michel Marc Bouchard, Joan MacLeod, Daniel MacIvor and Guillermo Verdecchia, among others, have created, and continue to create, dynamic dramas which bend and twist form and structure. A feature that distinguishes Pollock from some of her contemporaries is the diverse ways in which she incorporates the memory play, and I discuss three memory models used by Pollock at the end of this chapter.

Other critics aside from Zimmerman have commented on how Pollock’s plays contain intriguing, sometimes even confusing, structures. As early as 1979, Malcolm
Page notes how her stagecraft is as striking as her ideas and messages, because of “her restless determination to avoid obvious approaches and search for angles which are effective and unusual” (110). In reference to Doc, Marc Côté argues that “the lack of linear time structure is possibly one of the play’s greatest strengths” (17). In reviewing the same play, Audrey Ashley insists that the “complicated structure mars [an] interesting play” (“Sharon Pollock ... from the inside” D12). The playwright herself clearly states that “[f]orm interests me more than content” (Dufort 4), although she sometimes wonders “why I rack my bloody skull to find some weird way of presenting something” (Zimmerman, “Towards a Better” 38). Her desire to find the appropriate form to suit the content fulfills two goals: to entertain the audience by challenging them to make sense of fragmented pieces, and to encourage them to recognize the subjectivity of historical records or so called truths. In maintaining the ambiguity of the content with her complex structures, Pollock provokes and opens up important discussions around moral, social, and ethical issues.

i – Inquiry

One of the central arguments of my thesis is that the majority of Pollock’s memory plays contain a moral inquiry, where a character (or sometimes a group) tries to
justify their actions to others or to themselves. Similar to legal inquiries, which "question witnesses, verify and evaluate evidence and make judgements to arrive at a recommendation" (Hallett 12), the moral inquiries I investigate in Pollock’s work aim to discover what happened in order to determine the degree of the social injustice. Inquiries, unlike trials, do not necessarily try to find someone guilty. In fact, in many cases the objective centres on discovering what went wrong in the social or political system. What happened? Where did it break down? (Curzon 195). A judicial inquiry usually takes place in front of a judge and the evidence is presented by a prosecutor and a defence attorney; however, the rules and formalities as well as the testimonies and witnesses in inquiries do not necessarily adhere to the strict parameters found in legal trials. Hearsay, for instance, is acceptable during an inquiry and questions beyond material facts are addressed in an effort to find out the socio-political forces behind the crime or social wrongdoing. An inquiry may lead to a trial or it may be a post-trial investigation, but in either situation its main purpose is to find out what happened rather than trying to bring an individual to justice and finding them guilty or innocent.7

Pollock’s metaphorical inquiries are embedded and realized within her structure, and they are largely illuminated by memories—which I discuss later in this chapter. Most of the time the crime or injustice has taken place before the play begins, and it is through the guidance of one or more of the characters that we revisit the event; therefore, structurally, Pollock manipulates time and space to replay the past events through
memory. The victims are usually apparent to the audience, but the focus of these inquiries rests on clarifying and questioning who is the victimizer, and more importantly, what are the social conditions which have generated such a crime. Pollock reaches far beyond the “simple ‘whodunit’ of the present to a re-examination of the past in an effort to determine the original crime. And in so doing fact becomes less important than fiction, style and form as persuasive as content” (Saddlemyer 216).

The notion of inquiries and trials in drama can be traced back to Sophocles where Oedipus unknowingly places himself on trial, and the structure of the play unravels the evidence that indicts the new King of Thebes. Several of Shakespeare’s plays present characters undergoing trials or inquiries, either figuratively (Claudius in Hamlet), metadramatically (Lear in the cave with Poor Tom and the Fool), or literally (The Merchant of Venice). George Bernard Shaw’s Saint Joan could be seen as one long inquiry, and Reginald Rose’s 1950s classic Twelve Angry Men depicts a meta-trial as the jurors themselves revisit their preconceptions and inner motives in a trial-like manner. Peter Weiss’s The Investigation (1966) has the following characters in the dramatis personae: Judge, Counsel for Prosecution, Counsel for Defence, Defendants 1-18, Witnesses 1-9 (9). Weiss’s documentary reconstructs the events of the Auschwitz trials and the play openly acknowledges its use of theatrical devices.

In Canadian drama, Ann Saddlemyer points to several plays which include crimes on a political or domestic level. In her essay “Crime and Literature: Canadian Drama,”
Saddlemyer notes that seven of the twelve plays in *The Penguin Book of Modern Canadian Drama* edited by Richard Plant deal with the examination of past crimes. She highlights John Coulter's *The Trial of Louis Riel* as an iconic Canadian trial play. Coulter’s dramatization of Riel’s trial, staged annually in the very same Regina court house where Riel was condemned to be hanged as a traitor, has the tourist audience acting as jury (Saddlemyer 214). George Ryga’s landmark play *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* marks another example of a Canadian trial play, or in Gary Boire’s words a “mock-trial,” because “it is the audience that ultimately emerges as the central defendant—the audience, whose history is placed on trial and judged guilty of imperialistic complicity at worst, ignorance at best” (10). Boire’s essay takes a postcolonial perspective, arguing how the injustice in Rita’s trial highlights both racial and class tensions (themes and issues that frequently appear in Pollock’s work). An earlier Canadian play that contains a mock trial is *Eight Men Speak*. First produced in 1933 by the Workers’ Theatre of Toronto, the play marked “an agitprop response to a political event—the jailing and attempted murder in prison of Communist Party leader Tim Buck” (Filewod 7). Reuben Ship’s radio drama *The Investigator*, produced by the CBC in 1954, provides another example of a Canadian drama that makes use of the trial structure to stage its concerns. Set in heaven, Ship’s satirical drama on Senator Joseph McCarthy’s witch hunts during the 1950s centres on questioning, cross-examining, and ultimately trying “The Investigator” for unethical and immoral behavior. Practically all of Pollock’s plays deal with crime and in fact several
make reference to literal trials; however, my argument focuses on analyzing—structurally and thematically—how her memory plays, for the most part, contain a moral inquiry, where one or more of the central characters is forced, or needs, to revisit his or her past.

In an effort to gain a better understanding of how dramatic form plays an integral role in text and performance, Thomas Price investigates drama from a structuralist approach in his book *Dramatic Structure and Meaning in Theatrical Productions*. He grounds his methodology on the Hegelian dialectic, and he argues that the principal tensions at work in every drama boil down to action and counteraction, or “the victorious and the vanquished” (13).

According to Price, a struggle between dominant and recessive characters always takes place, and “the entire cast of the play divides itself into just two camps: those who eventually dominate and those who are eventually dominated” (12). Therefore, each drama contains only two forces, with individual characters representing specific features of these two opposing camps. The characters become part of the dominant camp “if their author permits them to achieve their overriding wish, or of the recessive unit if he does not allow them to achieve that wish” (Price 12). Price breaks these categories into protagonists (those who achieve their wish) and antagonists (those who do not achieve their wish), and it is made clear that a protagonist consists of one “who is permitted to accomplish his will, no matter whether we approve of him or not” (21). Therefore, characters such as MacLeod in *Walsh* or T.S. in *The Komagata Maru Incident* would be
part of the protagonist camp because their wishes are fulfilled, even though the audience may not approve of their discriminatory and racist actions.

Price's theory contains some limitations and can be viewed as reductive because of the binary model he proposes; nonetheless, his notion of protagonist/antagonist becomes a useful model with which to discuss the inquiries within Pollock's earlier memory plays. In most of Pollock's moral inquiries, similar to courtroom trials, there is a defense and a prosecutor, and through recollections both parties revisit the particular crime or injustice. The defense and prosecutor (who often become protagonist and antagonist forces in Price's terms) describe, remember, or re-stage the event(s) and slant the story to their advantage in order to gain support for their cause. The number of protagonists and antagonists can vary from play to play, and Price adds that a character may move from one camp to the other once during the action of the play. For example, Walsh begins the play as a humanitarian with a wish to help Sitting Bull, but when his duty as Major Walsh, government representative for the NWMP, overshadows his compassion as White Forehead, he abandons the antagonist camp to join the protagonists whose wish is fulfilled (returning Sitting Bull and the Sioux south of the border). In this example, it is relatively easy for an audience to recognize the protagonist and antagonist, but Pollock's later plays present inquiries where the distinction between those who achieve their wish and those who do not is more problematic. In the later plays, the evidence for the moral inquiries is much more subtle and the multi-person rememberers
are often both the victims and victimizers (antagonists and protagonists), which makes the structuralist approach less applicable. For instance, in *Moving Pictures* whose wish is fulfilled? Does Nell convince Shipman that her life as an artist was worth living? Or does Shipman succeed in letting her younger selves know that their life was all in vain? Who is prosecuting and defending, who is morally right and wrong is not always apparent in Pollock’s later plays; therefore, Price’s model becomes less useful in the more complex memory plays and I avoid applying his structuralist approach to these works.

In most of Pollock’s plays the prosecutor and defence are also witnesses and their testimonies of past crimes frequently become the central evidence for the inquiry. However, Pollock rarely offers a verdict for the social crimes and it appears that she purposefully remains ambiguous. Maintaining the ambiguity in her moral inquiries encourages her audience to closely consider the forces and motivations behind the social crimes rather than pointing a finger at a particular individual. In leaving the verdict uncertain it would appear that Pollock is assigning the role of the jury to the audience, but this is not necessarily the case because in several of her plays she appears to implicate her viewers as co-conspirators. In reference to Pollock’s work, Saddlemyer states that “violent action is but the foreplay to an internal trial that involves us not merely as spectators, but as conspirators in fact. [S]ociety is judged guilty of a crime far more heinous in the eyes of the playwright than the violence narrated on stage” (216).
Through her metaphorical inquiries Pollock asks her audience to take partial responsibility for past crimes, because we are "both nationally and individually responsible for what we are and for what we have become" (Knowles 240). As a socially conscious playwright, Pollock not only guides her audience into her historical recreations as active participants, but she also emphasizes how we have all been dragged into the myth-making process where our collective consciousness has been built. The idea of constructed myths figures prominently at the end of *Walsh*, when the dispirited title character engages in the planning of a mock Indian attack on a train-load of eastern tourists, "substitut[ing] the myth of the savage Indian for the reality he knew first hand" (Nunn, "Sharon Pollock's Plays" 74).

The literal courtroom appears in several Pollock plays (*Walsh, The Komagata Maru Incident, Blood Relations, End Dream*); however, even when the court is not visible, her plays continually involve her characters in trial-like processes such as distinguishing between fact and fiction, making judgements on past actions, and recreating what happened in hopes of discovering why. The second act of *Fair Liberty's Call* has the rebel Anderson in search of justice, placing the Loyalists on trial for the murder of his brother at Waxhaws. In response, the Loyalists try to assign responsibility for their actions, judge who is most guilty, and assess their value to the community, yet they ultimately fail to make a decision or reach a consensus—Anderson, through the persuasion of Annie and Joan, figuratively drops the charge. In more personal inquiries,
Ev and Shipman (*Doc* and *Moving Pictures*) are plagued with the same question—was it (the sacrifice) worth it (the results)? Once they have recollected and replayed their past exploits, they attempt to judge whether or not their efforts, as committed doctor and artist, were worth the sacrifices. These metaphorical inquiries each contain a present frame from which to examine the past; therefore, not only does Pollock re-play history (the past), but she often also includes a past within that reconstructed past. For example, *Fair Liberty’s Call* is set in 1785 New Brunswick, but the memories stem from 1781 at Yorkton. History and historiography become crucial elements in Pollock’s moral inquiries.

**ii – Historiography**

Herbert Lindenberger admits in *Historical Drama* “that by a strict definition one cannot categorize historical dramas as a genre at all, though one can speak of specific forms of historical plays which prevailed at certain moments in history” (ix). In an important essay on Canadian historical drama, Richard Knowles notes that since the early 1970s Canadian playwrights have been making use of a specific form of historical play--historiographic metadrama. He adapts the term historiographic metadrama from Linda Hutcheon’s idea of historiographic metafiction (*The Canadian Postmodern*, ch. 4),
and he suggests that this genre of drama incorporates “self-reflexive, metadramatic forms to highlight the instability both of history and dramatic texts” (228). Within the scope of history plays, the historiographic metadrama form is a useful model for analyzing Pollock’s plays, yet before examining this sub-genre I want to investigate certain questions regarding what constitutes the broader context of a history drama. For instance, is a play a historical drama when it is about history itself? When it is about a generally accepted historical event? When it is about a documented historical persona? Any one of these subjects for a play would seem to qualify that play as historical. But even if this broad spectrum of possibilities is accepted, more questions arise as to the nature of the history play. Do all the characters in the play have to be based on a specific historical persona? Can some of the characters and/or events be historical and the rest be fictional? How far in the past must a play be set to qualify as a history play? Should Don Rubin’s parameters for history dramas—“plays set at least 10 years earlier than their creation which deal with characters and/or situations of that period” (20)—then become the criteria?

It is difficult to pinpoint precisely what elements a play must incorporate in order to be labelled a historical drama. Diane Bessai writes that historical works differ from other kinds of drama in that they “in some way reconstruct the past” (“Documentary Theatre” 12). Pollock’s plays certainly do reconstruct past events, whether Sitting Bull’s exile in Canada, a British Columbia immigration case, or the Lizzie Borden, Janet Smith
and Jack the Ripper murders. Cynthia Zimmerman expands on exactly how this reconstruction of events takes place: “Pollock reconstructs the past by merging document and invention, by placing invented characters in actual historical situations and by having authentic figures do and say things they had never done in life” (Playwrighting Women 69). Zimmerman comes close to defining how the meshing of the historical and the invented creates not only a history play, but more specifically a historiographic one. Because no matter how much the work attempts to resemble the documented facts of the event or character, clearly not everything can be known, such as what goes on in private conversations between historical figures. The inherent need for conjecture begins to define some of the important characteristics of historiographic drama—where the facts of the case are not known, or where “historical reality does not rule out historical possibility” (Hutcheon, The Canadian Postmodern 67). Historiographic dramas raise similar questions to historical ones regarding how the past is reconstructed, but, in addition, they raise awareness about the assumptions and conventions according to which we reconstruct that past. Therefore, I suggest that historiographic dramas occur when playwrights deliberately reconstruct history and consciously make the audience aware that the play they are watching is a representation of the past, a possible version of what happened.

By the late 1970s the writing on historiography and new historicism by such thinkers as Hayden White and Stephen Greenblatt was already firmly embedded in
intellectual and artistic circles. Whether artists agreed with these approaches or not, they were being discussed by academics and artists, and in the work of Canadian historical playwrights, including Pollock, these approaches, I argue, appear implicitly embedded. White examines why society, and the historian in particular, seeks at all costs to formulate coherence out of the chaos of events that are deemed historical: “What wish is enacted, what desire is gratified, by the fantasy that real events are properly represented when they can be shown to display the formal coherency of a story?” (4) The need to place historical facts or events into a narrative form, a process literary theorists call narrativization, implicitly reveals a search that is only possible by placing events in a socio-cultural context that has relevance to the present. Because history is recorded partially as a teaching device, to help society learn from the past, it is recorded in such a manner, within such a framework, so as to facilitate that education. The process of narrativization links the facts or events of an historical occurrence in such a way as to draw co-relations to present day circumstance, and, as a result, the historian puts these events together in a manner that will serve a particular agenda or ideology. To this end, the past cannot be seen as “merely a stable body of evidence” but as “an ever-shifting set of so-called facts, which are ostensibly objective but in effect prejudiced by the ideological values with which we interpret them” (Salter xiv).

The meaning of a particular historical occurrence applies primarily to the group that shares the systems of meaning of the particular historian. In other words, because
the “modern scholar seeks fullness and continuity in an order of events,” the recording of history involves ranking these events “hierarchically from within a perspective that is culture-specific, not universal at all” (White 10-11). Pollock’s historiographic drama could then be seen as a desire to rewrite Canadian history from a perspective that considers the ambiguity and uncertainty of so called historical facts and truths. In this sense, one of Pollock’s major aims in her historical reconstructions is uncovering certain myths from Canada’s past that have been perpetuated by historians and artists. Her “choice of a historical subject,” therefore, “can be seen as a nationalist wish to re-discover and re-present our shared past” (Zimmerman, *Playwrighting Women* 65). The notion of a ‘shared past’ is vitally important to Pollock’s historiographic drama, because the conflicts developed in her plays are not confined to her protagonists; they are pertinent today, and the playwright makes it clear through her presentational techniques that we are all responsible for our past and all play a part in shaping it for the future.

In any recording of history, any narrative that attempts to place historical events into the context of a coherent story with meaning relative to the present socio-cultural situation, there is a selection process by which the historian chooses the specific events that he or she deems suitable to be recorded. Events or facts that may disrupt the coherence or causality of the overall history may be excluded from the formal historical record. As Hayden White explains, “[e]very narrative, however seemingly ‘full,’ is constructed on the basis of a set of events that might have been included but were left
out” of the standard accounts (10). These events that were left out are of concern to Pollock in her historiographic plays. For example, in her opening Note to *The Komagata Maru Incident*, she points out that the “repercussions of the government’s actions were overshadowed by the outbreak of World War One.” Certain events that are not seen as important to the historian--probably, in this case the media as well--are pushed to the background in favour of the more prominent, more important issues. With *The Komagata Maru Incident*, Pollock re-visits the plight of the 376 people on board the *Komagata Maru*, who undoubtedly felt their circumstances to have been more important than the outbreak of a war being waged on another continent. The playwright gives voice to those who have been silenced by the Euro-centric chronicling and representation of our history. The notion of giving a disadvantaged group a voice also surfaces in *Saucy Jack*, where Pollock raises awareness about the lives and individuality of the murdered women, who are often forgotten amidst the mythology surrounding the unknown killer.

Just as there are two sides to every story, there are two sides (at least) to every history. A Sikh’s documentation of the government’s actions regarding the *Komagata Maru* will likely differ, say, from that of a government historian. Sherrill Grace and Gabriele Helms note how two recent publications on the subject of the *Komagata Maru* incident paint Mewa Singh differently: one views him as a martyr (Jagpal) and the other a murderer (Jarvis) (90-1). These differing viewpoints, White suggests, are inherent in the definition of history itself:
In order to qualify as historical, an event must be susceptible to at least two narrations of its occurrence. Unless at least two versions of the same set of events can be imagined, there is no reason for the historian to take upon himself the authority of giving the true account of what really happened. (20)

The idea that history is only recorded because there is more than one possible way of recording it is central to Pollock's historiographic drama. For example, in *Walsh*, Harry, the wagon master, gives an unromanticized, inglorious account of Custer's death, a version far different from the myths that blame Indian savagery for the massacre of an American hero. Also, MacDonald's starve'em out policy regarding Sitting Bull and the Sioux does not find its place in most Canadian history textbooks. In the words of Robert Nunn, Pollock brings "to our attention the hidden or ignored events that have created our present reality and [uses] them to bring that reality to our consciousness in the immediate present time of the performance" ("Performing Fact" 56). Thus, a new Canadian consciousness may arise that no longer believes in such ideas as the peaceful settlement of the West or a harmonious Canadian mosaic.

White argues that in order to create a narrative account of history out of a list of events, there must be "a social center by which to locate them with respect to one another and to charge them with ethical or moral significance" (11). When the social center is shifted, the resulting history of a certain event is altered as well. Historical events or
facts are benchmarked for importance according to the morals and ethics of the social center from which the historian works. Knowles notes that the writing of history is “the invention of a narrative that exists as a function of the society and culture that produces it in the present” (228). Pollock’s historiographic dramas frequently revisit unresolved Canadian events, and these plays provide new ways of examining the incident. There is a sense in Pollock’s work that she desires to write down history to control it. She acknowledges the difficulty of the task, and may be speaking for other playwrights as well when she says, “I believe that we’re finally starting to look at the roots of where we happen to be. We’re tentatively trying to discover who we are. We need the maturity and strength to look at ourselves and to realize we’re interesting” (Pollock, “Canada’s Playwrights”38).

Pollock’s “political bias is overtly present in the early plays,” Zimmerman notes, but “by introducing multiple viewpoints even in the early works, she suggests alternative ways of understanding the politics of an event” (Playwrighting Women 69). This is an important dynamic because it points to Pollock’s desire to question the authority of documented history. Her plays highlight how the recorded past (history) is subjective and slanted by the recorder. In other words, at the same time as her plays investigate an historical event or character, they also explore how history can be interpreted in more than one way. Through her use of presentational techniques (play within a play, role playing, dreams, and memories), Pollock self-consciously parallels the
subjectivity of history with the subjectivity of her own interpretation of the events. She writes from a specific standpoint, and she wants the audience to realize that the history about which they are learning, the history that is being re-presented on the stage, has been written from a particular viewpoint, and that there are many other possible versions of this particular historical event. Pollock is fully aware that she is presenting her biases and perspective:

It's as if truthfulness when you're writing about life is a big multi-faceted diamond. I am standing in one place, and I am the result of a certain time and place and experience, and I have a flashlight. If I never try to expand those boundaries I can only hold my flashlight one way, shine it on one part of the diamond. By being aware of how I do see through certain eyes and in a certain way, I get to expand, I get to be able to move the light. But I can't go all the way around that diamond. So when I tell the story of Walsh or Sitting Bull, I may be shining my flashlight on a certain portion of that diamond. The First Nation person who is beside me is in a different place, but the same position I am. I suppose when you have many writers attacking the same story, you get the entire diamond lit up. I think that I can write a story so long as I find a way within the structure of the story to acknowledge my angle of observation. I'm the result of my middle-class, white upbringing in a conservative part of the country,
in a colonized country, next to the largest, most powerful country in the world. I am aware of that and I try to educate myself and sensitize myself to how that has formed me, so that I can understand and overcome the limitations that it's put on me – but to believe that I could ever manage to get rid of all that is a great lie. (Pollock, in Jansen 100-101)

The angle of observation of the writer refers not only to dramatic presentations, but to any historical representation. This ideological manipulation concerns the power that the "creator or discerner of that formal coherence" has over the facts of the case, as well as the audience (Hutcheon, The Canadian Postmodern 72). In making the politics (or the angle of observation) of her plays recognizable and by presenting her plays in a manner which makes it apparent that a certain subjective politic is steering the play, several of Pollock’s plays are recognizably historiographic dramas. Furthermore, because most of her plays contain a framed past—in the guise of an inner play, memories, or dreams—within the historical event being re-presented, her historiographic dramas, in some cases, approach Knowles’ notion of historiographic metadrama.

I define metadrama as drama that is self-reflexive, drama that is self-consciously aware of itself as a theatrical event, drama about drama. In other words, metadrama presupposes the presence of an audience and plays with that idea, often bringing the audience into the action as an implied or quasi-character. As a result, the audience must come to terms "not only with the play’s politic but with how the playwright (not unlike a
politician) is trying to direct their emotional, intellectual and moral attitudes” (Salter xi). Metadrama has been used in theatre since at least the sixteenth century when it was often incorporated in the chronicle history plays of the Elizabethan era. Ever since Shakespeare and his colleagues incorporated this dramatic method, “the re-creation of history on the stage has frequently represented the past metadramatically” (Knowles 229). The celebrated Spanish playwright Calderon used metadrama to investigate the conflict between reality and illusion. He incorporated role playing and the play within a play in works such as Life is a Dream (1636), The Marvelous Magician (1637), and The Great World Theatre (1645), and in these works he distorts and manipulates the natural world. In Life is a Dream, for example, the protagonist Segismundo cannot decide if he is awake or asleep for most of the play, which highlights the playwright’s desire to depict life as transient and dream-like. Three centuries later, Italian playwright Luigi Pirandello once again tackled the conflict between illusion and reality with the use of metadrama in several of his philosophical plays including Six Characters in Search of an Author (1921), Henry IV (1922), and Tonight We Improvise (1930). These plays, among others, question the validity and subjectivity of truth and seem to suggest how facts and truth are necessarily personal and subjective. Other playwrights made use of metadrama over the last four centuries, but the foundations appear to have been built from the Elizabethan history plays and the philosophical undertakings of Calderon and Pirandello.

When metadrama is combined with the notions of contemporary historiography,
the result, historiographic metadrama, is often a self-reflexive drama (play within a play) that emphasizes the theatricality of any re-presentation of life. Pollock's plays are not necessarily historiographic metadramas; in fact, only a few of her works fall directly into that category (Blood Relations, Saucy Jack, Moving Pictures). Nonetheless, the majority of her work can be defined as historiographic dramas, and these plays share many of the attributes of historiographic metadramas, in that they encourage the audience to question historical records and deliberately point out the subjectivity (and often the theatricality) of what is being presented. Her plays expose the notion that there are many possible ways to represent historical events other than the one the audience is seeing. The playwright's "blurring of fact and fiction, part of our postmodern climate, can be interpreted as a deliberate device to undermine the authority of the established historical version" (Zimmerman, Playwrighting Women 68).

Memory play

How does Pollock present her moral inquiries? What are some of the devices and hidden structures that generate these inquiries? Whether the inquiry investigates public, family, or personal history, Pollock more often than not includes the memories of one or more of her characters to depict the events from the past, which in turn illuminate the
moral inquiry. The remembered scenes in Pollock's work frequently hold most of the evidence from which the metaphorical voices of the defence and prosecution gather their argument to conduct the inquiry. The memories are undoubtedly selective and their purpose is usually to denounce or defend the actions of the character undergoing the inquiry. Therefore, the testimonies given by the witnesses during the metaphorical inquiries not only provide evidence for the investigations but the recollections also help define the parameters and structure of the memory play.

I define a memory play as a dramatic work in which a portion of the action is set in a time previous to that established as the work's initial present time or now; furthermore, these enacted scenes from the past are identified as the memories of one or more of the characters within the play. Several contemporary Canadian plays use a memory play structure, yet scholarly research in the field of the memory play has just begun to emerge. Various modern theatre movements during the early part of the twentieth century, in particular expressionism, symbolism, and Brecht's epic theatre, revolutionized the possibilities of dramatic form and structure. In their unique ways, these movements challenged neoclassical, well-made, and melodramatic play structures, and opened up different possibilities for presenting a dramatic story through their effective use of sound, visual effects, and verfremdungseffekt. Directly or indirectly, these influential modern movements played a role in the shaping of the memory play structure. In her comprehensive study Flashbacks in Film: Memory and History (1989),
examining the evolution of flashbacks in film history, Maureen Turim credits the Russian
Formalists, who privileged form over content, as a significant influence on early
filmmakers using the flashback device. According to Turim, the Formalists introduced
"the notion of 'device', a construct within form that complicates the formal patterning of
the textual object, providing form with variations" (5). As film structure became more
sophisticated, artists tried to justify their use of the flashback device, and Turim suggests
that flashbacks in modern drama and film began to hide their formal function by being
presented as memories, dreams, or confessions (6). Literary works made use of memory,
dreams, and confessions within their narratives long before moving pictures. It is nearly
impossible to know exactly what genre had the largest impact in the development of the
memory play. Yet it is safe to say that the work of literary artists had a great impact on
the early structure of films. The Russian film artist Sergei Eisenstein credits Flaubert’s
intercutting dialogues in Madame Bovary as an influential device in his development of
cinematographic montage (Barna 67), and the popularity and sophisticated development
of montage techniques in films (and later in television), which include flashbacks, have
had a definite influence on the development of memory plays. Playwrights such as
Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller, who have worked in both film and theatre, were
no doubt well aware of the flashback in cinema and likely adapted the technique for their
memory plays.

The term memory play originates with Tennessee Williams in his introduction to
The Glass Menagerie (1945) and, according to American critic Darryl E. Haley, it is the first work from the modernist canon to be categorized as a memory play (42). Plays prior to The Glass Menagerie incorporate aspects of the memory play structure, but none appears to make such a clear distinction between a present time and a defined remembered past. 

Williams’ contemporary drama is a narrated flashback framed by the rememberer (Tom Wingfield) who turns back time. As he says in his opening frame monologue: “The play is memory. Being a memory play, it is dimly lighted, it is sentimental, it is not realistic” (2-3). The time in Williams’ play is given as “Now and the Past” (3), and in fact, only three speeches take place “now”; the rest of the play is set in the past. Consequently, with such a major focus on the past, the usual audience expectation of what will happen is converted into a retrospective inquiry: what has happened and why? Williams’ play was soon followed by Miller’s landmark play Death of a Salesman (1949), which also makes use of the memory structure. In reference to Williams and Miller, Jeanette R. Malkin suggests that “memory plays use subjective conventions in order to ‘see’ into the mind, to reconstruct a life, and thus to find interpretive frameworks for personal or social failure” (21). The subjective conventions incorporated within the work of Williams and Miller sparked the imaginations of many future playwrights who have borrowed, changed, and complicated the initial conventions of the memory play. The development of this sub-genre grew rapidly in the second half of the twentieth century, with many Canadians embracing the memory play, including
Sharon Pollock.

If we take Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* as the basic memory play model, we can detect a resemblance in dramatic structure with Pollock's earlier plays. Similar to Tom in *The Glass Menagerie*, Chalmers in *One Tiger to a Hill* opens the play in the present with a monologue to the audience that ends with a segue into the past: “This place is the pen. These are the people. It happened like this” (77). The play concludes with Chalmers once again addressing the audience: “I remember I stood there [] looking down” (137). These two monologues are the only ones that exist in the now of the play, with the rest of the action stemming from Chalmers’ memory of past events. Two other Pollock plays, *Walsh* and *Whiskey Six Cadenza*, contain similar basic structures, and can be seen as extended flashbacks or recollections by Walsh and Johnny. Nevertheless, the majority of Pollock’s plays discussed in the following chapters make innovative departures from the standard model. For example, *Doc* has two on-stage rememberers, who experience and interact with each other’s memories. Nell Shipman in *Moving Pictures* is played by three separate actresses in three different periods of her life, yet they all have the ability to interact with one another, transcending both time and space. In these more complex memory plays, numerous time shifts between present and past occur, making it challenging to know which time frame is being depicted. The frequent shifts also disrupt the re-playing of a continuous past, which reminds the audience that these recollections are usually driven by associations from the present that are mediated

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by the rememberer to serve his or her purpose. Shipman, Catherine, and Ev are selective in the memories they conjure, which recalls a significant argument of historiographers who suggest that “there is no direct access to that real [past] which would be unmediated” (Hutcheon, “History” 173).

The work of recent theorists of autobiography supports the idea that memories, like stories, are constructions, versions of the past. Sidonie Smith in *A Poetics of Women’s Autobiography* observes that memory “cannot be articulated outside the structure of language and story telling” (45). Similarly, Roy Pascal argues that “[a]utobiography imposes a pattern on life, constructs out of it a coherent story” (9). From their study of experimental investigations on everyday memories, psychologists Craig Barclay and Peggy DeCooke conclude that even apart from its formal literary expression, “autobiographical memory is a constructive and reconstructive process” (52).

There seems to be general agreement among these scholars and researchers that accurate reproduction of the past is not a possibility, and that the act of remembering, like historiography, “becomes the ongoing process of remaking history, of ‘making it new,’ as fiction and myth” (Knowles 228).

The concept of memory as a constructive process is central to *Doc* and *Moving Pictures*, for in these two plays remembering is the predominant on-stage activity. In their attempts to understand and accept their present situation, the protagonists recall and replay selective moments from the past, trying to find justification for their actions.
Edmund Blair Bolles in *Remembering and Forgetting: An Inquiry into the Nature of Memory* goes as far as to assert that “remembering is an act of imagination” (xi). Janet Smith in *End Dream* replays (or imagines) a variety of scenarios in the seconds before she is murdered, imagining the reasons and recalling the circumstances that led to her violent death.

David Lowenthal in *The Past is a Foreign Country* suggests that “certain heightened recollections seem to bring the past not only to life, but into simultaneous existence with the present” (203). The memory play, which combines present and past, is arguably the literary structure which can come closest to presenting two fragments of time simultaneously. In several of Pollock’s plays the rememberer remains on stage (*One Tiger to a Hill, Moving Pictures, Doc*), visually reminding the audience of the present while depicting scenes from the past. As well, the intense emotional response of characters such as Eme in *Getting It Straight* and Shipman in *Moving Pictures* suggests that they are indeed experiencing the past presently. This leads into a paradox inherent in Pollock’s more complicated memory plays, because not only does the past affect the present, but the present can also affect memories from the past. Erik Erikson has remarked that “memories connect meaningfully what happened once with what is happening now” (quoted by Olney 244). Lowenthal agrees: “The prime function of memory, then, is not to preserve the past but to adapt it so as to enrich and manipulate the present” (210).
Pollock’s historiographic dramas contain two levels of the present from which the past is recalled and mediated: the present of the play and the present of the audience. Both these presents color how the past is portrayed, because the original crime is viewed in hindsight and tainted by contemporary perspectives and ideologies. Furthermore, the audience has the ability to observe how the crime is received in the play’s present, which complicates their preconceptions of the original event even further. For example, in *Blood Relations*, the audience observes Miss Lizzie observing the re-staged past. This metadramatic event lays open the notion of reconstructed history, which triggers the audience’s assumptions of what they think happened in Massachusetts in 1892. It reminds them that what they know of the Borden murders has been mediated by the media, historians, and artists. Furthermore, in observing others remembering and re-creating the past, the audience may be better able to identify the social injustices taking place, so that they may recognize how some of these injustices still prevail today. Ultimately, framing the crime or social wrongdoing with a moral inquiry taking place a few years afterwards creates a distancing effect, enabling the audience to observe the social issues without being absorbed by the events of the original crime as represented by the illusion of dramatic realism.
Three memory play models

Practically all of Pollock's plays incorporate memory yet to focus my study I deliberately chose to investigate the works that offer a distinct memory play structure. This leaves out some important plays that contain remembered events as well as intricate moral inquiries. As I define the three memory models used in my study, I discuss some of her works that contain memory yet do not suit my definition of a memory play. The three models I use to explore Pollock’s memory plays are not fixed within rigid and unbending parameters; on the contrary, the models are meant to be flexible framing devices that illuminate the playwright’s memory structure and, as importantly, uncover the historical and personal inquiries dramatized within her texts. It should be noted that some overlap exists among the three memory play models, because certain characteristics build on or borrow from others. By the same token, each of Pollock’s plays is unique and although I have paired them up in the following chapters, the inquiries within the memory plays work differently in the respective works and I highlight some of the significant similarities and distinctions.

i – Third-person memory model (Walsh, The Komagata Maru Incident)
The third-person memory model, which is the subject of my second chapter, can be explained by looking at Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*. In this late romantic play, the Button Moulder acts as a narrator/prosecutor who guides the audience through selective events from Peer Gynt's past. Peer has a few hours to prove that his life had significance, so he desperately tries to find witnesses to support his cause and he reenacts past exploits. Through the manipulation of the Button Moulder, a trial-like life review occurs where Peer dreams, imagines, or remembers significant events from his life. The first model I propose encompasses memories guided from a third-person perspective. Someone other than the central character generally manipulates the recollected, narrated events, and the narration often becomes expository information and/or a segue for dialogue between the principal players. The third-person memory model works well with historically based dramas, for it provides a structural device to disseminate a great deal of information in a short period of time. Moreover, through its use of flashbacks the potential monotony of a linear structure is broken. Furthermore, the theatrical space for this model (and the two other models) need not be naturalistic, for it asks the audience to flashback and imagine a past, which eliminates the necessity of depicting a detailed setting. Symbolic music, lighting, costumes, props, or set pieces often act as subtle signs to re-orient the audience to specific times or places.

The two Pollock plays which best illustrate this first model are *Walsh* and *The
Komagata Maru Incident because both these plays contain a narrator, a chorus-like figure (Harry and T.S.), who guides the story for the audience. As with Peer, the moral decisions of Walsh and Hopkinson are central to the inquiry. Did they make the appropriate choices given their circumstances? Do they take responsibility for their actions? Are they mere pawns in a greater game? Another Pollock play, not discussed in this dissertation, which makes use of the third-person memory model is The Making of Warriors, a radio play first broadcast by the CBC in 1991. (I have chosen to focus on her stage plays only. Sweet Land of Liberty, first produced in 1979 by CBC radio Calgary would be another worthy memory play to consider in another study.) The Making of Warriors contains three third-person narrators and, similar to Walsh and The Komagata Maru Incident, the narrative voices are not the primary subjects of the drama; instead, the principal figures are Anna Mae Pictou, a Micmac woman from Nova Scotia who was murdered in South Dakota in 1976 after the Wounded Knee events, and Sarah Moore Grimke, a nineteenth century woman activist who worked towards abolishing slavery and increasing women's rights. The lives of these two figures are reexamined in The Making of Warriors, and the radio drama presents how the efforts towards social change (often met with resistance) of the two female activists are remembered through the memories of the narrators. From a historiographic perspective these three plays are rich subjects, because Pollock purposefully avoids simply recreating a pageant of the events, notably in The Komagata Maru Incident where she deliberately theatricalizes the events of 1914 in
a carnival side-show manner.

ii – First-person memory model (*One Tiger to a Hill, Moving Pictures*)

The second model, and the focus of the third chapter, is the first-person memory model. Originally, and aptly, entitled “Inside His Head,” Miller’s *Death of a Salesman* exemplifies some of the characteristics which help define this second model. Miller’s memory play depicts Willy Loman reliving past encounters with his brother, his sons, his lover, and these recollections return Willy to a past that may illuminate the reasons for a failed life. The present of the play is constituted by the forty-eight hours that follow Willy’s unexpected return from a business trip; however, his past memories constantly overflow, creating a side-by-side existence of the two worlds: past and present. Instead of a third-person onlooker as in the first model, the memories here are guided by Willy (first-person), making them even more subjective. Willy reexamines his life while he contemplates suicide, so he figuratively puts his life on trial, trying, in vain, to reclaim some kind of self-worth from the past. Willy’s self-inquiry resembles Peer Gynt’s, except that the judge in Ibsen is the Button Moulder (third-person) whereas in Miller, Willy must judge himself.
The Pollock play that most clearly demonstrates this model is *One Tiger to a Hill*. The rememberer, Chalmers, recollects the past and tries to understand (along with the audience) what led him to his present state of disillusionment. The inner frame (past) dominates and there is limited disruption to it during the course of the play; therefore, much like *Taming of the Shrew*, once the inner play begins to develop it is difficult to remember that an outer frame exists. However, unlike most first-person memory plays, which focus on the inner struggle of the central rememberer, Chalmers in *One Tiger to a Hill* is only one of several figures confronted with a moral dilemma. The play provides a useful example of Pollock’s early experiments with the first-person memory model.

The Pollock drama that offers the most clear example of a first-person memory play where the central rememberer undergoes a moral inquiry is *Moving Pictures* (1999). This complex and sophisticated drama contains three Nell Shipmans (early years, mid years, and later years), and the split-characters respectively witness and accept events from the past differently. Pollock writes in her Introduction to the play that the split-character “plays for and against herself in the reconstruction of a life dedicated to the creation of play on stage, on screen, and in life” (2). Presumably, the older Nell, referred to as “Shipman” in the text, is the primary rememberer and the one faced with the moral dilemma, because she is the only one who has lived through each stage; however, this does not prevent “Nell” (middle) and “Helen” (younger) from sharing their memories of the past, or their projections into the future. In fact, “Helen” and “Nell” appear to be
aware of "Shipman's" mental state, and they try to defend their actions and convince their older self of the value of their life in art. A few other Pollock plays contain aspects of the first-person memory model (Whiskey Six Cadenza, Getting It Straight, End Dream) yet these works do not suit the framework or lens from which I am analyzing the playwright's work. In the next few pages I explain how and why these plays are not part of my central analysis.

First produced by Theatre Calgary in 1983, Whiskey Six Cadenza was originally intended as a radio musical and it draws from a documented event in Crowsnest Pass where a rum-runner's mistress "was hanged for shooting a Prohibition policeman" (Zimmerman, Playwrighting Women 81). Crowsnest Pass is situated on the Alberta/British Columbia/Montana border, and Pollock sets the scene for her family drama in the mining town of Blairmore in 1919-20. Whiskey Six Cadenza opens, like many other Pollock works, in a dream-like state with voice-overs (cf. Doc, Fair Liberty's Call, Moving Pictures, End Dream, Angel's Trumpet), and, similar to the induction scene in Walsh, the opening dance segment in Whiskey Six Cadenza seems to arise from a half-drunken state. This impressionistic dance sequence is repeated at the end of the play, and only then does the audience discover that the events of the play were presumably re-staged from Johnny's memory. During the final scene, when the members of the cast dance and the voice-overs are played, "Johnny enters, moves past them, through them, obviously not of them" (246). Then, the stage directions indicate that he takes off his
jacket and suddenly “looks quite a bit older. He speaks to the audience” (247). His final monologue ends with the ambiguous statement: “It may all have been lies, but that still doesn’t mean it weren’t true” (247). By addressing the audience directly, Johnny hints that the entire play stems from his memory and that what took place remains unresolved in his mind. The only other signs that support the memory concept in the play are a few musical and visual images that are described in the stage directions as being “fractured, refracted, fragmented” (141). (In the Playwright’s Note Pollock comments that the stage directions reflect the Theatre Calgary production designed by Terry Gunvordahl and that she endorses the impressionist fractured approach. [139].) For example, near the end of act one Mr. Big entertains Johnny and other companions with drinks in the Alberta Hotel, yet outside, “slightly distorted, is a fractured image of Bill in uniform” (193). In the middle of the second act while Mrs. Farley tries to persuade Johnny to abandon his affiliation with Mr. Big, the stage directions indicate that a “[f]ractured slow image of the constable” (226) takes shape outside. The use of the distorted and distant visual images reflects Lowenthal’s notion of the workings of memory:

All memory transmutes experience, distils the past rather than simply reflecting it. We recall only a small fraction of what has impinged on us, let alone of all the environmental displays. Thus memory sifts again what perception had already sifted, leaving us only fragments of the fragments of what was initially on view. (204)
The play's circular structure also implies memory, especially with the image and sound of the train, which appears in the opening and closing of the play. At the beginning of *Whiskey Six Cadenza* a train whistle is heard followed by a sharp headlight increasingly shining into the audience members' eyes simulating the train's arrival into town (142). This strong visual and auditory image is repeated after Johnny finishes his address to the audience in the final scene, but this time instead of getting off the train he catches it, going to an unknown destination. The train becomes a vehicle to connect past and present in Johnny's effort to revisit and reevaluate his past.

Categorizing *Whiskey Six Cadenza* as a memory play becomes problematic, despite the play containing several features of the first-person model. The reason I exclude it from my central analysis is because the play does not establish a distinct present and past (at the outset), whereby it is clear to the audience that the rememberer (Johnny) is recollecting specific memories in an effort to understand his present state. The usual structure for the memory play signals to the audience early on that what the rememberer is struggling with occurred before the play's present; as a result, the scenes from the past become the evidence or testimonies that justify, defend, or simply explain the state of the rememberer when the play opens. Because the beginning of *Whiskey Six Cadenza* does not set up two frames, Johnny's moral dilemma appears to take place in the play's present. Consequently, the social circumstances that force him to leave Blairmore do not give the impression of being recalled or reexamined from a later time.
The audience is not guided to the past via Johnny in the opening; therefore, at no point in the play (except in the final monologue) are time and place juxtaposed through memory.

Johnny certainly experiences a moral dilemma. In love with Leah, Johnny “finds himself pitted in a moral struggle with a man to whom he owes his freedom” (Salter xxix). If it were not for Mr. Big, Johnny would likely have to descend into the mines, the industry which has killed his three brothers, and return home “to a mother whose burden of guilt and apocalyptic visions of hellfire are certain to destroy him” (Salter xxix). On the other hand, if Johnny remains with Mr. Big he must deny his passion for Leah and witness first hand the illegitimate (and disgusting) affair between his boss and the woman he loves. *Whiskey Six Cadenza* contains several characteristics of the first-person model because of Johnny’s moral dilemma, yet the play’s structural elements differ from the parameters I set out to study Pollock’s memory plays—namely, the play lacks a distinct past and present frame from the outset.

Under Pollock’s direction, *End Dream* premiered at Calgary’s Theatre Junction in March 2000. Subtitled “A Mesmerizing Mystery,” *End Dream* investigates the final moments in the life of the Scottish nanny Janet Smith. Pollock describes her play as “a kind of mental drama. I see her [Janet] at the moment of her death ... as the brain replays the events that brought her to the violent place” (Taylor R5). The play is set in an affluent Vancouver home in 1924. Pollock has her protagonist, Janet, revisit the various ways she could have died, and through dream or memory the different scenarios are
played out. The Chinese houseboy Wong Foon Sing with whom Janet gradually develops an intimate friendship is accused of the murder, but he is eventually acquitted. The play presents the entire cast as potential suspects, with each character having their motivations to kill her. Robert Clarke-Evans, the master of the house and the one who hired the nanny after an alleged affair with her in Britain, could be responsible. He appears to run a successful drug-running business from his home, and when Janet became curious about his affairs he may well have disposed of her himself or hired someone to do so. Robert’s alcoholic, oppressed, and unhappy wife, Doris (much like Bob in *Doc*), knows more about her husband’s business than he thinks, and her jealousy of the potential affair between her husband and the nanny may have given her cause for murder. Or it could be Janet herself who imagines “these varied explanations as she loses track of reality on her way to suicide” (Montgomery, “Tired of waking” 22).

Pollock based her drama on Edward Starkins’ well-researched *The Murder of Janet Smith*. Looking for a thriller in a second-hand bookstore in Ottawa, Pollock picked up the former University of British Columbia professor’s novel and decided to explore the unresolved murder case further. The playwright stopped working on this play when she discovered that *Disposing of the Dead* by Kate Schlemmer, a play that also investigates the Janet Smith murder, was being produced by Pink Ink and Axis Theatre in Vancouver in 1998. During an interview with Nothof, Pollock mentions that she did not see Schlemmer’s production at Vancouver’s Waterfront Théâtre, “but I did see a very
good videotape of the play.” She then realized “that for Disposing of the Dead the story was a hook to hang an imagistic theatre experience from, an avenue to do interesting things with sound and sight. I ended up feeling that mine would be sufficiently different, and so I went back to working on it” (Sharon Pollock: Essays on Her Works 174-75).

In a racist Vancouver (as is explored in The Komagata Maru Incident) during the 1920s the combination of a Chinese houseboy and a white nanny created a wonderful dynamic for Pollock to explore racial tensions. Pollock’s play suggests that the authorities immediately pointed the finger at Foon Sing, yet his characterization and actions within the play imply that he tried to protect the nanny rather than kill her. Regardless, Pollock’s play does not attempt to solve the case; instead, her play explores various scenarios that may have taken place leading up to the murder. Framing the play is a legal trial where the Chinese court interpreter, Wong Sien, addresses an imaginary jury and presents evidence in support of Foon Sing’s defence. He describes how Foon Sing was “kidnapped from the Clarke-Evans home over six weeks ago” and how the houseboy was “systematically beaten by hooded men ... and thrown in a ditch in Richmond. When found by police, he was apprehended and charged with murder” (3). Wong Sien later informs the audience that several law enforcement officers were implicated in the kidnapping and subsequently charged, but the trial conducted by “important lawyer appointed by Attorney General” (67) dismissed all charges: “Kidnapping case dismissed! All go free” (67). The case appeared to be covering up
many underground dealings, including and beyond Robert’s drug-trading enterprise.

Janet is struck by something on the back of her head (likely the handle of the gun) before her death and this wound causes drowsiness in her final recollections. Similar to *Whiskey Six Cadenza*, many of the memories are refracted and fragmented in *End Dream*, and as with many of Pollock’s plays, scenes are repeated with slight variations. The combination of Gunvordahl’s effective lighting design and Bob Doble’s precise sound design in the March 2000 premiere gave the audience the impression that they were truly inside Janet’s head, and we became part of the hazy, nightmarish flashbacks that kept returning with only slight variations. *The Globe & Mail* critic Kate Taylor mentions that Pollock “is particularly interested in non-naturalistic staging and ways of communicating meaning in theatre without words,” and that in *End Dream*, “she has worked to create moments of unspoken hypersensitivity with a subtly Oriental design, strong lighting effects, bold props and symbolic action” (R5). These production elements are not new to Pollock, but with *End Dream* she has arguably created her most imagistic piece of theatre to date and she relies heavily on lighting and sound to recreate dreams and memories. For Pollock, “[t]he text is the tip of the iceberg” (Pollock in Taylor R5), and it is the staging and technical support that create the full effect and build the tension for the drama. Her comment that Schlemmer’s Vancouver production was “imagistic theatre” is rather ironic considering how she strongly emphasized lighting and sound in the premiere of *End Dream*. 

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Ambiguity is more prevalent in *End Dream* than in any of her previous plays and the audience is left with many questions when the play ends. One reviewer found the ambiguity to be too much: “So many questions are posed, and once it becomes clear that none are going to be answered, it becomes difficult to find the impetus to continue to pay attention” (Creery 8). This reviewer’s desire to find out what happened (something Pollock rarely divulges in her plays) colours her reception of the multi-layered play. The unresolved issues are typical of Pollock’s plays and they often provide the reason why her characters need to restage their memories. Janet tries to make sense of the various forces that led to her death and by representing several scenarios Pollock opens up the case and asks her audience to witness the possibilities. During an interview with Lori Montgomery, Pollock explains that the audience sees what Janet “wished had happened or feared would happen. ... She’s taken the raw material of her real past, but what she’s made of it may not be what really happened. I suppose the audience is asked, on some level, ‘What do you think happened?’” (“So far from her beginnings” 32).

What makes the first-person memory problematic in *End Dream* is that, similar to *Whiskey Six Cadenza*, Pollock’s version of the Janet Smith murder does not contain a distinct present and past frame. *End Dream* opens and ends with Janet presumably dead, so the play does not give the audience the benefit of a present voice leading them to her memories. Instead, the audience is being asked, according to Pollock, to “enter into the head of this young woman, and take the trip that she’s taking at the moment of her death.”
(Montgomery, “So far from her beginnings” 32). Without incorporating a present frame, the various memories interconnect in time and space but they do not necessarily inform and define Janet’s present state. Because the memories are collected within her head in a matter of seconds there is little time for her to digest, negotiate, or reconsider the details and events. Furthermore, Pollock opts not to have Janet speak in the present or address the audience directly. It becomes the role of the audience to piece together and sort things out from the little they are given. According to Bob Clark, *End Dream* “is a little like being allowed to examine only a few splendid and richly-textured details in the same area of a painting over the space of two hours, and then being expected to imagine, from what little we see and from what little we are told, what the rest of it must look like” (“Pollock turns Nanny’s death” B17). The overlapping and multiple memories are difficult to make sense of in one viewing and unlike *Moving Pictures* there is no older Janet sorting out the memories. Janet’s stream of consciousness journey leaves the audience bombarded with so many evocative images that are layered one after the other that one is left mesmerized (I certainly was in my viewing), and with perhaps too much to digest in too little time. A “Shipman” or a “Catherine” guiding the audience through the memories would enable the viewers to better experience Janet’s moral dilemma. Therefore, even though *End Dream* contains aspects of the memory play, the play’s structure does not include a distinct present frame from which Janet recalls her past—to justify or defend the state she is in prior to her death; as a result, the play falls outside the
parameters of my first-person model.

Another Pollock play which resembles *End Dream* in its nearly seamless connection/collection of memories is her one-person play *Getting It Straight* (1992). In one long monologue the protagonist of that play, Eme, recollects her past under an empty stadium bleacher. Like Janet, her memories are loosely connected through association rather than by cause and effect or any interaction with another time frame. Unlike Janet, who arguably exists in the past, Eme only lives in the play’s present but continually refers to the past. The subtle workings of memory are theatricalized in both *Getting It Straight* and *End Dream*, and the plays emphasize David Lowenthal’s notion that “[m]emory retrieval is seldom sequential; we locate recalled events by association rather than by working methodically forward or backward through time” (208). The sanity of both Janet and Eme is suspect so their recollections of the past are questionable; nevertheless, amid the dozens of fragmented and overlapping images they recall lies a potential truth, one that is never clear but hidden within the memories. The clear distinctions that are made between past and present in her earlier plays are blurred in *Getting It Straight*. Lighting and sound cues, along with physical gestures and blocking, become the only means by which an audience can realize that time and space have shifted or that one memory has now led to another. Like *Whiskey Six Cadenza* and *End Dream*, the lack of a distinct present and past frame in *Getting It Straight* excludes it from being one of the primary texts of my study on Pollock’s first-person memory plays.
iii - Multi-person memory model (*Doc, Fair Liberty's Call*)

The third memory model, and the subject of the fourth chapter, is the multi-person memory play, which features the possibility for more than one character to recollect the past. William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* provides a novelistic example where the same story is recounted from various perspectives. The four chapters (perspectives) indicate to the reader how subjectivity plays a major role in what one remembers from a certain event. The classic 1950 Japanese film *Rashomon*, written and directed by Akira Kurosawa, provides another example of a drama using multiple rememberers. A woman’s murder and her husband’s consequent death are remembered differently by the four narrative voices, illuminating the subjectivity of truth. The memories stem from first and third-person perspectives, with each rememberer altering the story to make himself/herself appear in the best light.

In *Fair Liberty’s Call* an entire group remembers various battles from their distinct perspective. What happened “depends on your angle of observation” (*Fair Liberty’s Call* 42-43), on who is telling the story, and although the action takes place in the play’s present, the ceremonies and memories bring us to past events. Most of the
characters undergo a personal trial in this play as they try to justify their past actions, and when John Anderson demands justice for his brother’s death, an ethical inquiry occurs amongst the men as they try to determine who is most responsible. The other play that I investigate in the fourth chapter is \textit{Doc}, because, like \textit{Fair Liberty’s Call}, this play includes more than one first-person rememberer.

Both plays contain a definitive now (present frame), and from that present at least two of the characters within each work recollect past events or memories. In turn, this creates the interaction of multiple perspectives within each play (present, first rememberer’s memories, and second rememberer’s memories), and these perspectives or frames sometimes occur simultaneously and quite often blur into one another. Unlike the first-person memory model, the multi-person memory model frequently reverts to the play’s present time frame. This added shifting often makes it difficult to know which time frame is playing, or who to believe, follow, or trust.

In \textit{Doc}, Pollock distinctly presents the memories of two first-person rememberers (Ev and Catherine) and these recollected events are interspersed within the present time frame, generating two distinct perspectives of the past. With \textit{Fair Liberty’s Call}, Pollock does not re-stage past events; nonetheless, most of the play, and in particular the Remembrance Ceremony, consists of the group of characters re-visiting the past, arguably in an effort to understand their present. Both plays present a tragedy (Bob’s death, Waxhaws massacre) and through the various memories, the characters
accuse/defend each other, in an attempt to lay the responsibility for the past atrocity on someone. The multiple first-person recollections are undoubtedly mediated and biased, and they support the notion that Pollock’s plays contain conflicting, ambiguous (multiple) truths.

Two Pollock plays that offer aspects of the multi-person memory but do not suit the parameters set out in this dissertation include Blood Relations and Saucy Jack. Blood Relations contains characteristics of the multi-person model but the inner frame (or past) is clearly metadrama and not memory. Miss Lizzie refuses to divulge direct information from the past and, as a result, the past is openly dramatized and reconstructed from the Actress’s perspective. Unlike the past in Fair Liberty’s Call where the rememberers metadramatically restage their memories of the American Revolution (through the Remembrance Ceremony), the Actress in Blood Relations did not witness the Borden murders and her restaging is based fully on conjecture and supposition. She recreates the past using second-hand information she gathered through Miss Lizzie, the trial, gossip, and the media. In many ways, the metadramatic structure used in Blood Relations informs and parallels Pollock’s rewriting of the historical records about the Borden case. In other words, just as Pollock pieced together her take on the Borden trial through her research (reading fictional and non-fictional sources) and creative manipulation of the events, the Actress reconstructs history from the “reports of the day” (17), the
information Miss Lizzie has imparted, and her imaginative intuition. From a third-
person perspective, Pollock and the Actress, in their own ways, bridge the gaps where
information is missing and offer their own interpretation of what may have happened on
the fateful day in Fall River without claiming to tell the definitive story. By
acknowledging the interpretive and imaginative elements used to dramatize the Borden
case, Pollock's Blood Relations reflects the historiographical notion that "the writing of
history is a (re)construction which involves the selection, arrangement, interpretation and
narrativizing of detail" (Wyile 198). Whereas Doc and Fair Liberty's Call present first-
person memories to restage the past, in Blood Relations Pollock deliberately avoids using
first-person memories, and the dream thesis openly acknowledges that the Actress did
not personally witness the events. To reexamine the events of Fall River in 1892, the
Actress, with some help from Lizzie, conjures up witnesses, but these characters (Harry,
Bridget, Mr. Borden, Mrs. Borden, Dr. Patrick, Lizzie, and Emma) inside the dream
thesis are guided by conjecture and imagination rather than personal memory. In certain
productions Miss Lizzie may be directed to deliberately assist the Actress in the
replaying of the past, and in those productions, the dream thesis would appear to include
memory along with conjecture.

In the present time frame Miss Lizzie refuses to offer any direct evidence but as
she begins to role play Bridget, she occasionally provides insights into the circumstances
surrounding the murders. In particular scenes Miss Lizzie appears to offer first-person
memories, but because they are filtered through Bridget, who speaks of Lizzie’s situation from a third-person perspective, the recollections become metadramatic. For example, when Bridget reminds Harry that Miss Lizzie was furious when he convinced Mr. Borden to sign the rent from the mill house over to Abigail (22), the information is presumably from Miss Lizzie’s first-hand experience yet it is delivered via a third-person point of view (Bridget’s). The role playing element complicates and layers the memory, because not only is there “no direct access to that real [past] which would be unmediated” (Hutcheon, “History” 173), but Miss Lizzie’s mediated recollections are also interpreted through the role of Bridget. This creates a mediated memory that is mediated again through role playing. Consequently, the role playing becomes the principal device. The inner play cannot be considered memory.

*Blood Relations* is unquestionably the playwright’s strongest artistic and commercial success to date. Since it premiered at Edmonton’s Theatre 3 in 1980, the play has received, and continues to receive, numerous productions in North America and beyond. It has been translated into various languages and the playwright earned her first Governor General’s Award for drama with the play in 1981. Despite Ray Conlogue’s opinion of the Toronto premiere that it “is a candy floss play” (“Victorian production” 22) lacking in resonance, most critics and scholars agree that the questions raised in the play about the 1892 Borden trial still resonate today. *Blood Relations* raises significant questions about imprisonment on the personal and family level, and Lizzy’s entrapment
transcends private issues to encompass the public, socio-political issues familiar from Pollock's earlier plays. Of all her plays, Blood Relations has received the most critical attention from scholars. Research on this play has centred on feminism (Bessai; Case; Chung; Clement and Sullivan; Miner; Scholfield; Stone-Blackburn; Striff) and metadrama (Loiselle; Stone-Blackburn; Zichy); however, to date researchers have not explored the concept of a moral inquiry in respect to Miss Lizzie. Although the play cannot be categorized as a memory play, it certainly contains a moral inquiry.

Examining Blood Relations as a moral inquiry offers another lens to study the play. Through the Actress's interpretation of the events (in the dream thesis) the play strongly suggests that Lizzie committed the murders, which implies that she would be legally guilty. However, is she morally guilty? And even if she is, are the mitigating circumstances sufficient to allow her to be forgiven? The recurring question, "Lizzie? Lizzie. ... did you?" (18), drives the action, but Pollock's play does not propose to answer the question. What happened is left to our imagination and in fact who did it becomes secondary for Pollock. At the heart of Blood Relations is Lizzie's moral dilemma about whether or not she should kill the Bordens in her desperate effort to liberate herself from the psychological and social prison she feels trapped in. By investigating the play through the perspective of a moral inquiry we witness how Pollock gradually builds the case to argue that under the circumstances Lizzie was left with little choice. Unmarried, her options become increasingly limited as the play progresses. Her
choices include repressing her feelings and pretending that all is fine, taking more drastic measures by killing herself or her oppressor(s), or, of course, leaving.

Rather than "Did you Lizzie?" the evidence gathered in the moral trial focuses more on "should you have, Lizzie?" Given the circumstances, was it morally just for her to take action?—that is what drives the inquiry. Pollock proposes "that all of us are capable of murder given the right situation" (Wallace and Zimmerman 123), and in Blood Relations the right situation is restaged. Nonetheless, the morality behind the act opens itself up to interpretation. What becomes significantly clear in the dream thesis is how gradually all the walls are closing in on Lizzie. Her options become extremely limited and her freedom and independence are reduced. This confining atmosphere forces her to choose between denying any sense of self (metaphorically killing herself), rebelling against the oppressive forces (which does not necessarily entail killing), or leaving home—at age 33. The moral dilemma that Miss Lizzie experiences is reconstructed and restaged, and near the end of the dream thesis the Actress demonstrates what she would have done under the circumstances. The Actress gives the impression that she has killed Mrs. Borden off-stage. And soon after, when Mr. Borden nods off to sleep, she picks up the axe and is ready to deliver a blow when the lights go out and the dream thesis shifts to the play’s present. At this moment, the audience, which up until this point was fully immersed in the inner play, becomes part of the inquiry. According to Zimmerman, Miss Lizzie’s final words of the play, "I didn’t. You did" (70),
“implicate us all” (Playwrighting Women 76). Miss Lizzie’s final utterance suggests that “the actress and the audience take responsibility for the action to which they have consented, the past that they have imagined and thereby created” (Knowles 240). The suggestion that the audience becomes an accomplice in the murders has been argued by other scholars (Stone-Blackburn 175; Bessai, “Sharon Pollock’s Women” 132). The repeated question “Did you Lizzie?” (19) becomes a much larger question, implicating the Actress as well as the audience (and Emma). The notion that the responsibility for the murders is shared among several parties implies that the moral inquiry, although focussed on Lizzie, potentially transcends the individual case. The moral inquiry illuminates the playwright’s determination to seek out social justice. A central character grappling for social justice, and needing to revisit the past in hopes of understanding, justifying, or defending their present, figures prominently in all six Pollock plays that I discuss in the following three chapters.

Another Pollock work that contains elements of the multi-person memory yet does not suit the parameters I set out for my study is Saucy Jack. The metadramatic play was first produced in 1993 under Pollock’s direction by The Garry Theatre, a company the playwright and her son, Kirk Campbell (who designed the set for the premiere), created in Calgary. Pollock sets her Jack the Ripper version on the evening of December 1st, 1888 in Henry Wilson’s Victorian home along the Thames River in Chiswick. Wilson, a senior bureaucrat at the Home Office, is unable to join his friends,
so James Kenneth Stephen (Jem) is the host. The invited guests include Prince Albert
Victor (Eddy), Montague Druitt (a teacher at a prestigious boy’s school), and the hired
actress, Kate. Jem opens the play with a long monologue directly to the audience, which
gives the impression that he is the central rememberer. However, what he wishes to
recollect, his potential involvement in the Whitechapel murders, appears blurred in his
mind. Jem’s “intellect is impaired” (32), and as a result his questionable first-person
memories are an unreliable source for recollecting the past. He tells the audience
directly: “You mustn’t believe anything I say, I don’t believe a thing I say” (17). His
possible dementia appears to be linked with a head injury, received when he backed his
horse into a windmill (31), but it may also be a result of built up anxiety and guilt
concerning the Ripper murders that he may have been involved in: “I would blow up the
houses of Parliament and slit the throats of all my so called friends if it would buy a
moment’s peace!” (16). Most historical accounts list the three men (Jem, Eddy, Druitt)
as suspects for the Whitechapel murders, but much of what happened in 1888 concerning
the murders remains conjecture (Palmer 48-52).

Different from Miss Lizzie’s Actress friend, Kate, the Actress in Saucy Jack,
gives voice to the murdered women rather than the murdering woman. The re-
enactments of the murders are not necessarily attempts to unravel a new theory as to who
committed the crimes; instead, Pollock explains that her version “is more an
extrapolation and variation mixing historical characters, probable relationships, and
possible events, with "what if" (Playwright’s Note 5). Pollock describes her intention even further in the Playwright’s Note when she states that her

objective or motivation for the re-enactment of the women’s deaths in the play is not to achieve the death of the women, but to achieve some other end or objective that relates to the relationship between the men. Love, loyalty, friendship, are words the men use, but the actions through which such noble sentiments manifest themselves are the ones of betrayal, duplicity, and murder. [...] I am interested in the whys and ways Jem attempts to bind Eddy to him as well as to confirm or negate his fearful suspicions regarding his own role in the Ripper events. He’s caught in a terrible dilemma. If he is indeed guilty of the crimes, he is ‘sane’ for his clouded recall is founded on reality. If he is innocent of the crimes, his memory and mind are serving up false data and he’s ‘insane.’ (5-6)

The “terrible dilemma” which Jem is caught in becomes central in his need to remember and clarify the past. Jem’s search to discover whether his memories are based on real events or imagined ones helps elucidate whether he is guilty of murder or insane. The evidence gathered to determine his sanity stems mostly from the Actress’s re-enactments because of Jem’s clouded and uncertain memories. As in Blood Relations, it is the Actress’s third-person perspective that provides the audience with the most evidence from the past through her reconstruction of what may have happened. It is clear that her
version of the past remains conjecture because her re-enactments clearly do not originate from personal experience. Much like the Actress in *Blood Relations*, Kate in *Saucy Jack* gathers most of her information on the murders from the reports of the day, which are interpretations of the evidence. Kate’s metadramatic depiction (as opposed to a memory) of the past, along with Jem’s unreliable recollection, provides the first reason why I do not incorporate *Saucy Jack* as part of my memory play analysis. Secondly, I argue that Jem’s inner struggle is not a moral investigation.

It would be inaccurate to deem Jem’s inquiry a moral one because the dilemma he is trapped in has little to do with making a moral choice; instead, it centres almost exclusively on confirming or negating a suspicion. Unlike Walsh who struggles between humanity and duty, Jem’s dilemma focuses on finding out whether he is a murderer or whether he just imagines he is one. There is no true moral debate in his inquiry. He appears to suffer from a “manic depressive illness” because he believes there is a “warrant out” to uncover “some ... unspecified ... crime ...es” (15) he possibly committed. Jem’s mental dilemma approaches the breaking point and he needs to know the past to buy himself “a moment’s peace” (16). The following dialogue underlines Jem’s uncertainty about his past, and partially explains why he needs to unearth some acceptable version of it:

EDDY: Have you considered the possibility ... your mind’s given way?

JEM: I’ve considered nothing else, it presses on me, exactly that
EDDY: Then why pursue so vigorously this course of action, whatever it might be?

JEM: I'd be mad not to, Eddy. Too much at risk. (40)

The risk involves damage to the men’s reputation. Pollock’s text suggests that reputation figures prominently in the covering up of the case. Any blemishing of the upper crust of Victorian male society must be avoided. Jem appears to be particularly conscious of his role in history and of what mask must be worn so that “History will understand” (17). It is as though Jem throughout the play is racing against a clock so that he is remembered in the archives as an upstanding citizen and not as a killer. Jem’s need to know the past has little to do with him experiencing (or wanting to release) moral guilt; instead, it stems from a desire to be remembered in the history books as a noble man who gave his life to the monarchy. This goal is undermined, however, at the end of the play when Kate reveals that Jem will die from “acute depression, melancholia, the refusal of all food, and dementia” (59) just three years later, not as an upstanding member of British society but as a broken man.

Unlike the murderous acts of Blood Relations where it was possible to deem Lizzie’s actions morally acceptable under the circumstances, Jem’s (and possibly Eddy’s) actions are immoral from every angle. Jem’s motivation to discover what happened in the past initially makes him out to be a noble character—“I do it for Eddy!
He is a very special person and must be protected, sacrifices must be made” (17)--but in
time his so called sacrifices reveal themselves to be equally self-serving: “I'm trying to
save you, Eddy. And save myself” (24). His selfish quest is not unlike Miss Lizzie’s,
yet a significant difference is that Miss Lizzie was the oppressed whereas Jem is one of
the oppressors.

Kate, who appeared to be controlled by the men in the initial stages, manages to
take control in the second act. In the early descriptions of the murdered women she only
spoke when asked, yet it becomes apparent in her refusal to describe Mary Jane Kelley’s
death (the final victim in the play) that she speaks when she chooses. Also, by the end
Kate no longer feels threatened by the men and she manages to leave “the room with no
sense of fear” (60). She not only lives, but she can tell their story once they die:

Prince Albert Victor will die on Thursday, January 14th, 1892 at
Sandrinham from influenza and pneumonia, the onset of which
terminated a most successful week-end hunt. [...] James Kenneth Stephen
will die on Wednesday, February 3rd, 1892 at St. Andrews Hospital,
Northampton, from acute depression, melancholia, the refusal of all food,
and dementia. (59)

Pollock asserts in her Playwright’s Note how Kate is the one empowered; she
is larger than herself at the end. The men, while attempting to shift, gain,
trade, and manipulate power between themselves (sometimes using her as
the means to do so) are rendered impotent by their actions and become smaller than themselves. She lives. They die. (6)
Montague Druitt’s choice to side with Jem and Eddy rather than the Actress in the end provides a clear example of the men’s failure. Druitt ignores the hints given by the Actress regarding the intent of the two other men (43; 56; 57), and he decides to play the game with Jem and Eddy even though he does not “know the rules” and their implications (48). His decision proves to be fatal and it highlights the treacherous and self-serving nature of the so called male Apostles. Kate is a constructed character of Pollock’s, similar to Harry in Walsh, so she does not have a particular existence outside the frame of the play. Therefore, at the end of the play we do not see her, according to Sherrill Grace, “return to a defined preexisting identity, to some essential stable Self; instead, she leaves, not as she entered, but as a person transformed by art, as the creator of another script” (“Sharon Pollock’s Portrait(s)” 9-10). The empowerment of Kate in the end also suggests that it may be her memory that guides the play, not Jem’s. She may be remembering the events at the Victorian home when Druitt was murdered. However, like Eme in Getting It Straight and Janet in End Dream, Kate only exists in one time frame—in the play’s present. Her role in the past is metadramatic: she plays the murdered women rather than being herself. Unlike Ev, Catherine or Shipman, Kate does not perform self-reflexivity. Only at the very end is there a hint that the play could be Kate’s recollections; nonetheless, Pollock does not establish a distinct present and past for Kate at the outset. Similar to Johnny in Whiskey Six Cadenza, Kate does not inform the audience at the beginning that she will be looking to the past in an effort to
understand her present; consequently, *Saucy Jack* cannot be deemed a memory play from Kate’s perspective. Additionally, because Jem’s first-person accounts are unreliable and his inquiry can hardly be called a moral one, this work falls outside the parameters of my memory play models. Like *Blood Relations*, *Saucy Jack* is more suitably identified as a metadrama.
Chapter 2

Negotiators under Investigation: Re-playing Canadian history

It's me they come down on. Don't you realize that? If I don't deliver, I'm the one that pays.

-The Komagata Maru Incident 19

I do not wish to embark on a full analysis of Pollock's work in relation to documentary theatre, yet it is important to investigate the interrelationship because Pollock's early plays contain many characteristics of docudrama. In his influential book Collective Encounters: Documentary Theatre in English Canada, Alan Filewod states that "Canadian drama has from its beginnings been partial towards what might be called the authority of factual evidence" (5). The desire to revise Canadian history can be seen in plays from Charles Mair's Tecumseh (1886) and Sarah Anne Curzon's Laura Secord (1887) to the more contemporary work of writers such as Sharon Pollock and...
Rick Salutin. Filewod stresses that the long line of historical dramas in Canada and the documentary theatre that originated in Europe during the 1920s were central to the emergence of Canadian documentary theatre during the 1970s. Furthermore, the populist nationalism of the alternative movement, influencing Canadian companies such as Theatre Passe Muraille to promote a nationalistic ideology, also had an impact on the emergence of the Canadian documentary play (5). Diane Bessai describes important characteristics of the documentary style when she points out how Theatre Passe Muraille, under the mentorship of Paul Thompson, produced plays that involved "playmaking about history, political and social issues, and the daily life of people in particular Canadian communities" ("Documentary Theatre" 17). She also mentions how structurally the documentary theatre in Canada during the 1970s broke away from "the tyranny of well-made play forms so that the theatre may speak to its audience in innovative contemporary styles" (19). Filewod expands Bessai's point further when he states that "the conventional dramatic forms no longer express the truth of the society, usually because those conventional forms cannot accommodate social change" (14). In her version of documentary theatre Pollock's desire for social change is explored in the content and the form of her socially-conscious plays. She experiments with presentational techniques in *Walsh*, and more specifically in *The Komagata Maru Incident*, in her effort to re-create, re-stage, and re-examine specific moments in Canadian history. Nevertheless, because of Pollock's focus on public events and social
issues, many critics have tended to centre their criticism, almost exclusively, on the playwright’s political examination “of historical evils or social issues” (Gilbert 113). Analyzing Pollock’s work solely from a content perspective, without discussing the dramatic form, limits an understanding of important element of Pollock’s early work. Therefore, this chapter includes a structural analysis, where I discuss Pollock’s use of metaphorical inquiries, as well as a historiographic analysis, examining the playwright’s selective and creative process of interpreting Canadian history. The documented history that Pollock investigates in *Walsh* and *The Komagata Maru Incident* involves controversial social issues, and the dramatic structure with which she presents her social concerns sheds light on new ways to look at the historical events and characters.

In *Walsh* and *The Komagata Maru Incident* Pollock examines racial, social, and legal injustice, but she also implicitly calls moral and ethical inquiries, during which Major Walsh and Inspector Hopkinson undergo investigation in a moral court. Neither character can be held legally responsible for his actions. Walsh, for instance, would not be tried in a judicial court for the death of Sitting Bull. However, he remains morally responsible for his actions against the chief and the Sioux people. The focus in both plays centres on the circumstances that led Walsh and Hopkinson toward their non-humanitarian acts, and the two dramas present the central character as the negotiator or mediator between the oppressor and the oppressed or the victimizer and the victim. Metaphorically, the negotiators are tried for immoral and unethical behavior, and the
playwright, according to Reid Gilbert, "calls upon the audience to make decisions and judge" (113) whether or not to indict Major Walsh and Inspector Hopkinson. Nevertheless, Pollock's moral inquiries do not necessarily grant the audience this place of superiority, where they can judge the dramatic characters. Rather, her investigations become means to cross-examine the audience as well as the central characters. Pollock involves the audience "not merely as spectators, but as conspirators" (Saddlemyer 216).

In both plays, Pollock implicates the audience in the racist developments, because it "is incumbent upon us to rethink our comfortable myths of identity if we are to 're-cognize' ourselves and take responsibility for our future" (Knowles 240).

The playwright is still in the early stages of development with the memory play in *Walsh* and *The Komagata Maru Incident*, and the memory model as well as the moral inquiries in these two plays are easier to decipher than in some of her later plays. Price's notion of protagonist/antagonist is readily identifiable in both plays. It is apparent early on that the Sioux and the East Indians are the victims (antagonists) and that the Canadian government is the victimizer (protagonists) that achieves its goal of dispersing the non-white races. To conduct or guide her trials in *Walsh* and *The Komagata Maru Incident*, Pollock uses a third-person rememberer or the "Our Town approach," as Elsie Park Gowan categorizes it (8). This means that the inquiries are conducted by a third-person narrator (Harry and T.S.), who chronicles the events and guides the audience in re-examining Walsh and Hopkinson's actions. In the following analysis of *Walsh* and *The
Komagata Maru Incident, I investigate Walsh’s and Hopkinson’s moral dilemma, what their social wrongdoing entails, how the evidence is gathered by the third-person rememberer, and what recommendations can be made after the inquiry. Because there is a substantial amount of historical material available on the subject of these two plays, I investigate how Pollock manipulates and alters the documented sources to suit her dramas. Also, the moral inquiries in these two early plays are less complicated than in some of her later works; consequently, I spend less time analysing the subtleties of the memory structure than I do in later chapters. In turn, I include a substantial section on Pollock’s selective use of documented history, particularly with Walsh.

Walsh

Although *A Compulsory Option* was Pollock’s first full-length stage play, *Walsh* was the first of her dramatic works to be published and achieve national acclaim.13 *Walsh* was initially intended to be a radio play, but while she was researching and writing the piece, Harold Baldridge, the artistic director of Theatre Calgary at the time, was also reading about Sitting Bull’s stay in Canada, and he became interested in what Pollock was writing. Baldridge contacted Pollock and she sent him a draft of the play. He comments: “I found the script very exciting to read and I was quite sure that I wanted to
present the play during the 1973-74 season” (Baldridge 118). *Walsh* premiered on
November 7th, 1973 at Theatre Calgary under the direction of Baldridge. A year after its
Calgary premiere, and with substantial revisions to the text, *Walsh* was remounted and
critically well-received under the direction of John Wood at the Stratford Festival’s Third
Stage. Due to its large cast few professional theatres can afford to stage *Walsh* today, but
since its publication in 1973 the text has become a staple for many university courses that
include Canadian drama on their syllabi. The playtext was also anthologized in Jerry
Wasserman’s first edition of *Modern Canadian Plays* (1985).\(^{14}\)

*Walsh* is the story of Sitting Bull’s exile in Canada following the Custer Massacre
at the Little Big Horn in 1876. More specifically, the play traces the plight of North
West Mounted Police Major James Morrow Walsh and his relationship with the exiled
Hunkpapa Sioux chief. Walsh, who is portrayed by Pollock and most historians
(Manzione 44; MacEwan 86-87) as a very sympathetic figure, befriends the feared
Sitting Bull soon after his arrival in Canada and becomes the only white man—White
Forehead as he comes to be known by the Sioux—to gain the trust of the Sioux leader.
The disappearance of the buffalo herds from the Canadian prairie and Ottawa’s refusal to
provide either a reservation or provisions to the exiled Indians, however, create a terrible
strain on the relationship and force Walsh to attempt to reconcile his duties as an NWMP
Major with his concerns for Sitting Bull. Unable to convince his government to consider
the needs of the Sioux people, Walsh is forced to compromise his personal morals and

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turn his back on Sitting Bull. This act of "self-preservation" (Walsh 99), as Walsh describes it to his superior, Colonel MacLeod, has just the opposite effect; instead of saving him it sends him into a personal and professional tailspin from which he is unable to recover.

In a wider context the play dramatizes racist, non-humanitarian, and cowardly policies that Pollock presumes were carried out by the Canadian government with regard to the Plains Indians. Furthermore, the play suggests that peace was achieved only because the Canadian government compromised its humanitarian values for the sake of placating its southern neighbor. Pollock's version implies that the Canadian policy of starvation was no better than the United States' policy of extermination of the Indian: both caused death. In Sitting Bull's words, the American policy was even preferred by the Sioux: "I would rather die fighting than die of starvation" (106). It appears that part of Pollock's intent in Walsh is to show Canadians how our past includes blemishes, and to insist that to better understand today's indigenous population, we must revisit how they were treated in the past: "To know where we are going, we must know where we have been and what we have come from." Baldridge shares a noteworthy story about recognizing and understanding our relationship to indigenous people when he describes the day he invited a Sioux Indian singer to a rehearsal of Walsh:

Mr. Lecaine is a gentleman in his seventies, who has spent most of his life in the Dakotas and now resides in Fort MacLeod, Alberta. I had
asked him to sing some Sioux war songs and chants for the cast. I had also asked for a death chant, because I was thinking of using it in the play. Mr. Lecaine sang a few songs, accompanying himself on a drum. He then presented a portable tape recorder upon which he had recorded the requested death chant. He pressed the 'play' button and retired to a corner of the rehearsal hall. He stood facing the corner of the room during the playback and wept. At the conclusion of the chant, he walked back to us, wiped the tears away with his handkerchief, and said to me: 'So many of them have died.' The actors and I were rooted to the spot, feeling the weight of guilt that we as Canadians have inherited from the gross mismanagement of Indian affairs. It was an unforgettable moment; it still haunts me. (120)

To present her political and social concerns Pollock focuses her re-examination of the "Sitting Bull affair" (Manzione 60-61) through the character of Walsh, and she does this primarily by dramatizing his role as negotiator between Ottawa and the Hunkpapa Chief. Initially, Pollock's Walsh is comfortable and confident in his ability to reconcile his professional duties with his personal values. He believes he can be a good soldier for the NWMP and, at the same time, a good friend to Sitting Bull. After the Major informs the Sioux leader of Ottawa's position on the refugees--that Canada will not provide a reserve or provisions when the buffalo are gone--he says, "I tell you this because I am a
soldier and I must follow orders, but I am a friend also. White Forehead (He indicates himself) does not say this, Major Walsh says this” (54). Gradually Walsh comes to realize, however, that the “Honourable men” (78) he is serving are not the esteemed leaders he initially thought. For Walsh, the emptiness of the oath he swore to serve becomes painfully clear during his confrontation with NWMP Commissioner MacLeod:

MACLEOD: Goddamn it, [Sitting Bull]’s a thorn in our flesh. We can’t discuss a bloody thing with the Americans without they bring it up!

WALSH: What up?

MACLEOD: Our giving sanctuary to those responsible for the Custer Massacre. They talk of nothing else.

WALSH: Custer was responsible for the death of himself and his men!

For Christ’s sake, speak the truth! (93)

Walsh soon recognizes, as MacLeod points out, that the Sioux are nothing more than pawns Prime Minister John A. MacDonald intends to use to maintain good relations with the Americans. In the process, the Major learns that his values and integrity have also been pawned in carrying out his official duties: “Honour, truth, the lot. They’re just words, Harry. They don’t exist. I gave my life to them and they don’t exist” (102).

Pollock highlights Walsh’s sense of powerlessness in order to reflect Canada’s colonial mentality. As a young country Canada frequently looked outward, at the British and Americans, in order to find sources of power. Cynthia Zimmerman expands:
Walsh’s experience of being used by his superiors, his final recognition that he, like the Sioux, is only a pawn in a much bigger game that has little to do with justice, seems quintessentially colonial. The authority to make decisions, the real power, is always elsewhere. (Playwrighting Women 68)

Colonel MacLeod becomes the messenger from Ottawa conveying the policies of the Canadian government, and he assures his comrade that from out in the West Walsh cannot “see the whole picture. There’re other considerations” (96). The source of power being physically removed from the immediate action is a theme in other Pollock plays as well. In Generations, for instance, much of the debate deals with the prairie farmers and indigenous people fighting for land rights, but the decisions regarding land and water privileges are all made far away in Ottawa. Pollock explains that in her plays “the authority (family, society, government) is removed emotionally or geographically from the protagonist [and] I think that is a very Canadian thing, actually, that comes from living in Alberta or the Maritimes and feeling that Ottawa never seems to understand what is required in these places” (Rudakoff and Much 210).

There is little ambiguity as to who the victims (Sitting Bull and his people) and the victimizers (American and Canadian governments and Walsh) are in Walsh; therefore, what drives Pollock’s drama is her investigation of the circumstances and forces that led the victimizers to such inhumane actions, and more specifically, what
provoked Walsh to deny his personal integrity and to turn his back on Sitting Bull and the Sioux people. Pollock combines documented history and dramatic license to create a metaphorical inquiry— one that investigates Walsh's moral actions and behavior toward Sitting Bull and the Hunkpapa Sioux. The Major is metaphorically tried for unethical behavior, and his social wrongdoing is physically and figuratively represented by his striking Sitting Bull in both the prologue and the body of the play. The investigation takes place in a moral court instead of a judicial one, and the inquiry closely examines the forces that led Walsh to leave the antagonist side (Price's term), which sympathized with Sitting Bull, to join the protagonist side, which wants to return Sitting Bull to American authorities. Under the circumstances did Walsh have any other choice? With the help of Harry's retelling, the various events that lead to the decision are replayed, and these restaged moments point up Walsh's inner struggle between duty and humanity. Walsh's physical actions against the Prospector in the prologue strongly suggest that he still feels guilt, even after twenty years. Therefore, instead of trying to determine whether or not he feels morally responsible for the demise of the Hunkpapa Sioux (Pollock appears to indicate that he does), the inquiry investigates the degree and magnitude of his social crime.

An early passage that illustrates Walsh's moral dilemma and his challenge of maintaining a balance between humanity and duty is when Walsh insists that neither he nor Sitting Bull can help the Nez Percés:
WALSH: You see my red coat ... it represents the Queen and the Canadian government. My duty is to inform you of my government’s position ... and it is this: Armed excursions across the line ... for whatever reason ... will not be tolerated!

*He speaks gently to SITTING BULL.*

I advise you to deny the Nez Percés. (59)

The hesitancy in Walsh's speech highlights his struggle to enforce a command that he does not personally, fully support. The aftermath of the battle between the Nez Percés and the Longknives (Americans) south of the border further emphasizes how Walsh feels torn between duty and humanity. His moral dilemma is heightened by Clarence, whose compassion and humanity for the massacred Indians override any sense of duty to the government. I cite this long scene in its entirety to indicate the excruciating nature of Walsh's double bind:

CLARENCE: Is ... is it all right, sir? My coat ... I've ... I've given it to ...

*He indicates vaguely outside of the light.*

... to ... to a little girl and her brother. Their feet are frozen, sir. ... Will the government mind about the coat?

WALSH: *holding himself erect, military*

I'll speak on your behalf, Constable.

CLARENCE: It's just women and children ... and a few men. ... Most of
them are ... got wounds of one kind or another. Chief Joseph, he's not with them. He ... didn't make it ... It's only just people, people that's been hurt! I don't see what they could have done to deserve this. ... Do you know what they've done?

WALSH: There ... see there ...

He hurriedly removes his tunic. He has on a long underwear top.
Take this ... take this to the woman on the pony ... there ... with the papoose on her back. Take it to her.

CLARENCE: Yes, sir.

[...]

CLARENCE returns, moving slowly. He has the tunic with him.

She doesn't need it ... she's been hit in the chest. The baby's dead. It's got a bit of blood on it ...

He gives the tunic an ineffectual wipe, more a touch of the blood, then looks at WALSH.

CLARENCE: I didn't notice till I put it 'round her that ... she didn't need it.

WALSH slowly takes the tunic from him. CLARENCE moves away as WALSH stands there holding the tunic. He extends one arm slowly, deliberately. He drops the tunic and looks out. LOUIS steps forward,
picks up the tunic and hands it to WALS\\H.

LOUIS: You can’t just throw it away, sir. Dat’s too easy.

WALSH looks at him, takes the tunic and slowly exits with it. (63-4)

The early stage directions in this passage indicate how Walsh tries to present himself to
Clarence as dutiful and unaffected by the events; nevertheless, the exterior facade is soon
replaced by his true feelings. He wants to help but he comes to realizes that it is too late
because there are few living among the Nez Percés. Walsh confronts the reality that
balancing duty and humanity is nearly impossible. His desire to show compassion for
the Nez Percés (to little effect) stresses the inner struggle he is experiencing, and the
symbol of the tunic highlights how the costume and role he embodies deny his
humanitarian side. Prior to Louis’ entrance Walsh appears ready to abandon his duty as
government official, but he is reminded by the Métis scout that if Sitting Bull and the
Sioux are to remain in Canada he is their best hope.

Walsh decides to keep trying to help Sitting Bull’s cause; however during his
confrontational scene with MacLeod, Walsh demonstrates the challenge of maintaining
his humanitarian side:

WALSH: Do you think McCutcheon hangs me from some goddamn
wooden peg with all my strings dangling? Is that what you think
happens? Do you think I’m a puppet? Manipulate me right and anything
is possible. ... I’m a person. I exist. I think and feel! And I will not
allow you to do this to me! (97)

But by the end of the scene the Major gives in to MacLeod and opts for “self-preservation” (99). What weighs heavily on Walsh’s conscience is the idea that if he could have continued to resist MacLeod and the government’s policies, he might have saved Sitting Bull from having to cross the border.

A description of a literal court trial occurs later in the second act. It reinforces the metaphorical investigation of Walsh because the lack of justice and humanity revealed by this case parallels and highlights the Major’s own torn feelings about the conflict between duty and justice. Walsh describes to Clarence how he “sat in judgement of a Sioux,” who “slaughtered a cow belonging to a settler” (108). The Sioux explained that his family was starving, and as payment for stealing the cow he offered the settler his horse, but the “settler refused and pressed charges” (109). Disillusioned and dumbfounded, Walsh expresses how he “sentenced that Sioux to six months imprisonment and fined him twenty dollars, for that is the law! But where is the justice in it?” (109). This scene captures much of Walsh’s dilemma because in it we witness the tension between his holding on to his moral and ethical values on one side, and enforcing Canadian government policies on the other. Whether he should exercise his public duty as a NWMP officer or act upon his personal feelings weighs heavily on the Major’s conscience throughout the play. The socially conscious side of Walsh, which guided his humanitarian efforts, gradually becomes smothered by the forces in Ottawa. It becomes
clear that Walsh feels like a pawn in the hands of the Canadian government and that he holds little control over the outcome. He has to suppress his own feelings if he wishes to perform his duty.

The scene following the literal trial depicts the climactic moment of the play (the crime), where Walsh reaches his emotional breaking point and denies, humiliates, then strikes Sitting Bull:

WALSH: exploding
And I can give you nothing! God knows, I’ve done my damndest and nothing’s changed. Do you hear that? Nothing’s changed! Cross the line if you’re so hungry, but don’t, for Christ’s sake, come begging food from me!

SITTING BULL: straightening up
You are speaking to the head of the Sioux nation!

WALSH: I don’t give a goddamn who you are! Get the hell out!

SITTING BULL goes for the knife in his belt. WALSH grabs him by the arm, twists it up and throws him to the floor. As SITTING BULL goes to get up, WALSH puts his foot in the middle of his back and shoves him, sending him sprawling. He plants his foot in the middle of his back.

CLARENCE and McCUTCHEON enter.

CLARENCE: screaming
Noooooooo! (112-13)

This scene brings the play full circle. We have seen this confrontation played earlier, during the prologue, where most of the cast is playing different, yet related, roles. In the prologue, the Prospector (played by Sitting Bull) is collecting money for a boy (played by Crowfoot—Sitting Bull’s son) whose father recently froze to death. When Walsh, now the Commissioner of the Yukon Territory, refuses to contribute to the cause, the Prospector calls him “a cheap son-of-a-bitch” (15), which sparks the embittered and broken Walsh to strike the Prospector to the ground, followed by Clarence’s “Münch-like scream” (Salter xv). This opening confrontation piques the interest of the audience, and they become anxious to find out why the man who is supposed to be the play’s central character acts in such a brutal, frustrated manner. What leads Walsh to strike the Prospector (Sitting Bull) in the prologue is played out in the main body of the play, and becomes the primary evidence for Walsh’s moral inquiry.

It is primarily through Harry’s recollection of events and his manipulation of time and space that the audience is able to witness the circumstances that led Walsh to strike Sitting Bull. Therefore, when the violent scene between Walsh and Sitting Bull is replayed near the end of Pollock’s play, the meaning of the confrontation from the prologue is revealed; nonetheless, whether or not Walsh should be held fully responsible for the demise of Sitting Bull and the Sioux remains ambiguous in the text. Pollock presents Walsh as feeling morally responsible and his guilt and actions in the prologue
support this claim. His self-reflective remark about the socially conscious Clarence near
the end of the play—"That young man should never make the force his life" (119)—
supports the idea that, morally, Walsh feels the weight of his decision. Walsh obviously
sees in Clarence his own idealism as a young recruit. As soon as Walsh shifts his
allegiance from Sitting Bull (antagonist side) to the Canadian government (protagonist
side), the Hunkpapa Sioux are forced to leave Canada for the United States. Indirectly,
Pollock’s Walsh is therefore responsible for their departure; however, he cannot be held
solely responsible for the Sioux’s demise, and certainly, he cannot be held accountable
for the actions the Americans take against Sitting Bull and his people.

Pollock creates Harry as a chronicler of the events, and he ultimately facilitates
Walsh’s moral investigation by guiding the audience to various moments and events in
the Major’s life. Similar to the Stage Manager in Thornton Wilder’s Our Town, Harry
provides the audience with background information about the characters and setting. In a
storytelling manner, Harry occasionally speaks outside of the dramatic action and
addresses the audience directly, informing them of past events. He is responsible for
guiding the audience to the various times and locales, from the opening prologue set in a
whorehouse in 1898, to the Custer Massacre at the Little Big Horn in 1876, and then
finally to Fort Walsh in the crucial period between 1877 and 1878. Again, similar to
Wilder’s Stage Manager, Harry not only speaks outside of the dramatic inner frame, but
he also plays a role inside of the drama. After vacating the “U-nited States” (Walsh 21),
Harry becomes a wagon master, and at various points in the play he is responsible for delivering goods to Fort Walsh where he interacts with the other characters. In production, Harry’s sarcastic remarks also provide a little comic relief amidst the historical confrontations. In a review of the Calgary premiere, Jamie Portman describes Frank Adamson as “very good indeed as a boozing, rough-spoken wagon master” ("Walsh signals" 76).

Harry is the only character in the play who is able to step inside and outside of the dramatic action and, except for Walsh, the only character who plays himself in the prologue (9). The expressionistic prologue which includes “a mournful sound” (10) and “momentary arrests in the action” (9), and is described in the stage directions as similar “to that experienced when one is drunk or under great mental stress” (9), can be seen as the “now” or established present of the play, and the rest of the play as a flashback or memories of past events. An alternative interpretation of the prologue is that this opening scene includes only Walsh as a figure in the play’s present, and the other characters are “ghosts” (10) who appear in the whorehouse to haunt him and remind him of his past actions. Heidi Holder makes this argument in her essay “Broken Toys: The Destruction of the National Hero in the Early Plays of Sharon Pollock” when she suggests that “the entire play proper can be seen as an extended flashback in the older Walsh’s mind” (140). In this sense Walsh can be categorized as a memory play; however, I would argue that Pollock does not offer enough evidence to support that the
play is structured from Walsh’s memory. At no point in the play does Walsh step out of his dramatic role to reflect on his past to recapture memories. He remains a figure rooted inside the drama and he does not exercise self-reflexivity. Harry, on the other hand, displays certain features that help categorize *Walsh* as a memory play. In his role as chronicler or rememberer, Harry steps out of the dramatic action and recollects various events that have shaped Walsh’s character. In essence, his recollections provide much of the evidence that propels Walsh’s moral inquiry.

Harry’s lengthy monologue in the prologue takes the audience back to what Gerard Genette refers to as an *exterior analeps* (an event taking place prior to the beginning of an extended flashback or memory [Genette 83]), where he succinctly describes the Custer Massacre in 1876. This historical event does not include Major Walsh, but as Harry points out, “the day Custer met Sittin’ Bull was the beginning of the end for Major Walsh” (16). Harry then twice reports from Ottawa, bringing the federal government explicitly into the action. Harry also plays a large part in describing much of the off-stage action, which indirectly and sometimes directly affects Major Walsh’s behaviour. For instance, it is Harry who reports that, contrary to the promises of the Americans, Sitting Bull, upon his return to the United States, has been taken to Fort Randall, a military prison, for the murder of Custer and his men. Harry had been part of the convoy escorting Sitting Bull across the border and had seen it all first hand. In reporting the off-stage events, Harry recalls the role of the chorus from Greek tragedies,
who often acted as a bridge between the action on stage and the audience. The audience gradually builds trust in Harry as an historical authority, and from his third-person perspective he becomes the principal rememberer; consequently, he influences the audience’s perception of the events. Therefore, *Walsh* can be deemed a third-person memory play with Harry as the central rememberer whose memories provide the evidence for Walsh’s moral inquiry. A character like Harry, who functions as a mediator or a voice to propel and set up the conflict between the central figures, will appear in several other Pollock plays (Oscar in *Doc*; Bridget in *Blood Relations*; Chalmers in *One Tiger to a Hill*). In her latest play, *Angel’s Trumpet*, Doctor Renton exemplifies this role as the mediating voice between artists Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald. Instead of speaking directly to one another, Scott and Zelda speak to (and arguably through) the psychiatric doctor throughout the play.

It is through Harry’s guidance that the audience discovers what brought Major James Walsh to the disillusioned, broken state he is in when the play opens because, as chronicler, Harry leads the action to particular moments and through monologues recalls certain events. The audience witnesses Walsh’s actions from the information and scenes selected by Harry; therefore, it is important to question his reliability as rememberer. For example, how reliable is his documentation of the events? Does the selection of scenes depicted inform us merely about Harry’s angle of observation? These questions are central to historiographers, and this early Pollock play marks the beginning of her desire...
to explore how "truth" or "facts" are always relative. During her research for *Walsh*, Pollock became increasingly aware of the ambiguity and relativity of truth:

> everything is so highly subjective, that the newspapers, for example, are full of lies. I read diaries of the day from commissioners who were travelling in the States drawing up the Sioux treaties that would place them in different places on the same day even though there were other accounts that put them together. You quickly begin to realize how relative truth is (Wallace and Zimmerman 119)

Pollock's text does not hide the fact that her version of history represents one angle of observation. In fact, by developing a third-person memory play, Pollock acknowledges that history is shaped by whoever is telling it, and in the case of *Walsh*, Harry's biases, personal perspective, imagination, memories all contribute to, and shape, the construction of Major Walsh's story. In not allowing Walsh to comment on his journey, the play appears to offer a more objective perspective than a first-person memory play would; nevertheless, Harry's third-person perspective is also subjective. He is, after all, a complete creation of Pollock's, and unlike most of the other characters in the play, no historical records exist describing his character or actions. In many ways, he is a device, a vehicle whereby Pollock can convey her angle of observation or perspective on the events.

Despite using dramatic license with the creation of Harry, Pollock felt a keen
duty to remain as close to the documented facts of the case as possible, almost to a fault, as some critics note. Denis Salter writes that in early versions of the play Pollock was “hampered by her self-assumed responsibility to publicize what she had found out about [Walsh’s] life and times” (xvii). Pollock struggled with what Elsie Park Gowan terms ‘the problem of selection.’ “Usually,” writes Gowan, “when research is complete, there comes a moment of utter despair. You know too much! This mass of facts can never be organized into cohesive dramatic shape” (8). The first version of *Walsh* presented at Theatre Calgary was much different from the revised production in Stratford, and further changes were made in subsequent productions. The initial production of the play was bogged down with historical facts that were read in voice-overs at the start of each scene (Portman, “*Walsh Signals*” 76; Whittaker, “*Walsh Beautiful*” 16). In an effort to incorporate the necessary historical background into dialogue (in a more economical and dramatic manner), later productions and printed versions of *Walsh* did away with the voice-overs and added the prologue, Walsh’s wife, General Terry and, most importantly for my study, Harry the wagon master.

With the addition of Harry, Pollock demonstrates the selective nature of replayed history, because as a guide to the action he recollects particular events and people from the past from his point of view. His account in the prologue of the Custer Massacre, for example, contains a cynical edge, and his angle of observation highlights the inhumanity
and racist mentality of the American army. Harry’s version of what happened at the Little Big Horn in 1876 foregrounds the lack of respect that General Terry and the American army afforded the Sioux people, and this encourages a sense of disgust and anti-Americanism in the audience. Once Pollock has achieved this notion of bigotry in the Americans, she then presents the Canadians, principally through Walsh, as sympathetic and humanitarian. (I am referring to the main body of the play—not the prologue—when suggesting that Walsh is sympathetic and humanitarian.) However, as Pollock’s plot develops, the notion of the more understanding and non-racist Canadian is shattered, because Walsh cannot follow through on his diplomatic goals. Also, the unsympathetic requests made by Colonel MacLeod, the voice of the Canadian government, eventually generate a disdain toward Canadian policies for the audience, albeit on a different level from the one felt earlier towards Custer and the American army. By showing the Canadians to be hypocritical, cowardly, self-serving and racist, Pollock undercuts the anti-American suppositions illustrated at the beginning of the play.

What we are first led to assume in the play (the Americans as sole villains) turns out to be less true, and more complex, as we see more details and get different perspectives. In his role as chief chronicler or rememberer of Walsh’s story, Harry plays a significant role in influencing an audience’s way of reading the events, and arguably leads them towards the intricacies of the moral inquiry and the playwright’s politics. It is evident that Harry does not witness all of the events in Walsh’s life and at times Pollock’s version of the
Sitting Bull affair does not appear to be necessarily told through Harry’s third-person perspective. This points to a lack of clarity/consistency in the playwright’s use of the memory structure in her earlier plays. A similar difficulty occurs in *The Komagata Maru Incident* because T.S. could not have possibly witnessed all of the events in Hopkinson’s life that he guides the audience through.

Any playwright decides which aspects of an historical episode to highlight according to her own political or ideological viewpoint in the writing of that play. Two playwrights could be given the same set of historical materials and come up with two completely different dramas, depending on the characters they develop and the particular events they emphasize. In fact, American playwright Arthur Kopit’s version of the Sitting Bull affair varies tremendously from Pollock’s. His metadramatic play *Indians*, first produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1968, does not dramatize Sitting Bull’s journey into the Canadian West, nor does it even mention the encounter between Major Walsh and the Sioux chief.18 A historiographic drama, then, is not dictated by the historical materials, but instead by the particular emphasis employed by the author. In historical narratives, Hayden White suggests, “our desire for the imaginary, the possible, must contest with the imperatives of the real, the actual” (4). In an historiographic drama, however, the imaginary serves to complement the real (or recorded history); they work together.

Pollock, as playwright and researcher, manipulates the action and
characterizations with her selection of material. In *Walsh* she tampers with the temporal aspect of the history by collapsing time spans and altering the chronology of events as they appear in historical narratives. For instance, Pollock shortens the time span between Sitting Bull’s return to the United States and his subsequent death. The playwright has the Sioux Chief and his son murdered soon after his return, while Walsh is at home in Brockville on a leave of absence. Historians claim that Sitting Bull was not killed until 1890 (Manzione 152; MacEwan 208), almost ten years after his return, and seven after Walsh was dismissed from the NWMP in 1883. Although the Sioux were a demoralized band at the time of their surrender and Sitting Bull did spend some time in the military prison at Fort Randall, the chief once again became a public figure a few years after his return—although, likely, not in the way he wanted. The world-renowned Sioux chief spent several years as a main attraction in Buffalo Bill Cody’s Wild West Show, travelling all across the United States and Canada. Interestingly, Kopit’s play centres almost exclusively on this period of Sitting Bull’s life, whereas Pollock chose to ignore it completely. Grant MacEwan’s description of the Wild West Show demonstrates how the myth of the Indian as villain was perpetuated:

> Throughout the Programme, Buffalo Bill was the hero; the Indians were the villains, repeatedly swooping down on the innocent people and having to be driven away by cowboys. In one scene the Indians attacked the Deadwood stagecoach, shooting it up until it could scarcely be seen
for gunsmoke. But when all seemed lost, Buffalo Bill and his posse galloped in to engage the savages and drive them to cover. (204-5)

The ending of *Walsh*, when Pollock has the disillusioned Major plan a mock Indian attack to celebrate the opening of the railroad, coincides with the mythology of the Indian as savage that was played up in Buffalo Bill’s show by the defeated chief.

The eventual death of Sitting Bull was, as it turned out, not an act of retribution over the Custer Massacre, but rather was caused by the Chief’s passion for the Messiah Craze. The Messiah Craze, also known as the Ghost Dance, was a mixture of Christianity and an appeal to Indian spirituality (Adams 359). According to the historian Alexander Adams the Ghost Dance craze emerged in 1889:

> On January 1, 1889, an eclipse of the sun took place in Utah. ... While the eclipse was going on, a Paiute medicine man named Wovoka fell into a trance. On regaining his senses, he spoke of the vision he had seen, a strange vision in which the white men’s Christ returned to the earth, the white men disappeared because they had killed him, the Indians took over, and the buffalo herds once more roamed the prairies in great numbers. (358)

The American government feared trouble with the growing Craze, so they asked Sitting Bull, who had become an “undisputed leader of the Messiah Craze” (MacEwan 207), to abandon this nonsense. Sitting Bull refused. On December 15, 1890 under the command
of Indian Agent James McLaughlin and Lieutenant Bull Head, Sitting Bull was arrested by the police. The former Sioux chief had gathered many followers over the previous two years and they were not willing to see their leader taken away from them. Adams describes Sitting Bull’s final battle in the following manner:

Suddenly two of Sitting Bull’s most devoted followers charged through the crowd. One of them fired his gun, and the bullet struck Lieutenant Bull Head in the right side. He, in turn, fired and hit Sitting Bull. Two more shots immediately rang out. Another mortal bullet struck Sitting Bull, and the second shot hit a policeman. The three men fell in a heap, and Sitting Bull was dead. (363)

MacEwan describes Sitting Bull’s death in a similar fashion except his more dramatic version suggests that the Chief fought on after the bullet wounds:

Sitting Bull was seriously wounded but the old warrior did not give up. Having gained possession of a Winchester, he dragged himself to a sheltered spot and fought relentlessly until police and soldiers attacked him, seized his rifle, and broke it over his head. He died almost immediately, fighting to the last. (208)

These two different ‘dramatic’ versions of what took place on December 15, 1890 illustrate the subjectivity/unreliability of historiography as well as highlight the interpretative slant of the historian.
In order to develop a plausible causality for Walsh’s degeneration, Pollock needed to make Sitting Bull’s murder occur soon after his return to the United States, while the Major was still with the force (which is likely why she left out Sitting Bull’s Wild West and Messiah Craze escapades). This theatrical license heightens dramatic effect by underscoring the suggestion that the Chief’s fate was a direct result of Walsh’s weakness in the face of authority. When Pollock’s Walsh, upon his return to the West, hears the news of his former friend’s death, the play comes together symbolically, with the Major taking off his tunic, unable to support the moral hypocrisy of his official role any longer.

It is also worth noting that the historical narratives (MacEwan 181; Manzione 138) of Walsh’s career with the NWMP show that the Major had fallen out of favor with his superiors because they believed he was, as McLeod states in Pollock’s Walsh, “privately urging Sitting Bull to remain in Canada while publicly stating that he must leave” (92). As a result, Prime Minister MacDonald recalled Walsh to Ontario to take on an eastern post (Pennanen 123; Manzione 138). Pollock, however, has Walsh take a voluntary leave of absence. That is more of a sign of weakness in the Major. If the decision were not a voluntary one in the play, then Walsh could have blamed his forced leave for his inability to help the Sioux, which would have reduced his accountability. Instead, Pollock alters the documented facts of the event in order to highlight his abdication of responsibility, because the Major can no longer face Sitting Bull after he
has assaulted him.

Another instance in which Pollock plays with temporal arrangement of historical materials in *Walsh* is when she alters the chronology of the play's two most important scenes. According to historian Grant MacEwan, the climactic scene in which Walsh breaks down and lashes out physically at Sitting Bull actually happened before MacLeod came to discipline him for not following the proper administrative channels in an international matter (149). In his book *"I Am Looking to the North for My Life,"* Joseph Manzione questions whether or not Sitting Bull even had an altercation with Walsh. He writes that "Sitting Bull may have had a falling out with the Mounted Police" (my emphasis 118). Manzione also points out in a footnote that the source of this supposed altercation (and the possible mythologizing of the confrontation) is Paul F. Sharp's *Whoop-up Country*, which does not cite sources for the altercation (118). According to MacEwan, Walsh and Sitting Bull met several times after that brutal encounter and were friends afterwards, and even after Walsh had been assigned to the East, Sitting Bull would not return to the United States unless he heard from White Forehead first (180, 182). When no word came, the Sioux chief went to great lengths to track down Walsh. Only when he received a reassuring note from Walsh that said he could expect fair treatment and safety across the line did Sitting Bull finally end his exile and return to the States (188).

It is interesting to consider why Pollock manipulated the historical records and
constructed the play the way she did. "What interested me in writing the play," she said in a 1982 interview, "was how did the man change from 1873 to 1898?" (Wallace and Zimmerman 119). As a result, she needed to create a logical cause and effect scenario that could chronicle Walsh's decline. To accomplish this goal, Pollock emphasizes certain events (e.g., Walsh's meeting with MacLeod and hitting Sitting Bull) that make up just a small part of official historical accounts, and even changes their order to give the impression that one caused the other. This is an advantage the historiographic dramatist has over the historical narrativist who, as Hayden White says, "must honor the chronological order of the original occurrence of the events of which it treats as a baseline not to be transgressed in the classification of any given event as either a cause or an effect" (5). Pollock has taken the liberty in her recreation of historical events of altering chronology to suit her particular agenda and to increase dramatic effect. The play does not strive to portray what happened, but rather how what might have happened might have affected one particular man.

The supporting material or evidence in Walsh's moral inquiry, represented through Pollock's choice of events and characters, becomes complicated when analyzed in production, because on stage a new set of factors can influence audience reception. For example, a director, designer, or particular actor(s) can shape the meaning of Walsh's actions by privileging specific moments, which may potentially steer the play toward a
certain ideology and paint the Major's character in a particular light. Therefore, the
performance aspect of each theatrical incarnation of Walsh will, according to Gilbert,
create "a whole new set of opinions, biases and inter-personal responses" (113). I do not
wish to engage in a discussion of reception or reader response theories, but it is vital to
recognize that although the memory structure remains the same in each production of
Walsh (if the text is not altered), the reception of each performance will undoubtedly vary
because of the artists' interpretations and the audience's angle of observation. For
instance, the reviews for the Theatre Calgary premiere strongly suggest that August
Schellenberg's performance of Sitting Bull "dominated" (Portman, "Walsh signals" 76)
the production because of his "remarkably authentic performance of a great man"
(Whittaker, "Walsh Beautiful" 16). Michael Fletcher's interpretation of Walsh on the
other hand was not as well received. He was described by Portman as frenetic and
bombastic, "almost as though he was feeling intimidated by the first act of the play" (76).
The imbalance in the portrayal of the two leading figures in the premiere appears to have
privileged the nobility of Sitting Bull in the face of humiliation and degradation, rather
than highlighting the inner turmoil Walsh experiences in denying his friend the support
he needs. The Stratford production, in contrast, points to Michael Ball's strong
performance as the Major. According to Audrey Ashley, "Ball, as Walsh, conveys with
wondrous clarity the inner struggle of a man who is, on the outside, the perfect strong,
loyal officer" ("Stratford Director" 50). She praises Derek Ralston's performance of
Sitting Bull, yet her review highlights Ball’s ability to present the Major's inner turmoil—"how a man copes with conflict between his own conscience and the orders of his government" (50). Whittaker, who also reviewed the Stratford production, agrees with Ashley and states how in Ball’s interpretation of Walsh “we are made aware of the deterioration which ensues” (“Walsh serves up” 13). Walsh’s inner struggle appears to have been highlighted in the Stratford production by the actor and director, which would trigger a different response from the audience than the Calgary premiere. How the two central characters are interpreted will have an impact on how the moral investigation is received, and judging from the reviews available Ball’s interpretation of Walsh in the Stratford production suggests a more intricate and developed moral dilemma than the one presented by Fletcher in the Calgary premiere.

Ashley’s Stratford review also points to the effective use of “Garryowen”—the marching song for General Custer’s 7th Cavalry. The tune appears four times in the play in the form of a reminder of the dead General, who was defeated by Sitting Bull and the Hunkpapa Sioux on June 25th, 1876. Harry mentions how Custer created “a kinda festive at-mos-phere” for his attacks; he “liked to charge to music, and ‘Garryowen’ was his favourite” (17). In the prologue Bill (Crow Eagle) plays the tune on the harmonica, which creates a sense of irony because usually the tune was played by Custer’s band while attacking the indigenous people. The tune is whistled two more times by Harry (17; 100), reminding the audience of the pressure the United States is putting on Canada
to return Sitting Bull and his band across the border so that white America can take revenge for the massacre at Little Bighorn. "Garryowen" is heard a final time when Walsh prepares to take his leave of absence from the Fort (114). At this point in the play it appears to suggest the fall of White Forehead as well as the eventual fall of Sitting Bull and his people who without Walsh’s help will be forced to return across the border to meet their end. The full effect of "Garryowen" finds its strength in production. It becomes a subtle memory device, largely manipulated by Harry, to remind us of the American atrocities and Canada’s complicity in them.

Walsh urges the audience to become involved in the action, in the process of discovering, because for Pollock it “is incumbent upon us to rethink our comfortable myths of identity if we are to ‘re-cognize’ ourselves and take responsibility for our future” (Knowles 240). For Theatre Calgary’s 1988 restaging of Walsh for the Olympic Arts Festival, Pollock rewrote the beginning of the play and her Program notes contained several quotes from contemporary events underlying “the modern parallels she wishes to draw, whether the Canadian treatment of the Indians, Jews, Sikhs or Tamil refugees” (Godfrey A18). An event outside the theatre for the 1988 Calgary production resonated with Pollock’s theme. Nearby the Max Bell Theatre the Lubicon Lake Indians were picketing the multi-million dollar Glenbow Museum exhibition of native artifacts, and “[s]everal cast members and the playwright joined picket lines to protest the hypocrisy of touting native artifacts while refusing land claims of more than forty years standing to a
living, but increasingly ill and dying, tribe” (Doolittle 13).

The memory structure in *Walsh* gives an account of the circumstances that may have led to the Major’s abusive, and apparently unsympathetic, actions. Through Harry’s third-person perspective, the audience witnesses specific events in Walsh’s life, in particular the Major’s negotiating role between the Sioux and the Canadian government. Walsh’s moral dilemma in Pollock’s play questions, among other things, accountability—who is responsible for the demise of Sitting Bull and the Sioux people. Walsh cannot be held fully accountable for the deaths of Sitting Bull and his people; however, what becomes clear in the metaphorical inquiry is that the Major feels morally responsible for what took place. He is not legally responsible, but morally he feels culpable and this is most noticeable by the fact that twenty years later he still snaps at the memory of being unable to follow through on his humanitarian impulses. His coiled up guilt is clearly exhibited in the prologue when he repeats the line—“I can give you nothing!”—to the Prospector/Sitting Bull (15). The prologue, set twenty years after Walsh allowed his duty to betray his humanity, demonstrates how this decision still haunts him.

The memory model used in *Walsh* develops in complexity in Pollock’s later plays; however, the inner struggle that Major Walsh encounters provides a model for other Pollock characters who undergo similar moral inquiries. The crimes committed and the manner by which the inquiries unfold differ; nonetheless, a rememberer who recalls the circumstances that led the central character to the breaking point is pivotal to
all the memory plays discussed in this dissertation. What the playwright alters most notably in later plays is the type of rememberer (from third-person, to first-person, to multi-person), but even in *The Komagata Maru Incident*, which I consider a third-person memory play, the role of the rememberer (T.S.) differs substantially from Harry’s, and Pollock’s manipulation of the inquiry develops differently.

*The Komagata Maru Incident*

The play that follows *Walsh* in Pollock’s oeuvre is *And Out Goes You?* Produced at the Vancouver Playhouse in 1975, *And Out Goes You?* is an overtly political play that investigates “a family about to be evicted from their East Vancouver home by government and business interests, as theirs is the last property delaying some massive re-development” (Page 106). Structurally, Pollock continues to venture further from the well-made form. She makes use of an adaptable play within a play, “which can be rewritten to satirize political figures contemporary to any production” (Gilbert 116). However, the dramatic structure and social issues found in *And Out Goes You?* were not nearly as well received as the ones in her next play. Pollock’s fourth full-length stage play, *The Komagata Maru Incident*, premiered in 1976 at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre. As in *Walsh*, Pollock examines race relations, injustice, and inhumanity. Set in
1914 Vancouver, the play shows that the Indian is still a menace to the government, though this time it is the East Indian. It is the story of the 376 potential immigrants of East Indian origin aboard the steamer Komagata Maru who were denied entry into Canada despite their legal right of entry. According to Chief Justice Gordon Hunter, “every citizen of India was a British subject, and could go anywhere he pleased in the Empire” (Ferguson 7); therefore, the mostly Sikh passengers were legally entitled to settle in Canada.

The play focuses on Department of Immigration Inspector William Hopkinson and traces that character’s role throughout the affair. In the play, Hopkinson is charged with finding ways to keep the immigrants out of British Columbia, and through a network of Sikh informers, which he runs out of a local brothel, he is successful in denying access to the East Indians. This success, however, is juxtaposed with his failure to come to terms with his own racial secret. Much like Walsh, Hopkinson struggles between public duties and personal feelings, though in Hopkinson’s case the full nature of the dilemma is not established until well into the play, when it is revealed that he is of Sikh background himself. Thus, in carrying out the government’s orders, he is forced to turn his back on part of his heritage, the part he spends the whole play trying to suppress and deny. After his success in turning away the Komagata Maru, Hopkinson is gunned down by a Sikh nationalist just as he begins to come to terms with his mixed racial heritage.
Whereas James Walsh was a well-known historical figure in the Sitting Bull affair, Pollock's decision to cast Hopkinson as her protagonist in *The Komagata Maru Incident* requires a little more analysis. It is well documented that Walsh was the main NWMP negotiator with Sitting Bull and the Sioux during their exile, and that he was an able and respected one at that. Hopkinson, however, was not the leading man in negotiations with the Sikhs aboard the *Komagata Maru*. Historian Hugh Johnston states that the Vancouver Immigration agent in charge was Malcolm R.J. Reid, a political appointee and close friend of local Member of Parliament H.H. Stevens (19). Pollock alludes to Stevens in the play as the man who spearheaded the move to bring in the navy and solve the affair once and for all (39), but Reid is never mentioned in Pollock's text. Nevertheless, it is Reid, most likely, that T.S. represents when he plays Hopkinson’s superior in several intervals throughout the play.

Why, then, was Hopkinson chosen as the main character in *The Komagata Maru Incident*? Johnston describes him as an even-tempered, non-controversial official who went about his business by the book. He writes that in “Hopkinson Indians encountered the long arm of the [] government, but in Reid and Stevens they ran into local prejudice pure and simple” (19). The answer, it appears, rests solely with the fact that speculation as to Hopkinson’s racial background persisted during his lifetime. Johnston shows that Hopkinson may have been the son of an East Indian woman, but this is not known for certain. The most substantial evidence that he may have been part Indian, and ashamed
of it, is that the Inspector “gave his place and date of birth as Hull, Yorkshire, England, 16 June 1880, although he was born in Delhi as the baptismal records of the India Office show” (Johnston 142). Pollock jumped on the speculative nature of Hopkinson’s background and saw it as an opportunity to increase dramatic possibilities. By making her central character partially the same heritage as the people against whom he is ordered to act, Pollock is able to develop an inner struggle that could not have existed if that character were motivated solely by racism. This inner struggle pitted against his duty as government official forms the basis of Pollock’s inquiry and establishes Hopkinson’s moral dilemma.

There is little ambiguity as to who the victims (East Indians) and victimizers (Canadian government, Hopkinson) are in *The Komagata Maru Incident*, but similar to her investigation in *Walsh*, Pollock attempts to unveil the circumstances that led the victimizers to such discriminatory acts in this later play, rather than focussing on who did what to whom. Pollock once again focuses on the negotiator in *The Komagata Maru Incident*, and like Major Walsh, Inspector Hopkinson undergoes a moral, rather than a legal, inquiry. However, counter to Walsh, who begins on the antagonist side then crosses to the protagonist (the side of those whose wish is fulfilled), Hopkinson clearly begins on the protagonist side and only near the end does he feel compelled to side with the antagonist group (East Indian). The metaphorical inquiry strongly implies that Hopkinson is guilty of moral and social injustice. Therefore, the investigation attempts
to determine the degree of Hopkinson's responsibility, and inquires whether there is any room for sympathy—and if so, on what grounds? Initially, the inquiry would appear relatively straightforward, because the Inspector gives the impression of being fully motivated by duty and career advancement, no matter how racist or unjust his tasks may be. Unlike Walsh, who tried to resist Ottawa's racism, the Inspector identifies himself with the racist policies of the Government. Early in the play, Hopkinson says to Evy that his "father didn't die in the service for the world to be overrun by a second-rate people" (16). A few scenes later, the Inspector raises a glass to the passengers on board the Komagata Maru: "It gives me great pleasure to extend to you the hospitality of the Canadian people! Enjoy your anchorage! Sip our rain and eat our air! And when you've had your fill—India lies westward!" (24). The play consists of several other moments when Hopkinson's determination to fulfill his duty as chief negotiator leads him towards immoral behavior and, for the most part, he appears to show little remorse or consideration for the victims. Nevertheless, as the events unfold, the audience discovers Hopkinson's suppressed racial background. This does not necessarily excuse him for his inhumane actions, yet it offers another perspective and a better understanding of the Inspector's inner dilemma.

In comparison to Walsh, where Pollock is much more open in displaying the Major's moral dilemma, Hopkinson's inner struggle is revealed more subtly in The Komagata Maru Incident, making it hard to discover the Inspector's resistance towards
his past. The first instance of Hopkinson’s uneasiness with his own heritage comes relatively early in the play. During an exchange between the Inspector and Sophie, a prostitute working at the brothel where the action takes place, Hopkinson discloses the following:

HOPKINSON: My father was a big man, blond curly hair, wonderful moustache he had, looked like a prince in his uniform. A prince--surrounded by little beige people. (he laughs)

SOPHIE: What about your mother?

HOPKINSON: “Quai Hai!” That’s all, and they’d scuttle like bugs.

SOPHIE: Did your mother like it there?

HOPKINSON: She never said. (9)

This dialogue, though seemingly incidental, suggests to the audience that Hopkinson is uncomfortable with some aspect of his past. By ignoring questions about his mother, he shows he may have been ashamed of her. A few lines later, Georg, a German immigrant, inquires about how Hopkinson came to Vancouver after working in India:

GEORG: And how did you end up in Canada, sir?

HOPKINSON: Promotion was blocked in Lahore.

GEORG: That’s hard to believe for a man like yourself.

HOPKINSON: Quite simple, Georg. Cliques. And I learnt something from that. (9-10)
This exchange provides some reason to believe that Hopkinson himself has been a victim of racism. Perhaps his half-caste status has kept him from professional advancement. It is quite plausible, then, that the Inspector might have developed a hatred for the part of himself--and that population--which left him unable to realize his goals. Perhaps that is what Hopkinson means when he says he learned something: he learned to hate the Indian. He also must have learned to hide his Indian heritage.

It is Evy, Hopkinson's prostitute friend, who reveals the Inspector's great secret in the play's most engaging and emotionally-charged scene. It begins with Evy telling Georg how Hopkinson's "got a thing about race, about color" (31). The Inspector orders Georg to leave, then he slowly begins to stalk Evy while she torments him, gradually enraging him and leading him towards the revelation:

EVY: Your mother's eyes, now what were they?

HOPKINSON: My mother's eyes were blue, you bitch! I'll kill you.

EVY: First you'll have to catch me.

HOPKINSON chases her: she avoids him.

You're stupid, Bill, you're stupid it's not me that's stupid, it's you. Stupid, stupid, Billy! They all use you, Bill, yes, they do You think that you use Georg, you think that you use Bella Singh, you think that you use me, but you're the one that's being used they're using you and Billy Boy's too dumb to know and stupid dumbo Billy will keep on being
used cause Billy Dumbo’s stupid! Stupid dumbo Billy’s stupid dumbo Billy.

(He catches her, she speaks softly.)
And Billy’s mother’s brown.

(He slaps her, she speaks louder.)
And Billy’s mother’s brown!

(He slaps her, she speaks louder.)
And Billy’s mother’s brown!

HOPKINSON: (He throws her down, kneels and shakes her.) Don’t say that. Don’t say that! I’ll kill you if you say that to me! (33)

It is not until this moment that the full implications of Hopkinson’s past are realized, and this climactic scene exposes the Inspector’s inner dilemma. From here on, even as Hopkinson is pushed into stepping up tactics for sending the Sikhs back to India, the audience is aware of the personal cost of the Inspector’s acquiescence to his superiors, and why the East Indian Woman, who comes to symbolically represent his mother, torments him. The confrontational scene also explains the setting of the play. The brothel is the perfect physical metaphor for how Hopkinson prostitutes himself for the sake of his bureaucratic duty. Like Walsh, Hopkinson is used. He is a puppet and a pawn of the government to carry out their orders. Once Hopkinson’s middle-man position and his mixed background are fully revealed, the moral charges against him may
be viewed in a more sympathetic light, which arguably makes it more difficult to fully
indict the half-caste Inspector for his racist actions.

The evidence from which the audience can witness the Inspector's racist actions
is largely provided by T.S., the Master of Ceremonies, who from a third-person
perspective guides the action of the play. Several critics suggest that the initials T.S.
stand for The System (Gilbert 116; Page 108; Salter xvii), although Pollock herself claims
during an interview by Margo Dunn that the “initials of the original entrepreneur, T.S.
Eaton, stuck in her mind” when writing the play (5). Pollock complicates the third-
person memory model in The Komagata Maru Incident because, unlike Harry, whose
role as chronicler and rememberer was quite evident in Walsh, T.S. plays multiple roles
that challenge the audience to know whom he is playing at any particular time. Roles
that he interprets through the course of the play include a circus barker, Hopkinson’s
superior, Member of Parliament, teacher, judge, prosecuting attorney, boy scout leader,
and journalist. Similar to Harry, T.S. is a mediating voice who facilitates the staging for
the play’s central conflicts and provides historical background to the events. However,
unlike Harry who maintains his wagon master role throughout the play and does not get
fully involved in the conflicts, T.S. changes identities in practically every scene and most
of the roles he interprets are from positions of power (e.g., judge, Member of Parliament)
where he challenges Hopkinson. From these positions of authority, T.S gives a strong
impression of being the puppet-master manipulating his pawn (Hopkinson).
Furthermore, T.S. holds omniscient powers (like Harry and the Stage Manager in *Our Town*), in that he has the ability to recollect events and scenes that he likely did not personally witness.

Pollock explains during an interview that she created the character by turning an apparent problem into an asset. Because the newspaper accounts of the day gave the impression that the whole *Komagata Maru* affair was "a wonderful circus or carnival atmosphere" complete with "marching bands and popcorn, apples and balloons," Pollock answered her own question—"How on earth could I communicate all that information in a way that might be vaguely entertaining?"—by creating the Master of Ceremonies (Wallace and Zimmerman 119). In a more recent interview with Anne Nothof, Pollock remarks that she always struggled with but could "never come up with a satisfactory answer as to why T.S. is telling this story" (*Sharon Pollock: Essays on Her Work* 169-70). The rememberers in Pollock’s later plays are usually compelled to look back because of unresolved issues from the past, but T.S. does not really have personal reasons for recollecting past events. In recalling Hopkinson’s moral dilemma, T.S. does not necessarily have any personal interests or risks. This is partially because T.S. is a composite of many voices rather than a distinct, fully-rounded character. The collective voices of the Master of Ceremonies combine to create a multi-faceted character with the various identities blending into one another, and not always readily recognizable upon a first reading or viewing.
It is apparent from the outset that T.S. holds all the power, because he has the ability to manipulate not only Hopkinson, but all of the events and characters. With a snap of his fingers a spotlight comes on him, then with a bang of his cane, Hopkinson and Evy come to life. With another bang of his cane they freeze, and the spot returns to him (2). He performs the same magical feat with Georg and Sophie in the opening scene by bringing them to life with a tap of his cane. Finally, by pulling a cover he reveals the Woman on board the Komagata Maru, who comes to represent the 376 East Indians aboard the Japanese steamer. In orchestrating the cast and events, T.S. controls how the story will unfold; however, it would be inaccurate to claim that T.S. personally recollects all of the events in Hopkinson’s life. As Malcolm Page observes, T.S. “suggests Joel Grey in Cabaret” (108), in that he conducts the events as the emcee, but he does not necessarily witness each event in Hopkinson’s life. He manipulates, orchestrates, and shapes the scenes the audience sees, but there is little to suggest that they derive from his personal memory. Because T.S. interprets several roles, it is nearly impossible to know if the character he is depicting at any time in the play witnessed a particular event; therefore, it may be more accurate to deem T.S. a third-person recollector (rather than rememberer), who re-collects various disparate facts and events, and conducts Hopkinson’s moral inquiry via theatrical (or carnival side-show) devices. Furthermore, his role as facilitator or emcee, which is generally outside of the dramatic frame, often blends with the roles he plays inside the dramatic action, thereby blurring the lines.
between the inner and outer frames as well as challenging the audience to know whether T.S. is remembering or partaking in any given scene. An example where T.S. weaves his way from the inner frame to the outer frame and challenges the audience to know whether or not he actually witnessed the events occurs near the end of the play when he re-stages the court scene.

In the complex final scene of the play T.S. initially interprets the roles of judge and prosecuting attorney and leads Hopkinson through the court proceedings. The Master of Ceremonies becomes a character inside the action. The courtroom trial reveals that the Sikh informers, Hermann Singh and Arjun Singh (both hired by Hopkinson), were brutally murdered by fellow Sikhs, presumably out of revenge for their betrayals of the East Indian community. While the court scene leads the audience back in time and sets up the events that lead to Hopkinson’s eventual death in the witness room, Pollock juxtaposes these events with a scene in the brothel whereby Georg and Sophie are playing cards and discussing the trial. Hopkinson is presumably part of both worlds—in the court room and in the brothel. This juxtaposition of scenes will be developed even further in Pollock’s later memory plays, particularly in *Doc* and *Moving Pictures*. When the court room trial gradually takes precedence and the brothel scene begins to fade, T.S. takes on another role. He becomes a journalist or omniscient rememberer, stepping outside of the dramatic action and leading the audience inside the Sikh temple where “people are singing. They’re singing hymns for Arjun Singh, Hermann Singh”
Pollock has T.S. meticulously describe (almost as if he were there) how Bella Singh, another of Hopkinson's informers, enters the temple and "takes off his shoes [...] Bella Singh moves to the back. Bella Singh sits in the corner. Bella Singh takes out a gun—he fires ten shots, scores nine out of ten, seven wounded, two dead" (46). Hopkinson informs Georg that he will testify that Bella Singh acted out of self-defence in the temple. According to Hopkinson, Bella knew that he was to be the next victim, because, like Arjun and Hermann, he betrayed the Sikh community by giving information to the government Inspector. The scene once again reverts back in time and T.S., from outside of the dramatic frame, describes the surroundings for Hopkinson's walk to the court house: "October 21st, 1914 My God, what a day! Look at that sky—and the leaves all russet and gold—the mountains like sentinels, just a light breeze, the city set like a precious gem on the Pacific" (46). T.S.'s irony-filled speech illustrates Pollock's desire to show how underneath Vancouver's beauty lie political corruption and racism. The passage also supports the playwright's desire to unearth and question the false notion of Canada as a harmonious mosaic. After T.S. weaves himself in and out of the dramatic scene as participant and recollector, Hopkinson begins his extended first-person remembrance of the events that led to his death in the court house.

Hopkinson appears to relive the events leading to his death, which hints at the possibility of a first-person memory. His vivid first-person description of his walk to the court house when he feels "like a toy man walking through a toy town" (46) gives the
impression of being told from his memory. He describes his peaceful journey to the
court house, and his monologue shows the acceptance of his fate: “I open the door of the
lift, I step inside, then I close it. I think of the peace of the coffin. I think of the safety of
the cage” (46). Hopkinson can no longer resist the dark weight of the past; therefore,
according to Anne Nothof, “he is forced to acknowledge his self-destructive hypocrisy,
and he accepts his death” (“Crossing Borders” 481). When he steps inside the witness
room and sees Mewa Singh, who in each hand “carries a gun” (47), Hopkinson feels
“himself bursting. My toy town is destroyed in an instant” (47). He then recites a hymn
from Shiva the Destroyer “out of the depths of his racial memory” (Salter xix), and
accepts his death as just retribution for his part in supporting the government’s racist
policy, for his lack of compassion for others, and for his betrayal of his heritage (Nothof,
“Crossing Borders” 481). Similar to Walsh though, Hopkinson does not provide enough
self-reflexivity for us to consider the drama a first-person memory play, and, in fact, this
is the only scene in which Hopkinson describes, and simultaneously relives, the events
from his past. Finally, because he is not alive to retell the tale, he cannot recollect his
past from a present frame--only the omniscient and multi-voiced T.S. can.

Only T.S. can float between the play’s established present and past, and at the end
of Hopkinson’s monologue it becomes evident that the Master of Ceremonies
manipulated and controlled every aspect of the court room scene when he states that
“Mewa Singh fires three times. A bullet pierces Hopkinson’s heart” (47). T.S.’s final
recollection or re-staging of the event is supported with Pollock’s stage directions:

[T.S.] touches HOPKINSON with the cane. HOPKINSON’S head falls forward. T.S. does a soft shoe shuffle to centre stage, he stops, looks out, raises his arms, pauses for a beat, and makes a large but simple bow---Blackout. (47)

The final stage directions remind the audience how Hopkinson’s story was fully manipulated and staged by T.S. for an audience to witness. Also, the notion of T.S. manipulating his puppet (Hopkinson) is reinforced. The soft shoe shuffle suggests that the entire incident (the suffering of the 376 East Indians) was mere entertainment for the observers—both the present audience for Pollock’s play and the observers along Vancouver harbour in 1914. However, in her efforts to address and question the social wrongdoings of the government officials, Pollock purposefully allows her audience to see through T.S.’s political and non-humanitarian entertainment scheme. As a result, an audience likely sympathizes with the Sikhs and, to a certain extent, with Hopkinson because both were pawns in the racist event.

In the role of third-person recollector, T.S. selectively leads the audience to particular events in Hopkinson’s life, and these scenes present the Inspector as morally responsible for the suffering of the Sikhs on board the Komagata Maru. The ending of The Komagata Maru Incident brings a sense of closure with Hopkinson’s death, and in these final moments he appears to acknowledge his social wrongdoing. It is almost as if
he agrees to offer his life to compensate for the damage he caused the Sikh community and the passengers on board the *Komagata Maru*. Hopkinson’s submission to death suggests that he takes full responsibility for his racist actions and the suffering of the Sikhs. Moreover, the opening of his arms implies that he joins the recessive group (antagonist) and shares in their defeat.

The investigation in *The Komagata Maru Incident* implicates the audience more overtly than it does in *Walsh*. Beyond their role as witnesses to the moral inquiry into Hopkinson’s conduct, the audience in this play become bystanders and participants in the racist side-show. Pollock accomplishes this through the carnival atmosphere T.S. creates from the opening of the play with the spectacle being the East Indians inside the ocean steamer (or cage as the set descriptions in the Production Note suggest):

> Ladies and gentlemen! It walks! It talks! It reproduces! It provides cheap labour for your factories, and a market for your goods! All this, plus a handy scapegoat! Who’s responsible for unemployment? The coloured immigrant! (24)

These remarks construct the audience as participants in T.S.’s carnival show and question their complicity in the racist event. Knowles suggests that the central subject of the play “is its predominantly white audience, for whose benefit both Hopkinson and the theatre company act” (238). He later comments that “we are confronted with our ability to detach ourselves from action that ‘doesn’t concern us,’ but for which we are necessarily
passive accomplices” (239). For his part, Robert Nunn notes that 
as an audience we are alienated from an automatic acceptance of the 
predominance of the ‘White Race’ in our country: it didn’t just happen; 
choices were made and continue to be made to maintain it. The play 
forces us to either criticize or justify the state of affairs: we cannot take it 
for granted. (“Performing Facts” 56)

Both critics suggest that Pollock not only stages an inquiry to investigate
Hopkinson’s actions, but that her drama also condemns the audience for its inaction on
the subject of racism. One of Pollock’s first stage directions is that “T.S. observes the
audience entering,” while the “other characters are frozen on stage” (Production Note).
In this sense the traditional roles are reversed, because the audience becomes the focus of
interest for those on stage. The actors wait for their onlookers and T.S. makes the
audience aware of the metatheatricality of the piece early on with his solicitations:
“Hurry! Hurry! Hurry! Right this way!” (1). His invitation serves to enhance the
spectators’ participation in the incident. Through this metatheatrical technique Pollock
implies to her audience that by remaining indifferent to racism in their daily lives they
inadvertently perpetuate it. An example of complacency towards racism occurs early in
the play when Evy vividly recounts to Hopkinson a fight she saw from the tram window.
She describes how a Sikh was violently beaten by (presumably white) men while
waiting in an employment line:
They knocked him down, the man in the turban, they were kicking, and then pushing and shoving to get in a blow—and the tram pulled away it was gone. As if I’d imagined it. It had never been. I should have done something. And I just sat on the goddamn tram and came home. (16)

Evy then looks “out the window,” towards the theatre audience, and says how “[t]here are people at the end of Burrard, staring out at that ship They look like the men in that line” (16). This scene implicates the audience directly, and invites them to reflect on their own inaction in events of overt racism. Pollock triggers the audience’s memory, and actively asks it to consider racism today. According to Reid Gilbert, Pollock exaggerates the violence and hatred in an effort to shock the modern audience and make them acknowledge their role in this historical prejudice (116). In her Programme Note for the first production of *The Komagata Maru Incident*, Pollock supports this claim: “The attitudes expressed by the general populace of that time [1914], and paraphrased throughout the play, are still around today and, until we face this fact, we can never change it” (quoted by Page 107-8).

The inner play in *The Komagata Maru Incident* reminds the audience how history, to a certain extent, is shaped by whoever is re-telling it, and how the circumstances that led Hopkinson (and the Canadian government) to deny entry to the passengers on board the *Komagata Maru* are interpreted by Pollock via her dramatic characters. In their essay “Documenting Racism: Sharon Pollock’s *The Komagata Maru*

Jarvis sees William Hopkinson as 'a Canadian martyr and hero' (Jarvis 1) and Mewa Singh as 'the Sikh terrorist and murderer of William Hopkinson' (43), while for Jagpal and the Sikh community, Hopkinson is the 'corrupt immigration official' and Mewa Singh 'a Sikh martyr' (Jagpal 34). (91)

Both Jarvis and Jagpal presumably worked from the same available source material, yet their interpretation, and no doubt personal politics, steered their re-writing of history in different directions.

Pollock too has her politics and interpretation of the events embedded in her play, and by using T.S. as Master of Ceremonies who presents and theatricalizes the events of 1914, the playwright openly acknowledges her subjective re-staging of the historical events. The metatheatrical atmosphere Pollock creates in the play enables her audience to know that what they are witnessing is a version of the Komagata Maru incident. Pollock's Playwright's Note contains the following disclaimer, which frees her to stray from documented accounts of the incident:

*The Komagata Maru Incident* is a theatrical impression of an historical
event seen through the *optique* of the stage and the mind of the playwright. It is not a documentary account, although much of it is documented. To encompass these facts, time and place are often compressed, and certain dramatic license is employed. (Playwright’s Note)

Because of the increased liberty she gives herself in the creation of the play, Pollock’s political intent in *The Komagata Maru Incident* is more evident than it is in *Walsh*. For example, the audience, in listening to the many tirades of T.S., cannot help but notice the bitter sarcasm that drips from his words. In one instance, the Master of Ceremonies describes the situation at hand this way: “A Japanese steamer chock-full of brown-skin Hindus headed for a predominantly pale Vancouver, and entry into whitish Canada. The *Komagata Maru* in blue Canadian waters!” (3) One does not have to look very far, then, to see the bias that steers the play. The word *optique* is fitting in the *Playwright’s Note*, because it calls to mind the distortions that appear when elements are viewed through such a lens, the same way historical events are distorted in an historiographic drama to suit the goals of the playwright.

*The Komagata Maru Incident* suggests to the audience that the Canadian government, represented by the negotiator Hopkinson, is fully responsible for denying the legal immigrants their rightful entry. The government’s actions against the *Komagata Maru* passengers are presented as purely racist. Pollock’s play then debunks
the myth of the harmonious Canadian mosaic in claiming that the Canadian government not only has a history of overtly racist immigration policies, but also has used back-handed, deceitful measures to enforce them. T.S. explains these manoeuvres after setting out the orders-in-council, which were targeted specifically at the Sikhs: “There—you see how we operate, Hopkinson? Never a mention of race, color, or creed—and yet, we allow British subjects; we don’t allow them to enter” (7). Like Walsh, the play shows that the government lacked courage in starving the refugees out of the country and denying them any future in Canada. Unlike Walsh, however, the government’s policy cannot be passed off as a diplomatic move to solve an international conflict. The Komagata Maru affair, rather, was a domestic concern for which the road to solution was paved with racist intent. In a wider context Pollock’s political argument is very one-sided, because her play contains little support for the Canadian government’s actions. However, the incident takes on a new life through Hopkinson’s inner dilemma, and by examining his personal and public situation through the frame of a metaphorical inquiry, Pollock invites the audience to reconsider the underlying motives of historical acts. Hopkinson’s moral investigation, staged and recollected by T.S., implies a guilty verdict by Pollock. However, when the Inspector opens his arms to Mewa Singh’s bullets (and figuratively repents) at the end of the play, could this gesture absolve him of the social crimes he committed against the Sikhs?

We have seen how Pollock exploits the speculative nature of Hopkinson’s racial
background, and how she merges several personae within the character of T.S., which combined, allowed her to develop a more imaginative structure than in *Walsh*. The increase in imagination in *The Komagata Maru Incident* is coupled with an increase in 'invention'; that is, she fabricates events and characters that do not appear in historical narratives. When asked if it is legitimate to invent incidents and characters, Elsie Park Gowan responds “that we must invent that’s what imagination is for but the invention should be closely based on fact” (8). In *The Komagata Maru Incident* there is much more invention than in *Walsh*, and that was a conscious decision made by the playwright. Seeking, perhaps, a way around the difficulties she encountered in early versions of *Walsh*, Pollock, in *The Komagata Maru Incident*, abandons all pretenses that the play presents the historical truth on stage with her Playwright’s Note cited earlier.

“To know where we are going, we must know where we have been and what we have come from” (Programme Note for *Komagata*, quoted by Page 107). This idea becomes, for Pollock, the driving force for her moral inquiries. In placing Hopkinson and Walsh under investigation for social crimes they partook in as negotiators, Pollock invites the audience to consider the degree of responsibility held by the Inspector and Major in the social wrongdoings from our past. More specifically, these two moral inquiries ask the audience to reconsider the historical events and urge them to rethink current events in which we personally face similar dilemmas between duty/humanity and bureaucracy/justice.
Chapter 3

Wrestling with Memories inside My Head

A proper inquiry can reveal your position, can help you.

- One Tiger to a Hill 123

The memory play form most frequently used by contemporary playwrights is the first-person memory model. Since Tennessee Williams’s semi-autobiographical creation of Tom Wingfield in The Glass Menagerie (1945), many playwrights have adopted the first-person memory play. Williams coined the term memory play in his stage directions, referring to Tom’s recollection of his family in St. Louis (2), and ever since, the notion of a memory play has largely implied a single character remembering his or her past from a present perspective. Frequently, the past dominates in this kind of play and the present
acts more as a framing device to contain the individual’s memories of the past. The past is not always linear or chronological because the rememberers select particular memories in their efforts to make sense, justify, and/or defend their decisions. Most often a violent crime or social wrongdoing has taken place; as a result, the rememberer’s retrospective analysis stems primarily from a desire to understand their implication in the social crime as well as the circumstances that led them to their present state. The notion of an inquiry figures prominently in the first-person model because the driving force behind the recollecting is most often an attempt by the rememberer to determine the degree to which he or she is morally (and in some cases legally) responsible for what has taken place.

Pollock’s first-person memory plays, much like her third-person plays, focus on the inner struggle of a particular individual. In her earliest first-person model, *One Tiger to a Hill*, the playwright’s public concerns once again figure prominently, in that the play questions the social injustice of the penal system in British Columbia. The rememberer, Chalmers, is faced with a moral dilemma but it is secondary to the larger socio-political issue of prison conditions. Because the memory structure and moral dilemma are relatively undisguised in *One Tiger to a Hill* I spend more time analyzing *Moving Pictures*, which develops the first-person model more fully.

In *Moving Pictures*, the playwright shifts her focus almost entirely towards the individual, so that her attack on society centres on an individual at war with herself or within a domestic situation rather than on governmental policies. The playwright still
reexamines past events, but the usual antagonistic government voices are left out, and the socio-political issues are then deduced from the more private investigation. The inquiry becomes very personal to the playwright because a key issue explored in the play is the role of the artist. *Moving Pictures* is Pollock's most personal play since *Doc*, in that it examines issues the playwright herself has experienced and continues to experience. The play tackles the conflict between the artist's obsessive commitment to her work and her social responsibility to others. *Moving Pictures* features the Canadian actress, writer, director, producer and filmmaker Nell Shipman, and in Pollock's version of her story three separate actresses remember, reexamine, and re-stage different moments in the artist's life: "Helen," the young actress; "Nell," the actress and director in middle age; and "Shipman," the older woman near the end of her life. In her effort to know if her life in art was worth the sacrifices she made, "Shipman" interrogates her younger self, in particular "Nell." "Shipman" conducts the inquiry, and "Helen" and "Nell" provide the primary evidence by replaying earlier moments in her life.

*One Tiger to a Hill*

First produced at Edmonton's Citadel Theatre in 1980, *One Tiger to a Hill* examines the reform system (or lack thereof) in a British Columbia penitentiary.²¹ The
play closely investigates the treatment of prisoners and the role of social workers through the first-person perspective of the lawyer Everett Chalmers. Chalmers, who exists both in the play’s present and past, shares his recollections of the social injustices he perceives are taking place inside the prison walls. Practically all of the action in *One Tiger to a Hill* occurs in the past with the exception of Chalmers’s monologues at the beginning and ending of the play. These two monologues in the play’s present are direct addresses to the audience, a feature that Pollock makes use of in *Walsh* and *The Komagata Maru Incident* through Harry and T.S. The direct address is commonly adopted in the memory play and with the exception of *Moving Pictures* and *Doc* it is a device used by Pollock in all her memory plays. Similar to Harry and T.S., Chalmers could not have possibly witnessed all the scenes that occur in the play first hand; therefore, although the past is depicted through the lawyer’s memory certain events are suppositions about what took place. For instance, Chalmers did not personally witness Gillie and Paul “launch themselves with knives drawn” towards Walker and Soholuk at the beginning of the play (87). This scene is a reconstruction of what may have happened and not a recollection of what took place. Nonetheless, the majority of the events in the play depict Chalmers’s experience inside the prison. In the inner (past) frame Pollock highlights, through Chalmers’s recollections, the hostage taking incident from two angles: the prison officials (Wallace, McGowen, Hanzuk) and the prisoners and hostages (Paul, Gillie, Soholuk, Walker). Chalmers, as rememberer and mediating figure between both parties,
guides the audience back and forth between the struggles of the prison officials and the demands of the hostage-takers.

Unlike most first-person rememberers, who are generally the central subjects of the play, Chalmers is a secondary character in the inner play. According to Robert Nunn, Chalmers's “part in the action is so peripheral that it will not bear the weight of the anguish he informs us he is suffering” (“Sharon Pollock's Plays” 80). He is one character among several and his moral dilemma shares the stage with other polemical debates and inquiries—including social worker Dede Walker's determination to reform the penal system. However, Chalmers's moral dilemma in One Tiger to a Hill provides a good opportunity to study the early stages in Pollock's development of the first-person memory play.

Pollock frequently examines power structures in her plays, and her distrust of institutions and their power over individuals appears once again in One Tiger to a Hill. The play is partly based on the 1975 hostage-taking incident at the New Westminster penitentiary where a female classification officer, Mary Steinhauer, was killed by a prison guard in what may or may not have been an accident during the suppression of a prison riot. Pollock takes some dramatic license with the recorded events, and the development of her fictional characters differs substantially from Christian Bruyere's Walls (1978), a documentary play (and subsequently a movie) that sticks closely to the documented accounts of the same event. During an interview with Wallace and
Zimmerman, Pollock mentions that she initially “wanted to write the play from [Mary’s] point of view or from a character very much like her,” but the playwright eventually discovered she “couldn’t write about her--I had such negative feelings about everything I found out about her”(122). Instead, she decided to frame the play with the fictional Chalmers, the lawyer who negotiates between the hostage-takers and the authorities. Similar to Walsh and Hopkinson, Chalmers becomes the mediating figure and “gets caught between the demands made by the institution he serves and his painful realization that those demands are suspect” (Zimmerman, *Playwrighting Women* 71).

Pollock’s father’s name was Everett Chalmers and the character name figures again in *Doc* where biography and fiction come even closer. The playwright’s father, as I will discuss more thoroughly in the next chapter, was a well-known medical doctor in Fredericton and he dedicated his life to improving social and medical conditions for the people of New Brunswick. In the role of lawyer, Chalmers, in *One Tiger to a Hill*, also takes on a near impossible task by challenging the way prison officials (Wallace and McGowen) run the penal system:

CHALMERS: Why did you lie to me? Tell me it was internal, then it turns out Paul has a point about Desjardins, he has a point about solitary. They’re torture cells, for christ’s sake, described as such by a judge!

MCGOWEN: It’s a maximum pen, we need punitive isolation.

WALLACE: Ev, what we’re dealing with here is things as they are, not
as we'd like them to be!

MCGOWEN: Tommy Paul is a contract killer!

CHALMERS: Alright. He was convicted. He was serving his time.

Does his sentence mean 'time'—plus ongoing physical and mental abuse.

Is that what it means? (127)

Aside from the playwright’s father’s renowned use of foul language, the most important parallel between Everett Chalmers the person and the character in *One Tiger to a Hill* is a humanitarian compulsion to help others at whatever cost. The fictional Chalmers risks his life for two prisoners he just met and he overlooks his other responsibilities, such as family. He insists on walking out of the prison with Paul and Gillie knowing full well the risks involved in escorting the prisoners:

CHALMERS: I'll walk with you out to the yard.

WALKER: Why?

CHALMERS: I owe it.

[...]

PAUL: ... You’re gonna walk out with us, eh?

CHALMERS: Yeah.

PAUL: You don’t have to do that.

CHALMERS: I want to.

PAUL: I suppose ... you got a wife and kids and a house.
Pollock’s father also put his profession ahead of his family and as I discuss later, in relation to *Doc*, this comes at a cost. Interestingly, Walsh also dedicates his life to his professional work and neglects his wife and two daughters back in Brockville.

Unlike Walsh and Hopkinson, Chalmers is not the central figure in the inner play— he is a witness rather than a catalyst of the social injustice. He cannot be held personally responsible for the social wrongdoings inside the prison; nonetheless, as a citizen, he feels morally and socially obliged to be informed of what is taking place in the penitentiary. His opening monologue informs us that for nine years, twice a day, almost every day, I drove past the pen. ...

Sometimes I wondered what it was like being inside, locked up. I suppose there was always this question at the back of my mind and the question went like this—what if? What if the things you hear, what if those things really happen inside? Would I be any different in essence from all those good Germans who passed Dachau and Buchenwald, and never asked questions? (76)

Chalmers’s initial moral dilemma centres on whether or not he should enter the prison and investigate what is taking place. He feels socially obliged, so when the opportunity arises he takes it. His partner, criminal lawyer Joe Whetmore, is away on a fishing trip when a mediator for a hostage-taking incident in prison is needed. Much like Walsh,
Chalmers's sense of social justice provokes him to accept the challenge, despite the personal risks. In his mediating role, he is made aware first-hand of the injustices he suspected all along. The poor conditions the guards must work in are brought to his attention, but it is the dehumanizing and sadistic treatment endured by the prisoners that captures Chalmers's sympathy. He enters the situation believing—somewhat naively—that he can make a difference. (Ev Chalmers in *Doc* also believes he can make a difference and reform the medical system in New Brunswick.) During an early encounter with Lena Benz, Chalmers tells the social activist that he entered the pen because “I thought I could help” (107). Unlike “all those good Germans” who turned their backs on the suffering Jews inside the concentration camps, Chalmers’s conscience forces him to act.

Typical of most Pollock plays, *the system* presents all sorts of obstacles and the ability of individuals to generate change is nearly impossible:

MCGOWEN: Look, they send us these crazies, what can we do? We can’t keep em general population, so we isolate em. That’s what we do. And sometimes it happens. Suicide, top tier. Then you get an opportunist like Paul or like Benz, and they make us look bad. Guard’s name in the paper, press harassin’ his family—Can you understand our position?

CHALMERS: But a proper inquiry can reveal your position, can help
you.

MCGOWEN: It doesn’t work like that.

CHALMERS: Then you tell me how it does work.

[...]

WALLACE: Look, tomorrow this will be over for you ... you’ll have breakfast, drop the kids off at school ... on Friday I’ll see you down a the Y.

CHALMERS: ... I ... (123-24)

Chalmers is eventually made to feel powerless in the face of a bureaucratic penal system. However, commenting on the play, Pollock explains: “My hope is that next time the audience reads about a hostage-taking event, I’ll have given them a touch of Chalmers” (Wallace and Zimmerman 122). What she means by “a touch of Chalmers” is the change in sensitivity towards prisoners: “I want the audience to come away having been touched by that theatre incident so that the next time they read the paper, it isn’t just the headlines and they don’t say, oh those fucking psychopaths, we should lock them up and throw away the key” (Wallace and Zimmerman 122). ‘A touch of Chalmers’ could also imply a touch of the playwright’s own political point of view because Pollock’s birth name was Sharon Chalmers. In this sense, she may be acknowledging that she wants to challenge her audience with her personal (socially-conscious) perspective on the events at New Westminster penitentiary.
Chalmers' decision to walk away with the hostage-takers and risk his life at the end of the play suggests that he not only sides with the inmates but that his experience inside the institution has allowed him to understand the injustice they are subjected to in prison. The final image in the play presents Chalmers, dumbfounded, staring down at the dead bodies of Dede Walker and Tommy Paul lying on the stage. After a moment of silence, he returns the play to the present, still touched by the incident:

I remember I stood there ... looking down ... and I thought ... if Paul doesn't move the blood from his jaw will run into her hair ... but he didn't move and neither did she. ... What were the lies? ... Is everything lies? ... tomorrow ... I said ... I will have breakfast ... drop ... the kids off at school ... on Friday ... I'll go to the Y ... he weeps. (137)

After experiencing what it is "like being inside, locked up" (76), Chalmers comes to realize that an entire system will need to be reformed before any positive change can occur. The efforts of social worker Dede Walker and leftist Lena Benz are perhaps noble in intention but they will fail every time against the conservative and narrow views of security officials such as McGowen and Hanzuk. Incidents like Desjardins' death in the isolation cell and the deaths of Walker and Paul will continue to be covered up or deemed inevitable. Chalmers' "faith in the system he serves is shaken to its roots by what he discovers when he finds himself inside the Pen" (Nunn, "Sharon Pollock's Plays" 80). His experience awakens his sense of moral justice, and his need to share his
memories is a result of an unsettled feeling when he leaves the penitentiary.

Chalmers faces three moral dilemmas during the course of the play. First, he has to decide whether or not he should enter the pen. Next, once inside, he makes the moral decision to walk with the prisoners, risking his own life in hopes of saving theirs. His final dilemma occurs at the end of the play, in the play’s present. Can he go on driving by the prison knowing the social injustices taking place inside? As a socially conscious person, will he attempt to make a difference? This final moral dilemma remains unanswered and the playwright deliberately leaves the audience with it unresolved in the end. Walker’s death scream at the end of the inner play, which is reminiscent of Clarence’s scream in *Walsh*, strongly suggests that Chalmers continues to live with this dilemma in the present. In *my* production of *One Tiger to a Hill*, Walker’s “Noooo! Noooo!” (137) might be extended and echoed so that it carries over, residually, into Chalmers’s final speech in the play’s present. This would emphasize that Chalmers continues to bear the guilt of the past even though he knows there was little else, under the circumstances, that he could have done.

Walker, similar to Clarence, exemplifies the unyielding desire to fight for justice, and the playwright presents the young rehabilitation officer as overly idealistic in a world or society that appears unprepared for change. This idealism is exemplified during an interchange between Walker and Soholuk, another rehabilitation officer in the prison:

WALKER: Sometimes it’s the struggle that counts, to struggle to keep on
struggling.

SOHOLUK: For what?

WALKER: A just cause!

SOHOLUK: Determined by who?

WALKER: Yourself!

SOHOLUK: Ooh, we’d have a great kinda order then, wouldn’t we.

WALKER: What kinda order have we got now?

SOHOLUK: You’re a lamb looking for a slaughter, Deed.

WALKER: You gotta turn everything into some kinda head trip, don’t you? You can’t believe there’s people willing to fight for things they’re not gonna win! (118)

The enthusiasm and optimism Walker displays echoes Clarence’s naive desire that he can make a difference. Both these younger characters are juxtaposed with father figures (Walsh and Chalmers) who have challenged existing systems but appear tired of meeting continuous resistance at the bureaucratic level. In Major Walsh’s case, he gives up. At the end of the play Chalmers leaves the stage disillusioned yet it remains unknown whether or not he will persist and confront the system.

Pollock’s hope for the play is that Chalmers’ recollections of the events that took place inside the prison may cause “a tiny human connection” (122) and expose her audience to the social injustices taking place behind prison walls. In using the first-
person memory model, Pollock takes advantage of the intimate connection that is made between the rememberer and the audience. Because Chalmers addresses the audience directly in the beginning and end, his story and feelings become more personal, which in turn enables the audience to follow his journey more readily and perhaps sense the social injustice he witnesses first-hand.

Most often, the role of the rememberer in first-person memory plays channels the audience’s attention (not unlike the power of the camera in film) towards a certain perspective. In *One Tiger to a Hill* the audience witnesses Chalmers watching the final events unfold and it is through his eyes and his physical experience that the audience observes the events—“It happened like this” (77). He focuses the action and he becomes our surrogate on stage, so that as an audience we can relate with (and to a certain extent experience the feelings of) the observer. In this way the moral inquiry in *One Tiger to a Hill* tries to implicate the audience because, like Chalmers, the audience is urged to re-think and question their assumptions towards prisoners, guards, social workers, hostage-takers—the entire penal system.

*Moving Pictures*

The memory play that follows *One Tiger to a Hill* in Pollock’s chronology is
Doc, and in this multi-person memory play (which I discuss in the next chapter) the playwright intensifies the use of memory and complicates the first-person model by having two first-person rememberers: Ev and Catherine. Furthermore, Catherine is a split-character, in that two separate actresses interpret the parts of Catherine and Katie (the younger Catherine). In Moving Pictures, which is arguably the playwright's most complex memory play to date, Pollock extends the split-character into three parts, so that Nell Shipman recalls her life at three separate stages. The concept of split-characters is not uncommon in drama; in fact, a few other Canadian playwrights have experimented with multiple split-characters. For example, Michel Tremblay's Albertine, in Five Times (1984) features the protagonist Albertine reexamining her life from five distinct stages. Also, David Young's Glenn (1992) looks at the musical prodigy Glenn Gould at four particular stages of his life and career, with the character again played by separate actors.

In her essay “From Split Subjects to Split Britches” Sue-Ellen Case examines the notion of split-characters from a feminist perspective. She purposely makes use of the term split-subjects when referring to characters who appear in more than one manifestation in a play. Her use of the term subject “derives from feminist uses of semiotic and Lacanian notions of the subject” (127). Case expands Lacan’s notion of split subject by suggesting that when a woman looks in the mirror,

when she enters the system of representation, she does so as a cultural male. [... Yet, she] also sees in that mirror that she is a woman. At that
moment she further fractures, split once as the male-identified subject and his subjectivity and split once more as the woman who observes her own subject position as both male-identified and female. [...] She cannot appear as a single, whole, continuous subject. (130-31)

Case’s theoretical argument is beyond my discussion of split-characters in relation to memory; however, her feminist approach to studying Pollock’s split-characters opens the door to future research. In their essay “The Split Subject of Blood Relations” Susan Clement and Esther Beth Sullivan describe how they grounded their Pollock production on feminist theory. They do not refer to Case’s work directly but they discuss how feminist film theorists such as E. Ann Kaplan and Kaja Silverman influenced their thinking and production of Pollock’s Blood Relations (55).

During an interview in 1982, Pollock mentions that the plays she’ll “write in the future will be more about women.” Then, she confesses that the “closer the plays get to me, to something that I really feel, the less polarized I become. The more I move inward” (Wallace and Zimmerman 118). Pollock’s writing about women and the movement inward reflects a greater exploration of self—arguably, a closer look at her life as an artist. In Moving Pictures Pollock presents the challenges of the artist. More specifically, the play investigates the struggle of the artist to strike a balance between pursuing the work and remaining socially responsible to others—a dilemma that Pollock has, arguably, personally grappled with during her life. Moving Pictures was first
produced at Calgary's Theatre Junction in 1999 under the direction of Brian Richmond. The Toronto-based Richmond had some money to commission a play and while looking for a subject he chanced upon a newspaper article about the mostly forgotten Canadian-born filmmaker Nell Shipman (1892-1970). Richmond told Martin Morrow from the *Calgary Herald* that he had “never heard of this woman before, even though she was such an important figure in early film history. So I phoned Sharon. She came to my mind right away. Nell Shipman was a very strong-minded and forceful woman and I thought hers and Sharon’s sensibility matched up very well” (“Pollock examines” F6). Later in the interview, Richmond comments that even though the play is inspired by Shipman’s life he thinks “the story Sharon is telling is also the story of herself as a creative artist” (F6).22

Ever since *Blood Relations*, the female artist has appeared more frequently among Pollock’s characters and her most recent play, *Angel’s Trumpet*, not unlike *Moving Pictures*, closely examines the struggle of the female artist in a male-dominated industry.23 In an interview with Bob Clark, Pollock states that *Moving Pictures* and *Angel’s Trumpet* “deal with the conundrum of the artist, and where that artist sits, both in society and in human relations” (B12). In the same interview, the playwright mentions that she is more comfortable writing female characters in these later plays because she feels that she knows herself better as a person and artist. In her essay “Sharon Pollock’s Portrait(s) of the Artist,” Sherrill Grace notes a few of the parallels between Pollock and
Shipman:

both women were pioneering in fields dominated by men; both fought to preserve a non-commercialized art; both seem to have felt guilt over their consuming commitment to art at the expense of husbands and children; and both identified closely with beloved fathers whom they escaped in order to become themselves. (19)

Grace’s second point regarding how both artists fought (and in Pollock’s case continues to fight) for a non-commercialized art is a significant parallel. Shipman’s independent approach to film making and “her alienation against Hollywood worked against her. When the big studios began to take over the industry in the ‘20s, her career foundered” (Morrow, “Pollock examines life” F6). Kate Taylor suggests that Pollock’s uncompromising, firebrand personality, combined with her distaste for “the industrial, corporate assembly line” theatre, have alienated her from the regional theatres in Canada (R1, R5).

The primary source material for Pollock’s research on Moving Pictures was Shipman’s autobiography, The Silent Screen & My Talking Heart (1987). Similar to her other works based on documented records, Pollock interprets the sources and takes dramatic licence to create her theatrical interpretation. The autobiography by Shipman tends to focus on the events surrounding her early and middle years, particularly tracing her film career; Pollock, on the other hand, makes the ageing “Shipman” the focus of her
drama. In the role of the central protagonist, "Shipman" "leads and bullies the others ["Nell" and "Helen"] into telling stories," notes Grace in her other recent essay on Pollock, "Creating the Girl from God’s Country: Nell Shipman and Sharon Pollock" (15). In the same essay, Grace also suggests that in the dramatic adaptation the playwright fills "the gaps in Nell Shipman’s autobiography":

In *Moving Pictures*, Sharon Pollock picks up where Nell Shipman left off. Pollock’s Nell, or Nells, for there are three of them, argues with themselves, challenges past decisions, provokes, criticizes, accuses, and pushes for a reconstruction of memory and identity, before reaching understanding and acceptance of her own complexity and multiplicity, failures and successes. (14)

The reconstruction of memory becomes a significant vehicle in Pollock’s interpretation of Shipman because the primary way in which the film artist reaches self-understanding occurs in the remembering and retelling of stories. As the eldest of the Nells, "Shipman" becomes the principal rememberer in the play and her desire to find out if her life had any meaning pushes her to re-examine her memories of the past. She recollects and restages her past in an effort to find out why she sacrificed her family for her art. "Nell" becomes the one most closely scrutinized and interrogated because it is during that stage that most of her sacrifices were made. The revisiting of past memories becomes a personal and moral investigation centering on how Nell Shipman neglected and
sacrificed her family while pursuing her film making. The play includes other moral and socio-political issues, but the family ones illuminate the inquiry most clearly and appear to be at the heart of the moral dilemma. Moreover, parental figures sacrificing their family for other pursuits constitutes a major theme in other Pollock plays, including *Doc*, *Whiskey Six Cadenza*, and *Fair Liberty's Call*. This theme of parents neglecting their children and family to pursue personal ambitions is close to home for Pollock and several of her major characters grapple with this issue. (I discuss Pollock's relationship with her family in more detail in the next section on *Doc*.) Before investigating "Shipman's" moral dilemma I want to look at how Pollock structurally complicates the first-person memory model in *Moving Pictures*.

The multiple perspectives of the three Nells and the juxtaposition of time past and present complicate both the form and content of the play. Structurally, the play resembles the screening of a film because "the action unfolds, in a one-act flow of memory, story, and debate, uninterrupted by scene or act divisions" (Grace, "Creating the Girl" 17). With *Moving Pictures* Pollock continues to move away from the more common two act structure of contemporary theatre. Her most recent play, *Angel's Trumpet*, also consists of one continuous act or collection of memories. The majority of Pollock's plays since the early 1990s, although text-based, rely heavily on visual and aural images, and they disrupt and fragment chronological and linear plot lines. Time and space in plays such as *Moving Pictures, End Dream*, and *Angel's Trumpet* "are
reconfigured in order to stimulate variant ways of imagining the ‘truth,’” states Nothof, and the “plays work through a series of disclosures--although rarely in terms of a linear temporal sequence” (“Staging the Intersections” 14). In a recent interview with Lori Montgomery, Pollock mentions that she sees the trend in her structures as part of the trend in theatre in general:

It would be very strange, I think, and very sad, if I had worked in the theatre all these years--where we see this move now toward more imagistic theatre--if I had not been affected by that. It reflects the changing world of society and culture and technology that I live in. (“So far from” 32)

In *Moving Pictures* Pollock builds on her earlier memory plays by intensifying the use of recollections and, as a result, the memories from the past continually interrupt the present frame. Unlike *One Tiger to a Hill* where the past distinctly dominates the play, *Moving Pictures* resembles *Doc* in that past and present share equal stage time. Also, the frequent shifts between past and present challenge the audience to know whether the scene takes place in the play’s present or in memory. In production, the past and present time frames exist simultaneously because the older character, who represents the present (“Shipman”), and the younger characters, who represent the past (“Helen” and “Nell”), are on stage for the entire play, and even though “Shipman” role-plays or interacts with characters from the past she still remains rooted in her particular time. The effect in the
theatre is that the audience experiences a continuous multiplicity of time (and often space), and practically each line of dialogue sheds meaning in two, sometimes three, time frames, which layers the interpretation and reading of a particular scene. According to Nothof, the present and past scenes “are played contrapuntally, each informing the other and constructing a rich texture of sound and imagery” (“Staging the Intersections” 14).

Not only does the past affect the present in Moving Pictures but the present also shapes the past. For example, “Shipman” as an older woman has trouble remembering the joy she had as a budding actress in a third-rate stock company because she is jaded by her present state of disillusionment. However, the younger “Helen” defends and celebrates the youthful moments and depicts the excitement of getting her first job, which counters “Shipman’s” rather pessimistic view of her youth and shows how the present can inaccurately taint the past. The past is seen to have shaped the present as well. For instance, some bad business decisions by “Nell” have forced “Shipman” to live in poverty and on the charity of others. One of the memories recalls how “Nell,” with Bert’s advice, prematurely sold the rights for GRUB STAKE to Fred Warren. Instead of waiting for other offers, she took Warren’s miserly offer—“75 - 25 split in his favor ... no money up front” (105). “Nell” and Bert never saw any of the money because Warren’s company eventually went bankrupt. This bad business decision along with “Nell’s” determination to continue producing films without financial support leaves “Shipman” sitting “essentially destitute, in [a] little rent free cottage, courtesy of affluent old friends”
(13). Playing with time is not only exemplified by "Shipman's" ability to access the past: both "Helen" and "Nell" also appear to know what happens in the future. (They share the same foreknowledge as Jem and Kate in *Saucy Jack* who both know what takes place in the play's future.) Therefore, the stories continually overlap and contradict one another because the three Nells have the ability to witness and share the joys and sorrows in each temporal period.

As is often the case, Pollock's Playwright's Note at the beginning of her text illuminates some of her intentions. In the Note she explains that Nell Shipman "plays for and against herself in the reconstruction of a life dedicated to the creation of play on stage, on screen, and in life" (2). This is exemplified near the middle of the play when tension builds between "Shipman" and "Nell" and they argue about the performance and construction of the past:

NELL: What is it now?

SHIPMAN: You play around with time and with place--and with people!

NELL: It's the way the head works! The way I remember!

SHIPMAN: Well, some people-

NELL: So is it content or form you're complaining about? Don't you know your own life?

SHIPMAN: Not the way you tell it! (79-80)

This passage illuminates, among other things, the workings of personal memory and it
supports the work of cognitive psychologists Barclay and DeCooke who suggest that “autobiographical memory is a constructive and reconstructive process” (52). How the past is remembered will differ at each stage because the circumstances and priorities for the respective Nells change. Contrary to the stereotype of the remembered past as unchangeable and fixed, Lowenthal states that “recollections are malleable and flexible; what seems to have happened undergoes continual change. Heightening certain events in recall, we then reinterpret them in light of subsequent experience and present need” (206). The debate between “Shipman” and “Nell” also sheds light on how memory functions in a fractured, discontinuous, and associative manner, making it difficult (or practically impossible) to recapture the past as it happened. The other point this piece of dialogue makes is that the form influences the content and vice versa, and this supports Pollock’s approach to dramaturgy. Pollock has attested in several interviews how finding the form to tell her stories is one of her most important and difficult tasks (see Dufort in particular).

The inquiry, which begins as a personal one, moves to a moral one when “Shipman,” the aging artist, revisits her past in hopes of discovering whether or not her pursuit of producing/writing/directing/acting for film was worth sacrificing her family:

SHIPMAN: You thought recognition would come.

NELL: Now that you’re old and no one remembers and you can’t even remember! You wonder if it was worth it. I know it was worth it.
SHIPMAN: Worth It. What is “it”, what is it? (55-6)

This dialogue between “Nell” and “Shipman” takes place after we discover that her father died alone at home without someone to care for him. Penniless and disillusioned, “Shipman” pries into “Nell,” hoping to find out why her film making was so important and why she neglected her family. The investigation tries to uncover her obsessive passion for art and exactly what she was trying to accomplish. In hindsight “Shipman” cannot understand “Nell’s” selfish endeavors, yet in the replaying “Nell” persists with her obsession with creating films about animals and heroines, and she eventually convinces her older self to celebrate the past rather than pine over it. However, when “Shipman” pushes “Nell” to revisit the moment on set at Lesser Slave Lake when she discovered that her father had died, the middle-aged “Nell” expresses her guilt: “I cried for daddy. Not with Ernie. Not in front of the crew or cast or the people milling around. I kept it inside. I said why wasn’t I there, how could I leave him, what was I thinking. But--I thought I was doing something that mattered” (55). At this low point “Nell” appears to question her obsession with making films and shows regret for neglecting her family in times of need. She says that she intended to look after her father:

NELL: I loved daddy! If I’d known in time I’d have-

SHIPMAN: What?

NELL: I’d have gone to him--(Yes I would).

SHIPMAN: “She leaves the picture to go to her father.”
NELL: Maybe she would. I don’t know if she would.

SHIPMAN: I do. (54)

“Shipman’s” desire to morally indict “Nell” prevents her from listening to her younger self, and “Nell’s” one-track mind makes it questionable whether or not she would have cared for her father at that stage. The text suggests that her father’s death does not halt her pursuit of making films. “Nell” simply takes the blow and forges on with her film project of the moment—*Back to God’s Country*. (Pollock’s “Nell” suggests that *Back to God’s Country* was a hit [28], yet, according to Calgary critic Martin Morrow, “nobody remembers Nell Shipman” or her films today [“Pollock examines life” F6]. The family sacrifice may not have been as difficult to digest for Shipman in her old age had the film become a classic.) The moral debate between “Shipman” and “Nell” remains unresolved because “Helen” intervenes and guides the characters to another memory.

Shortly after revisiting her father’s death, “Shipman” narrates the events leading to her mother’s death. She describes how her mother “made a pact with God” (57) when Nell was only ten days old. Although not explicit in the text, the pact involves the mother sacrificing her life in exchange for her daughter’s life. (Nell was a blue baby.) When Nell is once again confronted by death (a terrible flu) during the filming of *Back to God’s Country*, the mother once again resuscitates the daughter, only this time the mother does not survive. (Complications during child birth also figure in *Blood Relations*, but in this case Mrs. Borden dies shortly after giving birth to Lizzie.) In the
course of the play the three Nells partake in the restaging of memories; however, in the replaying of mummy's death the younger Nells remain silent, despite "Shipman's" insistence they "play"--the cue to move or replay another memory. Eventually, after a prolonged silence "Shipman" says, "I win," in a "defeated" voice, according to Pollock's stage directions (58). The recollection of her mother's death followed by the long silence marks the "most complex and profound confrontation in the play," according to Grace, and arguably this memory lies at the heart of the moral inquiry ("Creating the Girl" 19). Grace adds that "'Shipman' has held herself accountable to the mother who died for her, and she has found her selves wanting" ("Creating the Girl" 19). Whether or not the sacrifices affected the artist appears to be answered in this moment of truth, and the three Nells cannot deny their selfish behavior toward the person who gave them life. However, instead of dwelling on guilt, the spirited and ebullient "Helen," who counterbalances "Shipman's" desire to draw out the darker memories and accusatory attacks on "Nell," changes the scene to yet another memory. In placing the neglect of family at the heart of "Shipman's" moral dilemma Pollock revisits an issue she investigates in Doc. Ev's commitment to his medical practice seems to come at the expense of his family, and in his old age he revisits his past trying to understand if it (practice) was worth it (sacrifice). The deaths of his mother and his wife remain unresolved in his conscience and, like "Shipman," he appears to fight a similar battle in his old age. After revisiting the death of her parents with her younger selves, "Shipman"-
-a month away from “dropping dead” herself—seems to begin to understand her past choices and is on her way to accepting them.

How “Nell” treats the men in her life is significant in the remembered scenes. Her lover and creative partner, director-producer Bert Van Tuyle, stayed with her through some of the most trying moments but eventually he could no longer handle her persistent and relentless desire to produce art films. Still suffering from the effects of his foot freezing during the filming of *Back to God’s Country* in Northern Canada, Bert is seen in the play at his wit’s end in the couple’s wilderness cabin in the middle of Idaho. A particular memory depicts Bert desperately waiting for “Nell” to return, and like the consortium of animals on the farm he is starving on top of being nearly frozen to death. When “Nell” finally arrives he musters the strength for a confrontation. First, he lashes out verbally. He diminishes her artistic work by suggesting that her films are “garbage and trash. You write little scenarios. Little—little notes. Little pieces of paper, not real writing” (125). His frenzy builds to a physical attack and in a stylized manner, without touching “Nell,” he mimics a “realistic violent attack” on her (126). The violence leads him to fire five shots at her with a gun, yet somehow she manages to survive. The last we hear or see of Bert is when he puts the gun to his head. Then a “distant shot sounds. ... Bert sinks into a chair, ‘out of the picture’” (134). Characters reaching a breaking point figure prominently in Pollock’s plays and most often these climactic points involve violence. Nonetheless, the violence in her plays is often a metaphor for underlying social
wrongsdoings. What drives Bert to violence is metaphorically what the play and inquiry question. What was so important in her art that she would sacrifice her family? In her old age "Shipman" is able to ask that question but the replaying of the memories does not necessarily provide answers. "Nell," who is the most guilty of neglect, acknowledges her selfish behavior yet she is unwilling to shift her focus away from art.

The moral investigation metaphorically presents "Shipman" as the prosecutor and "Nell" and "Helen" as the defence. This way the memory or evidence is seen from two and sometimes three different angles, thereby providing depth and at the same time ambiguity. By the time the play ends "Shipman" remains unable to convince her younger selves that her pursuit of art was worthless because both "Helen" and "Nell," though they share regrets, remain convinced that what they are doing is worthy. During the final scene "Shipman" makes a final attempt to repress/deny the past or forget her life as a selfish artist:

SHIPMAN: (to tx techie) Gooo--to Black" (Lights start to fade)

NELL: (to techie) Never! (lights bump back up)

SHIPMAN: Oh for god’s sake, would you give me one moment’s peace?
I’m an old woman you know. You’re an old woman! We’re an old woman!

NELL: (extends her hands) Never.

(The three women clasp hands. They burst into laughter.)

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HELEN: *(beginning a story as lights fade)* Thanksgiving. I’m in New York ... (139-40)

The final scene suggests that the stories continue and “Nell” and “Helen” will not allow “Shipman” to stop playing. The coming together image, repeated from the opening, and the burst of laughter imply that “Shipman” is ready to accept and embrace her younger self, much like Catherine does near the end of *Doc*. In order to live freely during her final days, “Shipman” lets go of some of the guilt she felt regarding the way she treated her family. She comes to realize through the re-played memories that the stages she went through were important to her at those moments and although she regrets certain aspects she cannot change past decisions. The ending of the play suggests that “Shipman” decides to accept the ambitions of her younger self and when she joins hands with “Helen” and “Nell,” the present, according to Nothof, “is reconciled with the past” ("Staging the Intersections" 8).

Pollock manipulates Williams’s original first-person memory model with *Moving Pictures* by increasing the disruption of past and present and blurring the multiple memories one into the other. The sophisticated developments she makes with the memory form are made clear when studying this later play and comparing it to *One Tiger to a Hill*. Pollock’s structure in *Moving Pictures* is much more complex and the play relies increasingly on subtle staging techniques. Her reflections to Lynn Dufort in 1986 on the state of dramatic literature are certainly apt for her latest first-person memory
It seems to me there was a time that came out of Chekhov and Ibsen and Shaw in which the theatre was dramatic literature. I don’t believe there is such a thing as dramatic literature. What we seem to be moving towards is a clear understanding that a play is written to be performed. ... [I]t is actually seeing the past, the non-verbal communications, and the move from time zone to time zone. This creates and conveys something to the audience that can never be conveyed on the printed page. (5)

*Moving Pictures* complicates the original first-person memory model, but in its manipulation of time and space the play almost demands to be performed in order to depict the full effect of the layered memories. The personal inquiry that Shipman undergoes can only truly come to life when past and present (and sometimes the future) are juxtaposed on the stage. Pollock’s *Doc* and *Fair Liberty’s Call* are equally layered with memories and they too almost require being seen on the stage rather than the page.
Chapter 4

Investigating Daddy

Well you're not rememberin' right!

- *Fair Liberty's Call* 53.

The multi-person memory play features the possibility for more than one character to recollect the past, and the memories can stem from a first or third-person perspective. In the two plays I examine in this chapter, *Doc* and *Fair Liberty's Call*, Pollock makes use of multiple first-person rememberers. Past events remembered by more than one individual creates contradiction because the different angles of observation complicate the notion of a single truth. As in the majority of Pollock's plays, one or more of the characters in *Doc* and *Fair Liberty's Call* need to revisit the past in
order to clarify or come to terms with a social injustice. Both plays contain several social injustices, but I will focus the discussion on the father figure and how he is morally tried in both plays for his irresponsibility towards his family. I examine Ev’s insensitivity as husband and father in Doc and George Roberts’ lack of responsibility toward his wife and children in Fair Liberty’s Call. I will also investigate the moral struggle faced by two of the daughters. In Doc, Catherine confronts her younger self, Katie, in hopes of releasing her guilt regarding her mother’s death, and in Fair Liberty’s Call, Annie reinvestigates her betrayal of the spy John Andre. How Pollock structures the multiple first-person memory inquiries differs substantially in the two plays. In Doc, Ev and Catherine guide the audience to specific memories, then re-stage these moments from the past; whereas in Fair Liberty’s Call the memories that dominate the stage are performed in the play’s present, in that the evidence supporting the moral inquiries is remembered, not necessarily re-staged.

Doc

First produced by Theatre Calgary in 1984, Doc is perhaps Pollock’s most sophisticated script. The social issues addressed and the dramatic structure combine to create a dynamic and provocative drama. In 1986, Pollock won her second Governor
General's Award for Drama with *Doc*, and many of Canada's major regional theatres produced the play during the 1980s. In *Doc*, Pollock turns her attention toward family politics, following *Blood Relations* and *Generations*, rather than the larger public issues she addresses in *Walsh*, *The Komagata Maru Incident*, and *One Tiger to a Hill*. The play opens with Catherine, a writer, returning home to New Brunswick to see her father, Ev (Doc), who has recently suffered a heart attack. Father and daughter then revisit the past through memory, in hopes of “[c]learing things out” (12). This process of “goin’ through things” (12), as Ev says to Catherine when she arrives, brings to light several unresolved issues, in particular Bob’s death.

In an interview with John Hofsess prior to writing *Doc*, Pollock mentions how she does not like looking back at her personal past in New Brunswick, because it is “a ghost story” (“Families” 60). However, the bulk of her plays do look back, and from the 1980s onwards, not only is she writing “the same play over and over again” (Rudakoff and Much 210), but she continually revisits unresolved social issues that appear to stem from her family history—and in no other play of hers is this more evident than in *Doc*. Most of the characters in *Doc* are drawn from Pollock’s family history, and as Cynthia Zimmerman points out, the “autobiographical aspect of the play is undisguised” (*Playwrighting Women* 84). This is Pollock’s most personal play. Instead of re-examining public history and issues, the playwright draws her source material from memories of her workaholic father, her alcoholic mother, and her younger self while
growing up in New Brunswick in the 1940s and 1950s. Pollock then dramatizes these stored memories from childhood for the stage. In *Doc*, Katie (young Pollock) writes things down in her note book: “Everything’s down in here. I write it all down. And when I grow up, I’ll have it all here” (83). In her effort to understand and come to terms with her personal past, the mature Pollock translates the stored memories (or note book) for the stage. In revisiting unresolved domestic issues through personal memories, the playwright reinforces observations made by the group of Australian psychologists whose book-length study *Emotion and Gender: Constructing Meaning from Memory* suggests that childhood memories function as a store-house for unfinished business:

> What is remembered is remembered because it is, in some way, problematic or unfamiliar, in need of review. The actions and episodes are remembered because they were significant then and remain significant now. Their significance lies in the continuing search for intelligibility, necessitated by the unfamiliarity of the episode, the conflict and contradiction that might have been present, and the lack of resolution. (Crawford 38)

Through the character of Catherine, Pollock appears to dramatize her personal search for understanding of what took place during her childhood in Fredericton. The specific memories Catherine recalls would appear to be unresolved moments in need of revision for both the dramatized character and the playwright.
The central tensions in *Doc* are evidently borrowed from Pollock’s family history, but the playwright comments in a post-first production interview with Brian Brennan how the characters “aren’t really the people I know any more. They started out that way but now have grown past them” (“Pollock play confirms” D1). The process of distancing “herself from the material so that it would seem dramatically compelling” (Knelman 74), rather than biographical, can be detected in a change she made to an early version of the play. In an early draft, the character of Catherine was named Sharon and Katie was Sharnee, a name Pollock’s father used to call her as a child (Pollock, Box 54.6.4). The connections to Pollock’s life remain present in the current text but transmuted into theatre, as she pointed out in her Theatre Calgary Program note: “My father is Ev but Ev is not my father” (quoted by Zimmerman in *Playwrighting Women* 84). It is worth noting that, similar to *Walsh*, historical records are manipulated in *Doc* to increase dramatic effect. For example, Pollock’s grandmother died after her mother’s suicide; Dr. Chalmers remarried in 1956; Pollock was sixteen, not a young girl like Katie, when her mother died; her mother lived longer than indicated in the dramatic text. In manipulating her family’s history, in particular by making Bob and Katie younger, Pollock increases the characters’ “vulnerability and the play’s pathos” (Zimmerman, “Sharon Pollock: Transfiguring” 15).

An important question Pollock explores in *Doc*, through her memory structure, is whether or not Ev should be held morally responsible for Bob’s death. As in most of
Pollock’s plays, the answer to such a question is not fully resolved in the text. There is ample evidence that suggests Ev should be held responsible for the suffering and eventual death of his wife, yet his commitment to his patients and practice must also be considered in the moral inquiry: “should I have tended my own little plot when I looked round and there was so damn much to do--so much I could do--I did do! Goddamn it, I did it! You tell me, was I wrong to do that!” (81). Ev’s personal and professional dilemma resonates with the audience and potentially divides them between those who would champion Doc for his humanitarian efforts and those who scorn him for the neglect he showed his family. In an interview with Martin Knelman, Pollock describes how she was once accosted by a woman in a parking lot. The woman and her husband and another couple had recently seen *Doc* in Calgary and had an argument, because the “women felt Ev was a ‘tremendous asshole, and completely insensitive.’ The men thought he was a saint. ‘Which is it you wanted us to believe?’ the woman demanded” (Knelman 73).

Few of Pollock’s plays make it easy for the audience to know exactly what the playwright wants them to believe, and this is arguably one of the greatest strengths of her socially-conscious plays. Pollock generally provides enough supporting evidence to sustain an argument for both sides of the moral debate, and this makes it difficult to fully support one side or the other without some reservations. During an interview with Robin Metcalfe, Pollock points out that “in order for the play [*Doc*] to work, you have to give equal balance to everybody in it. I don’t want to judge them. I want to hold the mirror up
and say, what do you think?” (40)

Some light can be shed on the dilemma by looking at biographical information on Pollock’s family. Everett Chalmers was deemed a saint by some people in the province of New Brunswick. In his book *Gentlemen, Players and Politicians* Dalton Camp describes how Doc Chalmers was “worshipped by legions of patients, ... celebrated for his compassion,” and popular opinion considered him “the ablest practitioner in New Brunswick. He looked it. Trim, wiry, graceful in movement, direct and brusque in manner, Chalmers was a doctor’s doctor and a man’s man” (71-2). He was instrumental in setting up numerous rehabilitation centres all over the province for polio victims during an epidemic in the 1940s, and as a result saved hundreds of lives (Hofsess, “Families” 57). Furthermore, historical records indicate that Doctor Chalmers had provided the “medical and surgical care for all polio patients ... from 1941 to 1948 without remuneration” (Camp 83-84). Pollock provides insight into the character of Bob when she mentions to Hofsess how her own mother’s “whole personality was geared to striving. Yet suddenly she was expected to retire and play the role of the doctor’s wife--gracious, idle, nothing much to do” (“Families” 48). According to Pollock, her father was aware of his wife’s inner drive, her talents, and ambitions, but “it is characteristic of his blind spots, his masculine code, that he never encouraged her to have a career. He didn’t follow his insight to its logical conclusion” (48). Regarding the role of women, Pollock admits that there is “nothing wrong with being a wife and mother if that is what a
woman wants to do; but to be forced into the role, whether or not it fits or not, simply because you’re a woman and a man expects you to conform, can be a terrible form of imprisonment” (48).

The issue of socially determined roles for women is also raised in Generations. In this family drama Margaret Nurlin happily accepts her role as wife and mother, and when Bonnie marvels “at ... how you can submerge yourself in all this. Be nothing but ... an extension of this ... I would not want that to happen to me,” Mrs Nurlin responds: “I don’t feel submerged—I am tired on occasion” (188). Pollock’s contemporary perspective allows her to examine her mother’s generation from hindsight and be more critical of the patriarchal society. In accepting her role of wife and mother Mrs. Nurlin represents an exception in Pollock’s oeuvre because her plays mostly present women who feel trapped by their secondary role and cannot escape (Bob) or who resist the oppression and desperately seek ways out (Lizzie). In reference to Generations, Pollock states that she is not sure “whose side” she is on: “Part of me relates to Margaret and part of me is with Bonnie” (Wallace and Zimmerman 117). Judging from Pollock’s comments in interviews and the documented material on her family, the care and compassion that Ev ought to have given his family was evidently offered to his patients and practice. In presenting both the humanitarian doctor and neglectful husband side by side the playwright opens the debate rather than leads it to a single perspective. The layers with which Pollock embeds Ev’s moral inquiry provide one of the most
challenging metaphorical investigations the playwright has created to date because, as Zimmerman points out, the “handsome and commanding Doctor” is “at once idealizable and infuriating” (“Sharon Pollock: Transfiguring” 3). Part of the moral inquiry seeks to discover the forces that led to Bob’s suicide, and Ev’s lack of responsibility towards his family figures prominently in the investigation. Although he cannot be legally accused of causing the suicide, he is tried for social injustice.

The evidence gathered for Ev’s moral inquiry stems primarily from memories “arising associationally from the minds of the two present-time characters, Ev and Catherine” (Bessai, “Sharon Pollock’s Women” 135). The inquiry confirms “the notion that we do not perceive our world in a linear, chronological order” (Cowan 52), and from a historiographic perspective reminds us how memories are “a form of reshuffling, reforming, in short, mediating the past” (Hutcheon, “History” 181). In using the multiperson memory model, Pollock restages Catherine’s memories of her neglectful father, Ev’s memories of his dedication to saving lives, as well as their shared memories. Consequently, the individual and shared memories bring to light other potential reasons for Bob’s decline, aside from Ev’s neglect; for example, Ev’s mother’s disapproval of Bob, Katie’s frustration, and Bob’s personal struggle to accept the role of doctor’s wife. These factors collectively contribute to the suicide and should be taken into account in Ev’s moral inquiry.

A significant character who haunts Bob and potentially affects her descent into
alcoholism and suicide is Ev’s mother. Although she never physically appears on stage, Mrs. Chalmers’ disapproval of Bob carries significant weight in the play. Ev remembers and replays a discussion he had with Bob after they told his parents they were getting married:

BOB: She [Ev’s mother] implied I’d caught you by the oldest trick in the book.
EV: She didn’t.
BOB: “Why does a girl go into nursing?” Why to marry a doctor of course!

[]
EV: She had certain expectations, I’m not defending her, I’m just trying to explain how things are, or have been—Bob? Bob!
BOB: For years she’s been practicing, “I’d like you to meet my son, The Specialist.” She’ll be counting the months. (51-52)

Ev’s mother blamed Bob for the pregnancy, and the marriage prevented her son from becoming a specialist. Perhaps to prove his capabilities to his mother, Ev dedicated himself fully to his practice and soon turned into a workaholic, which meant that Bob saw less and less of her husband. His dedication to his patients led to the point where instead of being with his wife for the birth of Robbie, Ev was in Keswick trying to save “Frank Johnston’s kid [who] fell under a thresher” (64). Ironically, Mrs Chalmers’ desire
to see her son succeed in the medical profession results in his seeing less and less of her. She “is reduced to writing letters and crying on the phone” (89-90) to Oscar because she never sees her son. This loneliness likely led her to her death on the railroad bridge.

Because only Catherine and Ev exist in the play’s present frame, all the scenes from the past must be initiated and guided by these two characters. Hence, Bob’s perspective, voice, and potential reason for taking her life are filtered through the memories of her husband and daughter. However, this does not suggest that Bob’s voice is not heard. On the contrary, her voice emerges quite frequently through the memories of both Catherine and Ev. Several times in the play Catherine remembers her mother talking about her youth, trying to let her daughter know who she was before she became the doctor’s wife. Bob describes how she “was the smartest” in her family of eight kids, and how she “always won,” because she “could run faster and play harder than any boy” (62). In another instance, Catherine vividly remembers how her mother described a time when the future held no limits:

Listen Katie. I want I want to tell you—when—when I was little, do you know, do you know I would sit on our front porch, and I would look up, look up at the sky, and the sky, the sky went on forever. And I just looked up. That was me, Katie. That was me. (115)

Catherine recollects this same speech earlier in the play (63), which suggests that Bob was desperately trying to share both her aspirations and who she was before marrying Ev.
“This isn’t me you know,” she tells Katie. “This isn’t really me. This is someone else” (100), implying that her role as doctor’s wife masks part of herself. Bob’s career as an R.N. and her ambitions “To reach! To grow!” (63) were suppressed after she chose to fraternize with Doc at the hospital (47), became pregnant, and married the soon-to-be chief surgeon. After Catherine was born, Bob wanted “to go back to work” (54), but Ev wanted her to be at home with the baby (55). He insisted: “Look, you’re not just an R.N. anymore. You’re not Eloise Roberts, you’re not Bob any more. [You’re] my wife” (56-7). Bob becomes the object in Simone de Beauvoir’s terms, because she “is defined and differentiated with reference to man; she is incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other” (xvi). Trapped at home, her ambitions denied, Bob turned to alcohol for salvation.

She received moral support from Oscar, whom Ev describes as a “pseudo-doctor, a pseudo-husband to [Bob], and a pseudo-father to my kids” (122-3); however, Oscar’s physical attraction to Bob and his loathing of Ev’s neglect for his wife eventually leads to what is possibly an adulterous affair. Near the end of act one the audience sees Bob and Oscar dancing to ‘Auld Lange Syne’ and eventually kissing. This scene is remembered by Catherine and witnessed by Katie who “screams,” then “launches herself at OSCAR and BOB” (77). The scene breeches a further gap in the relationship between Bob and Katie, and now Oscar can no longer play the role of the trusted friend. With an absent husband, a daughter who disrespects her, and a companion whose feelings have gone a
step too far, Bob’s only salvation consists of hiring and firing maids, consuming alcohol and sleeping pills (or whatever else she can find), all in hopes of escaping her loneliness and misery. Bob’s sense of entrapment is highlighted through Pollock’s stage directions. Unlike Ev “who is free to exit and enter during the play” (Playwright’s Notes), and Katie who leaves home and decides herself when she’ll “come back” (124), Bob can only escape the playing space and the repressive social circumstances when she dies.

Bob herself is no doubt partially responsible for her own unhappiness. The energy consumed by wallowing in self-pity and reminiscing about her ambitions prior to meeting Ev could have been channelled more productively. Catherine confronts her about remaining in the unhappy situation:

CATHERINE: Why couldn’t you leave. Just leave!

BOB: Katie and Robbie.

CATHERINE: Did you care for them?

BOB: And your father? (94)

Unlike Oscar’s mother, who “had the good sense to get out” (35), Bob, like most women from her generation, stayed in the marriage and suffered the consequences. The issue of socially determined roles for women appears in several Pollock plays, and some of Pollock’s women resist the roles they are placed in and attempt to construct their own. (Most are unsuccessful and pay a high price for their transgressions—Nell in Moving Pictures, and Sarah Anne Pictou in The Making of Warriors, for instance. Those who are
apparently successful in escaping their pre-determined roles, like Miss Lizzie, are still faced with scrutiny—namely by Emma in *Blood Relations*.) Catherine’s other Gramma also has an impact on the outcome of Bob and Ev’s relationship. Bob describes her mother’s feelings to Oscar: “My mama’s so happy I married a doctor. I’m successful you see. I made something of myself” (70-1). Bob feels the pressure not to disappoint her mother, so she stays with her husband despite feeling trapped and unfulfilled.

In encouraging Oscar to take Bob on trips and escort her to various functions, Ev plays a pivotal role in fostering their possibly adulterous affair. In turn, this leads to Katie’s disdain for her mother and escalates the family tensions. Ev’s intense focus on his medical practice and the lack of support he gives to his wife figure prominently in Bob’s decline. The play presents Ev as an absent-father and absent-husband, and his domestic neglect is witnessed primarily through Catherine’s memories. Ev’s memories, on the other hand, present a mitigating perspective on his behavior, and through his recollections Pollock presents the side for the defense in the moral inquiry.

Ev recalls a heated debate he had with Oscar over who should be held responsible for Bob’s death. Oscar strongly implies that Ev’s neglect was the cause:

OSCAR: It shouldn’t have happened.

EV: It did.

OSCAR: She asked for goddamn little and you couldn’t even give her that. I could see it in my father, I can see it in you. You got your eye
fixed on some goddamn horizon, and while you’re striding towards that, you trample on every goddamn thing around you!

[]

EV: It was all my fault? Supposin’ it were, her death my fault, put a figure on it, eh? Her death my fault on one side--and the other any old figure, thousand lives the figure--was that worth it? Was it? I’m askin’ you a question! Was that worth it! (122-23)

This scene suggests that Ev admits he played a role in Bob’s death; however, his reasoning indicates that the sacrifice needs to be examined in a larger context. If he is to be tried, public as well as personal responsibility needs to be considered. According to Ev, the thousand lives he saved as a doctor outweigh his failure to support his family.

The first scene in act two has Catherine asking Ev the recurring moral question: “Was it worth it?” (79). He initially avoids the question, until Catherine clarifies it—“About Mummy” (80). At this point, Ev desperately seeks evidence to support his past actions, and he searches through the trunk for a photo of him and Valma in Minto with “[s]ix or seven kids standin’ outsida this Day Clinic” (80). Frustrated that he cannot find the photo, he tries to convince Catherine that his decision was anything but selfish: “I cared about those little kids! I looked into their faces, and I saw my own face when I was a kid [] was I wrong to do that? You tell me, was I wrong to do that!” (81). Ironically, Ev’s self-reflection suggests a kind of narcissism in his satisfaction in the work.
In an earlier scene between Catherine and Ev the same question arises, but this time the responsibility for Bob’s death is compounded by Ev’s mother’s death. The tension-filled scene begins with Ev holding onto the enigmatic letter from his mother, which may provide the reason why she walked across the train bridge. Father and daughter argue over their lack of communication, and Ev becomes defensive—“your father who gave his life to medicine because he believed in what he was doin’ is an asshole!” (31). Trying to justify his commitment to medicine, Ev recalls the plight of his family to Catherine: “My whole family never had a pot to piss in, lived on porridge and molasses when I was a kid” (31). Not willing to let her father off the hook, Catherine indirectly asks Ev if he realizes to what extent he was responsible for his mother’s death as well as his wife’s:

Catherine: And it all comes down to you sitting up here alone with Gramma’s letter!

Ev: I am goin’ through things.

Catherine: Why won’t you open it?

Ev: I know what it says. (32)

Catherine then grabs the unopened letter from Ev, and is about to open it, but fails to do so. Instead, she questions her father further:

Catherine: Did Gramma really walk out to meet it?

Ev: It was an accident.
CATHERINE: What was Mummy?

EV: You blame me for that.

CATHERINE: No.

EV: It was all my fault, go on, say it, I know what you think.

CATHERINE: It was my fault. (32)

At this point, Catherine reveals why she came home to revisit the ghosts from her past. She feels guilty for the way she treated her mother as a child and takes some responsibility for the suicide; therefore, Catherine’s coming home involves confronting, then forgiving, her own younger self as much as her father. As an adult, Catherine begins to understand her father’s single-minded dedication to his profession because she too acknowledges that she has little time for a relationship: “The work you know. Makes it hard” (28).

The most significant moment in the play that suggests Catherine is willing to forgive her father and put an end to the moral inquiry occurs in the final moments when father and daughter agree to burn the letter. This act of complicity can be read as freeing them both from past responsibilities because the letter, symbolically, still gave voice to Ev’s mother and Bob. Another interpretation is that the burning of the letter allows them to purge the past in order to create a possible future. Nevertheless, the play does not wholly acquit Ev. Both father and daughter may have taken the easy way out. In burning the letter, they can be accused of refusing to take responsibility.
The final image of the dying flame brings the play full circle because one of the first images we see is a match flaring as Bob lights a cigarette. (Pollock’s two most recent plays, *Angel’s Trumpet* and *End Dream*, also use fire on a darkened stage for the opening images. In *Angel’s Trumpet*, the fire represents the nature of Zelda’s death and in *End Dream* the Bob figure, Doris, lights a cigarette at the opening.) The flame in a black theatre is an effective theatrical device, but in the case of *Doc* the device reinforces one of the play’s dominant themes—reigniting past memories by bringing them to light, then burning the evidence to purge the past and free the living from the ghosts. Another significant visual image that reflects the play’s theme of remembering is the trunk. The trunk acts like a memory box because in it are stored the elusive letter, photos, memorabilia, and clothing (Playwright’s Notes). When the lights begin to rise at the opening of the play, Ev is seen seated by the open trunk holding the unopened letter “goin’ through things” (12). The next stage direction indicates that the lights slowly rise on Bob, then Oscar, and finally Katie, almost as if these three characters from the past were emerging out of the trunk. The memories from the past have symbolically been held shut in the trunk, but with the arrival of Catherine, father and daughter allow the relics from the past to emerge and they revisit the memories. The trunk also plays a crucial role in *Fair Liberty’s Call*. The playing space is bare when the actors enter and they fill the space and create the Roberts’ new home with pieces they take out of the wagon and trunk. Near the middle of the play, during the Remembrance Ceremony, the
Loyalist men extract costumes and souvenirs of war from the trunk in their effort to remember the Yorktown battle (36-7). The various relics taken from the trunk represent memories from the War of Independence, which some individuals would rather forgot; therefore, similar to *Doc*, the opening of the trunk stimulates various characters to revisit and reexamine past actions. Pollock also makes use of the trunk in *Moving Pictures* where the prop again comes to represent a storehouse of captured memories. The trunk serves a practical function in each of these plays, in that it stores costumes and props, but it also symbolically acts as a vehicle to unleash and disclose memories from the past. The trunk as a theatrical prop recalls traveling troubadours and street entertainers whose entire sets and stories rest within a box.

Reviews of recent productions of *Doc* mention how the set physically represents the play’s use of memory. Critic Brian Gorman notes that the director for the 1997 production at the Great Canadian Theatre Company in Ottawa, Jeanette Lambermont, uses the four levels of the house as staging areas, where a memory can begin its invasion of the present before descending to the main level and centre stage. At other times, two levels are in play at the same time, with the present and the past going from coexistence to interaction and back.

(1)

According to Anne Nothof, the stage design by Narda McCarroll for the 1999 production of *Doc* at the Studio Theatre, Edmonton, demonstrated
the distinct moments that embed themselves in memory. The set was constructed on several levels: on the lowest level downstage Doc Everett occupied an armchair, his patriarchal family throne; from a trunk placed in front of him, he took the habiliments of the past. Catherine also inhabited the foreground. The tiered levels upstage were the domains of the dead—her mother, Bob, and her father’s friend, Oscar—the furniture draped in dustcloths. As the young Katie, Catherine moved through these levels; as a woman she remained in a confrontational position with her father. (“Staging the Intersections” 3)

By incorporating different levels in the playing space for the present and remembered past, the sets in both of these productions provide the audience with a visual reminder that the evidence for the moral inquiry stems from memories. Furthermore, the coexistence of present and past scenes recalls Lowenthal’s notion that heightened memories “seem to bring the past not only to life, but into simultaneous existence with the present” (203). According to Pollock, what makes a play such as *Doc* convey its full effect happens in performance:

>a play is written to be performed. ... It’s in the element of the game-playing, role exchanging, and levels of audience. In *Doc*, it is actually seeing the past, the non-verbal communications, and the move from time zone to time zone. It creates and conveys something to the audience that
Two characters who receive little critical attention, yet figure in the moral inquiry, are Oscar and Robbie. Oscar is a mediating character who enables much of the evidence for the inquiry to emerge. For instance, he takes part in several insightful conversations with Katie that illuminate Bob and Ev’s past, and he becomes instrumental in exposing Bob’s vulnerability and Ev’s one-track mind. Oscar is the only character not based on Pollock’s family past, and similar to Harry, T.S., and the Actresses in Blood Relations and Saucy Jack, he is essentially a dramatic device to help facilitate the metaphorical investigation.

An important family member who is only mentioned but never physically appears in the play is Robbie, Catherine’s younger brother. His testimony in the inquiry could provide valuable evidence, but it appears as if he has completely severed his ties with the family. Ev never sees him despite the fact that they live in the same city, and Catherine never writes--“Everyone’s busy” (18). The play insinuates that Robbie has no desire to remain in contact with his father and sister. Even though this lack of communication does not indicate that he holds them responsible for Bob’s death, it indirectly suggests that he sympathized with his mother. Catherine remembers that when they were kids her mother would never get mad at Robbie and that she’d say, “Robbie’s just like her side of the family and I’m just like Daddy’s” (61). While remembering the events surrounding Ev’s mother’s funeral, Catherine describes how Bob “tripped at the
top of the stairs and she fell” (99). Katie purposely leaves her there and goes to her bedroom, but Robbie “screamed and cried and screamed and cried” (99). A few scenes later in the play Katie says to Bob that Robbie does not like seeing his mother drunk—“It makes him feel bad. He has to pretend that you’re sick” (113). Of course both these memories of Robbie’s behavior are interpreted by Katie, who in turn is remembered/recreated by Catherine and possibly Ev; as a result, Robbie’s testimonies are not only subjective in interpretation but also distant in memory and shaped by the present. Robbie’s testimony in the moral investigation is nearly impossible to determine given that his voice is filtered through at least two channels; nonetheless, from what the memories offer (his sympathy towards Bob) his testimony would lean towards accusing his father of neglect and his sister of a lack of respect or empathy. The silenced or absent son also figures in Moving Pictures. Shipman’s son, Barry, does not physically appear in the play, but through voice-overs the audience discovers that he is sent to military school at age six because his mother is too busy to care for him. According to Nothof, he is not sufficiently important in her life “to have even a corporeal existence on stage,” so he is evoked through a voice-over (“Staging the Intersections” 6).

The second inquiry that I investigate in Doc centres on Catherine’s moral struggle to forgive herself and to let go of the past. This metaphorical investigation is secondary in focus in the play but equally important. Her quest for self-understanding is closely
linked to her mother's death. As an adult she wants to understand what happened. What are the circumstances that led to her mother's suicide? Was she partially responsible? She comes home to see her ailing father, but she also returns to revisit the ghosts from the past in order to confront them. She is haunted by a few interactions she had with her mother as a child. A significant event, which is replayed twice in the play, involves Katie striking Bob and knocking her down (7-8; 114-5). The scene presents Bob demanding the liquor bottle from Katie. When Katie tells her mother she poured it down the drain, the scene builds to a breaking point and violence ensues. Pollock’s use of the split-character device (Katie/Catherine) illuminates this repeated scene of violence, especially the second time it is played, because the audience can physically observe the older Catherine trying to calm Katie and Bob down, desperately attempting to avoid the violent incident. A significant point about this incident is that Bob accuses Ev of striking her: “Your father hit me and I fell” (10). Katie replies, “You’re always lying. He didn’t hit you” (10). Physically he may not have, but metaphorically he does strike her and bring her down. Pollock’s text seems to suggest that Catherine sees Katie physically strike Bob, but as an adult she understands that the most damaging blow came from her father’s neglect.

At several points in the play Katie seeks the truth about her mother’s illness, and early on Ev suggests that it is a medical problem. “Tell that to Robbie,” Katie responds. “He wants to believe that. I want the truth” (7). Later in the play, she explodes in front
of her father: “You all say she’s sick, she isn’t sick. She’s a drunk and that’s what we should say!” (119). This passage is preceded by a painful memory of Catherine’s where she recalls Katie saying some awful and regrettable words to her mother:

KATIE: I hate you!

BOB: Not afraid to say it!

KATIE: I hate you and I wish you were dead!

CATHERINE: No

KATIE: It’s true!

CATHERINE: No.

KATIE: Someday you will be dead and I’ll be happy! (118-19)

Catherine realizes that she cannot change what took place in the past, no matter how loudly or often she says “No,” so instead of continuing to blame and torture herself for the way Katie treated her mother, she decides to gradually release the guilt. After revisiting the painful moments through memory, Catherine forgives herself, so that when Katie asks, “Would you want to have me?” Catherine is able to answer, “Yes, yes I would” (121). According to Jerry Wasserman, who uses the vocabulary of contemporary therapeutic literature, Catherine “embraces and accepts Katie--the child Katie within her” (“Daddy’s Girls” 32).

Catherine’s coming home involves confronting unresolved issues from the past, which leads her to forgive herself, but her return to New Brunswick also includes
forgiving her father. Early in the play, in reference to having a hospital named after him
for his medical accomplishments, Catherine tells her father, “I’m proud of you, Daddy”
(13). These words of support are highly symbolic because his life’s work in the medical
field received little praise from his own family. When Ev and Catherine agree to burn
the letter at the end of the play their unspoken gesture insinuates a mutual consent to put
the past behind; moreover, the gesture suggests that Catherine’s struggle to determine
which parent she resembles most is decided. According to Wasserman, she has “cast her
lot with the charismatic (and living) father” (Modern Canadian Drama (1994) 365). The
final stage directions support this claim: “CATHERINE looks at Ev and smiles” (126).
In forgiving both her younger self and her father for past actions, Catherine, it would
appear, makes the decision to stop feeling responsible for her mother’s death (as well as
blaming her father).

However, does Catherine side with her father so that she can move on with her
life? Or does she sincerely forgive him? Ev is seen in the beginning “goin’ through
things” in the trunk, figuratively unpacking memories from the past. When Catherine
arrives home, determined to find out what happened—to untangle the memories—she
comes to realize the impossibility of such a task. A single truth does not exist and her
memories and Ev’s differ; furthermore, their recollections have been jaded by the passing
of time and their present situation. As the play progresses, Catherine comes to realize
that the only way for her to escape or let go of these ghosts from the past is to close and

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lock the (memory) trunk, then throw away the key—the image of the burning letter is the concrete stage metaphor that Pollock actually employs. In this sense, the daughter forgives the father for the sake of her own personal survival, not necessarily because she believes he was innocent. Catherine’s moral inquiry leads her to release the painful memories, despite knowing full well that her actions and Ev’s (witnessed in the memories) had a significant impact on Bob’s death. By telling Ev that it was her own fault (32), Catherine acknowledges her (partial) responsibility in her mother’s death, but more importantly she provides an answer to what has been a tormenting question of guilt. Taking blame, giving the incident some kind of closure, allows her to move on with her own life.

The moral dilemma in Catherine’s inquiry contains little contradiction, because the investigation is primarily held by Catherine herself. Ev’s inquiry, on the other hand, consists of individual and shared memories, so subjectivity in the moral investigation is heightened, “letting separate voices, different perspectives on the shared situation, undermine any sense of a single meaning” (Zimmerman, _Playwrighting Women_ 89). Undermining the sense of a single meaning becomes equally complicated in _Fair Liberty’s Call_ where Pollock has an entire family remember and re-examine how the father, George Roberts, sacrifices his family for material interests.
Fair Liberty's Call

Fair Liberty's Call premiered in 1993 at the Stratford Festival, the third of Pollock’s works to be produced at the Festival (Walsh 1974, One Tiger to a Hill 1990). Set once again near her hometown of Fredericton, New Brunswick, Fair Liberty's Call examines the Loyalist settlement in 1784. Soon after the American Revolution, thousands of Loyalists fled the American colonies and crossed the border into British Canada to settle in present day New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Pollock’s play investigates how the struggle between independence and authority, the tension which sparked the 1776 Revolution, is replayed in New Brunswick. The play combines elements of Pollock’s dramas from the 1970s and the 1980s. The historical setting and public politics recall works such as Walsh and The Komagata Maru Incident, and at the same time the family tensions and personal politics are reminiscent of Generations, Whiskey Six Cadenza, Doc, and Blood Relations. However, rather than focussing the struggle on one individual, as in her earlier plays based on history, Pollock has an entire group revisit their past. The Roberts family, along with Major Williams, Daniel Wilson, Black Wullie, and Major John Anderson collectively remember the past, and respectively accuse and defend one another for past actions. Because the first-person memories arise from several characters, it is difficult to know with any certainty what actually took place.
in the past.

Memories dominate the action of the play yet, similar to *Saucy Jack* and unlike *Doc*, the characters in *Fair Liberty's Call* remain in the play’s present (1784) when recollecting the past. The play’s two acts each make use of a distinct structural device to channel the memories: act one contains a metatheatrical ceremony while act two makes use of a metaphorical trial. In *Drama, Metadrama, and Perception*, Richard Hornby considers ceremonies as a category of metadrama because a “ceremony within a play,” he argues, “involves a formal performance of some kind that is set off from the surrounding action” (49). The Remembrance Ceremony that runs through the play’s first act presents the Loyalists’ attempt to celebrate and revisit the battle of Yorktown when the world was suddenly turned upside down. With the use of flags, drums, uniforms, waistcoats, jackets, and helmets, the former members of Tarleton’s Rangers “fill the place up with things that speak of the past,” because how “the hell’s a man to remember” and “know who he is” without “no surroundin’s?” (*Fair Liberty's Call* 36-7). The Ceremony is continually interrupted, because each individual remembers differently and there appears to be no consensus on exactly what events they wish to remember.

In the second act, the Loyalist men are metaphorically placed on trial by Major John Anderson for their actions at Waxhaws. The American Anderson demands that one of the Loyalists step forward and take the blame for the murder of his fourteen-year-old brother, a member of the defenceless Rebels slaughtered at Waxhaws by Tarleton’s
Loyalist Rangers. At gunpoint, the patriot/rebel seeks justice, and he intends to execute one of the Loyalists in exchange for his brother’s death—“murder for murder” (61). This sets off one of the play’s moral inquiries, and according to director Guy Sprung the investigation in the second act “forces each of the Loyalist immigrants to embark on his or her journey of introspection and self-confession” (Introduction, *Fair Liberty’s Call* 8).

The collective remembering in the Ceremony and the search for who is most responsible for the death of Anderson’s brother provide a framework for the Loyalists to share and re-examine past actions. The women, aside from Eddie/Emily, are not directly part of the Ceremony nor the trial, yet this does not mean they do not have reason to remember. On the contrary, Joan and Annie are continually preoccupied with the past—Joan for the loss of her sons and her home in Boston, and Annie for her betrayal of the British spy, John Andre.

The need to tell, “to tell before someone else tells; to correct a former mistelling” (17), begins in the opening segment of the play where the members of the Roberts family introduce themselves, then try to explain their past. The father openly states to the audience, “If you wanna know, I’ll tell ya. Me, I’m George Roberts, formerly of Boston and one of that city’s foremost citizens and merchants” (21). A few lines later, Annie explains what happened to her two brothers: “He was nineteen, Richard, my older brother. Nineteen when he died. And Edward? My younger brother Edward? Killed himself at the farm in Tarrytown” (21). Pollock’s opening segment provides the
audience with some historical background and a context for the Roberts' family history. Similar to Walsh, *The Komagata Maru Incident* and *One Tiger to a Hill*, the rememberers in *Fair Liberty's Call* address the audience directly at the opening of the play. However, what is unique about this later memory play is that Pollock has an entire group addressing the audience with their recollections, which challenges the audience to know who to listen to, believe, or trust. While the characters in *Fair Liberty's Call* literally introduce themselves and the historical situation, the bare stage is gradually transformed into a semblance of the Roberts' property where the Remembrance Ceremony takes place. Therefore, at the end of the opening segment, the stage is physically ready and the history of the Roberts' is explained. The audience is prepared for the debate that ensues.

Visually, Pollock opens her play with a bare stage with the floor radiating "*in a dark-hued swirl of colour,*" representing the "*virgin land*" (19). However, even though the space appears empty, "*an aura of foreboding, a sense of the unseen*" fills the space, and amid the darkness there "*are several lightning-like flashes*" followed by "*the sound of a rolling rumble of thunder, or what might be thunder, for all sound is impressionistic, even surrealistic, rather than realistic*" (19). The imagistic yet specific stage directions imply that the land the Loyalists are about to claim has a story to tell. The story and importance of the landscape figure prominently in other Pollock plays; for example, in *Generations*, the playwright personifies the landscape by suggesting that "*THE LAND* is
a character revealed by the light and shadow it throws on the Nurlins's lives” (141).

Early in the play Joan alludes to seeing a “red woman ... watchin’” (20), then a little later she finds the “bones of a man” in the earth and not far away the “red woman stands in the glade of trees, and she watches” (27). Near the end of the play, when the characters begin to clear the space, returning it “to some semblance of its virgin state at the beginning of the play” (78), Joan once again sees the red woman under the glade of trees (79). Through the representation of the red woman Pollock insinuates that there were indigenous people inhabiting the land, and arguably the entire play could stem from the memory of the Native people for whom the land was of the utmost importance. (Charlie Running Dog, the indigenous figure in Generations, is described by Pollock as also having a deep relationship with the land: “Time and the elements have so conditioned and eroded his skin that he looks less like a Native Canadian, and more like some outcropping of arid land”[141].) Similar to the Sikh woman on board the Komagata Maru, the lone figure of the red woman in Fair Liberty’s Call represents an entire people, likely the Micmacs and/or Malecites who were settled in the Fredericton area hundreds of years before the arrival of the Loyalists (Nothof, “Crossing Borders” 484). From under the glade of trees she sees the Loyalists arrive, fight amongst themselves (almost replicating the War of Independence), and eventually take over lands once inhabited by the indigenous and Acadian people. The red woman is on the
periphery, observing the Loyalists arriving and carrying with them bundles of belongings, "a wagon, piled high with barrels, trunks and rough pieces of wood" (19). In addition to these belongings they also bring new ways of thinking (inherited from Britain and the American colonies) in their attempt to build a new country, which may not necessarily work here. The red woman and her people, like the blacks who were "run out of Shelbourne" (56), are displaced from their land and homes by the Loyalists and they are no longer seen (with the exception of Black Wullie), only heard--usually by "a dry rattle" (27) sound that periodically emerges during the play. The social injustices against the indigenous people and blacks are not as central in *Fair Liberty's Call* as they are in some of her earlier plays, yet Pollock's desire to address racist acts is still apparent in the text despite not being fully developed in the moral inquiry.

On a political level, *Fair Liberty's Call* focuses on examining "a country comin' into bein'" (20). Through her play Pollock implies Canada's need to find a way to differentiate itself politically and socially from Britain and the United States, and the women characters express the playwright's politics most vividly. Eddy/Emily, Annie, and Joan offer an alternative to the hierarchical British model of "position and placement" (33), "worth and class" (48), and the "fiefdom of a few" (48). Their alternative vision for the new country rests on the ability of people to exercise "freedom of choice" (28) and "freedom of speech" (33), and the idea that "talk" rather than "killing" (71) be the means to solve conflicts. Because this approach challenges the elite,
racist, and corrupt approach of the Committee of Fifty-five, the leader of the Fifty-five, Major Williams, attempts to squash the alternative group, charging them with "[s]editious and scandalous libel" (32). Pollock’s romantic ending (Walker 141) in Fair Liberty’s Call brings to light the power of choice and words. For instance, Annie makes it clear to Anderson that he does not need to kill a Loyalist to revenge his brother’s death, rather he’s “choosin’” to do so (71). For her part, Joan lets Anderson know that he “can go now” (75)—no one is forcing him to detain the Loyalists. Joan and Annie’s words successfully provoke the rebel/patriot to leave peacefully. The use of words and compassion, Pollock suggests through her play, works much better than wars and corrupt laws, which the men display through their inability to deal with Anderson. Commenting on the Stratford production, Owen Brady points out how Guy Sprung’s staging counterpoints “male and female principles” (274). He describes:

At the tip of the thrust stage, deep in the audience, the men debate inconclusively and somewhat comically, wrangling about their individual value and the politics of selecting a sacrificial victim. Upstage, in a somber key, the poetic and compassionate memories of Joan and Annie ... work their healing magic on Wayne Best’s implacable American [Anderson], dissuading him from revenge. (274)

According to Zimmerman, “the women provide the play’s emotional centre. ... [T]he play’s real subject is not the past battles, which preoccupy the men, but how to create a
'place', a home” (“Sharon Pollock: Transfiguring” 12). In order to achieve the desired home, Pollock makes each of her characters search and cleanse their personal past. Compromises must be made and the past put aside, and only then might the present and future look hopeful. The only character who leaves embittered by the alternative approach is Major Williams. His “fiefdom of a few” (48) was destroyed in America and it is again threatened in the new country. His disgruntled exit, which incited a “laugh of bitter recognition” in the Stratford production (Brady 274), suggests that the struggle is not completely over.

In Walsh and The Komagata Maru Incident the victims and victimizers are readily recognizable, but with Fair Liberty’s Call such categorizations are not so straightforward. Pollock includes various levels of victimization, and in turn, several of the victims become victimizers themselves. The entire group can be viewed as victims of the Revolution, because with the American victory at Yorktown, the British Loyalists were forced to leave their homes. In Anderson’s case, the loss of his brother in the Waxhaws massacre marks him as a victim too. But if all of the characters in the play are victims, then who are the victimizers? In order to depict a civil struggle, Pollock must create at least two sides within the exiled Loyalists. Two distinct factions are represented in the play: Major Williams speaks for the Committee of Fifty-five Families and Eddie/Emily spearheads the opposing alternate movement. Historical records indicate
that in 1783 a group of fifty-five Loyalists from New York, in an attempt to replicate the position of privilege they enjoyed in America, petitioned for five thousand acres of land each, suggesting that the new colony was in need of an elite to lead and organize the thousands of new Loyalists arriving in New Brunswick. This attempt to establish a social hierarchy was opposed by a group of six hundred Loyalists who presented a counter-petition and successfully overthrew the elite Committee of Fifty-five (Moore 144). Pollock takes some dramatic license with the historical records by suggesting that the Committee of Fifty-five succeeded in taking ownership of the land in the Fredericton area. As a result, a power imbalance occurs in the play. Those without land are subject to the whims of the landowners, because “[l]and is money and money’s land” (32). In this sense, Major Williams becomes a significant victimizer over the rest of the characters; in order to gain any land privileges you “need to get in with the Committee” and “Major Abijah Williams is the agent for the Fifty-five” (21).

A recurring theme in *Fair Liberty’s Call* involves the loss of innocent lives, and the unnecessary death of innocent people is played out symbolically within the Roberts family. Pollock metaphorically represents the conflicts of the American Revolution through the Roberts family. The family as a microcosm of society is especially fitting, Anne Nothof suggests, since the Revolution resembled a civil war rather than a struggle against an external group (“Crossing Borders” 481). The Roberts family encapsulates the divided loyalties within America during the War of Independence, where “sons fought
against fathers, brothers against brothers, and often individuals or families would change sides to survive” (481).

Not as overt as in *Doc*, but at the same time still recognizable, is Pollock’s continuous grappling to understand her parents in *Fair Liberty’s Call*. Her father’s lack of responsibility to his family and her mother’s decline are played out once again through the Roberts family. (The name Roberts no doubt reflects Pollock’s mother’s maiden name, a name she traces back to “the Seventeen Hundreds,” according to Bob in *Doc*: “the blood of Red Roberts! ... A pirate, with flamin’ red hair and a flamin’ red beard who harboured off a cove in P.E.I!” [62-63].) *Fair Liberty’s Call* also places the father figure, George Roberts, under investigation for social injustice against his family. Like Ev’s inquiry, the evidence for George’s moral investigation strongly suggests that he is guilty of domestic irresponsibility, to the point where he jeopardizes the lives of his family. However, unlike Ev’s passion for his medical practice, George’s personal and political ambitions to acquire land and status are much less worthy and much more selfish. His wife, Joan, goes mad, rather than committing suicide, but like Bob, her victimization is largely the result of her husband’s unsympathetic and one-track mind. The moral investigation of George concerns his role and responsibility in the death of the two sons (Richard and Edward) and the sacrifices made by the daughters (Emily and Annie). Even though the victimizer, George, cannot be legally tried for these family sufferings, the evidence from the text provides ample reason to indict him for moral and
Whereas in *Walsh* and *The Komagata Maru Incident*, Major Walsh and Inspector Hopkinson are clearly the central figures of the drama, *Fair Liberty's Call*, much like *One Tiger to a Hill*, does not necessarily present a dominant protagonist. Each member of the ensemble has his or her own story to tell and all of them undergo some sort of moral investigation for past actions; however, George Roberts's irresponsibility towards his family is the most pronounced object of moral inquiry and the one which ties several of the play's themes together. Four first-person rememberers gather the evidence for George's metaphorical inquiry, and, as in *Doc*, most of the memories support the argument of the father's irresponsibility. Joan's memories, along with those of her two daughters, provide ample reason to try George for immoral, wrongful, and selfish behavior. Like Ev, George defends his position, and tries to explain his cause, despite receiving little support from his family. The case becomes one-sided with the women's perspective highly favored, but George's change of heart near the end of the play problematizes what appears to be an easy verdict in the moral investigation. At the close of the play he appears to recognize his past mistakes and the women seem to grant him forgiveness.

The older daughter, Annie, remembers how “it was impossible for Richard to sit down at table with Father without havin' words, ugly words, and yet Richard believed lions could lie down with lambs, and he saw no contradiction in that” (67). George, on
the other hand, could not tolerate his eldest son espousing “separation and independence” (25), and in order to maintain his position and interest in “English Parliament” (25) and his upstanding status as a leading Loyalist merchant in Boston, he “drove Richard out” (24), Joan recalls. Joan and Annie vividly recall the day Richard left, while George tries to stifle the memory:

JOAN: And Annie was there when you drove Richard out.

ANNIE: I was there in the hallway.

GEORGE: Annie, please.

JOAN: And Em’ly and Edward at the top of the stairs and all of them watchin’ their own father drive their own brother out, drive Richard out!

And he went!

ANNIE: But he stopped.

JOAN: At the end of the walk. And he turned. Even then, I don’t think he’d have gone, but his father, he slammed the door. (24)

Joan’s memories express the pain of seeing Richard leave, and she holds her husband fully responsible for her son retreating. Richard’s departure from home led to his eventual death while fighting with the Rebels. In the same scene the women continue to remember and share more incriminating evidence against George. Annie describes how Richard was taken prisoner and “held in the Long Island Prison Ships,” and Joan recalls how she urged her husband to use his political influence and
go “to New York! Get leniency for Richard!” (25), but he refused. George’s moral crime against Richard soon involves Annie, who in an effort to soothe her mother’s pain takes it upon herself to see Richard in prison:

I saw him once in the prison ship. I made my way there. I offered somethin’. Them in charge wanted it. I gave it to them. It meant nothin’ to me. When I saw him, my brother, he told me the worst fightin’ he’d seen up ‘til then was ‘tween two prisoners over a rat. He looked so thin. He laughed. (67)

Unlike her father who feared “a tarrin’” (34) and public humiliation, Annie sacrifices both her body and self-respect to see her brother and help her mother. Joan recalls how Annie “lay on her back and she spread out her legs so she could see [Richard]. I begged him, [referring to George] I begged him, but he wouldn’t” (71). In refusing to go to the prison to plead for Richard’s cause, George indirectly causes Annie’s sexual sacrifice as well as initiates his wife’s decline into near madness. For his part, George offers little defence against the accusations, nor any remorse for leading Richard to his death. To maintain his position and place in society, he felt compelled to get rid of his rebel son. His self-serving thinking is exemplified after the Major sarcastically comments that what he “lacked was a son in the Rebel army,” to which George responds: “I cut that boy out of my heart” (34).

In hopes of politically smoothing things out, George then sacrifices his
younger son, Edward, by encouraging him to fight with the Loyalists. Once again Joan accuses her husband of forcing their son to fight—"he made him sign up! His father thought that was going to balance things out! Richard there, Richard there, one Rebel son, and then poor Edward, the Loyalist" (25). In response to being accused of coercing Edward to fight, George claims that "Edward would do what was right. Do what he wanted" (24), and he "wanted to go!" (25). After Edward returns home from the massacre at Cherry Valley, he commits suicide, because he is unable to deal with the bloody battle he experienced. Edward was soon buried, but to protect the father's self-interests the cross bore the name of Emily (71), who was deemed to have died of "the smallpox" (24). Emily then, Joan remembers, "picked up Edward's gun put on Edward's jacket, cut off her hair, joined the Legion, Tarleton's Loyalist Legion, Bloody Banastre Tarleton's Bloody Loyalist Legion! Because! Her father said!" (24). Emily transforms her identity and becomes Eddie, a Loyalist soldier, for the sake of her father. In his defence, George claims that Emily "wanted to do it! Because it was necessary" (24). However, a later exchange between father and daughter sheds light on how Eddie/Emily really felt:

EDDIE: I went to war for you.

GEORGE: You know how that came about.

EDDIE: And here I am.

GEORGE: It was the only way.
EDDIE: That's what you said.

GEORGE: It wasn't just for me, it was for Annie and your mother.

EDDIE: What about Em'ly?

GEORGE: You wanted to go! You offered to go! How else were we to survive with the English down our throats 'cause of Richard, and the Rebels at our heels 'cause of me? Was you said you'd go, you said it!

EDDIE: I did. (73)

Eddie/Emily suggests that it was her decision to fight for the Loyalists, but her reason for doing it was to please her father. After experiencing the war, she cannot forgive him for allowing her to figuratively kill Emily for his self-interest. She was "willing to die" (73) for her father then, but she is not willing to keep sacrificing herself for him now. In the play's present, she refuses to withhold her feelings about Major Williams and his corrupt Committee of Fifty-five, even though she realizes how her opposition may jeopardize her father's chances of obtaining land. Eddie/Emily is not willing to compromise her social responsibility, so she publicly challenges Williams by writing a "seditious and scandalous" (32) letter in the Gazette as well as openly admitting that she killed Frank Taylor, a member of the Fifty-five (69). Despite Eddie/Emily's strong opposition to Williams' Committee, George still tries to profit from his daughter's military services in hopes of acquiring land, metaphorically
prostituting his daughter for his self-interest. George’s desperate desire to obtain land also provokes him to prostitute his other daughter, Annie, when he strongly suggests that she marry Major Williams: “Humour an old man, it’s not such a bad idea. He’s in thick with the Fifty-five, and they’re the ones to be thick with if you want to thrive in this neck of the woods” (29). (This incident echoes Mr. Borden’s suggestion that Lizzie marry Johnny MacLeod in Blood Relations [38-39].)

The sacrifices George asks of his daughters, compounded with the deaths of Richard and Edward, have sent Joan into near madness. Similar to Ev, George has a domestic blind spot and neglects to notice (or simply does not care about) the pain he causes Joan by sacrificing their children. The loss of her children is combined with the loss of her home in Boston, and she explains in the opening segment how New Brunswick “is a barren place. This wasn’t home, isn’t home, is no place I know, no, no place I know” (20). In her effort to come to terms with her losses, Joan recalls the past through a collection of disassociated memories, and for most of the play she appears to be in a different world from the rest of the characters. In the Stratford production, according to Brady, Joan (Janet Wright) is an “earthy figure” whose “poetical madness” seems “eerily disconnected from the political struggle among the male characters, yet her healing compassion points the way toward a brave new world” (274). Joan’s memories serve to accuse her husband of neglect, but at the same time the remembering and re-articulating of the past appears to be therapeutic, enabling Joan to release some of the pain.

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George's desire to regain his former position and acquire land in the new country blinds him to his domestic responsibility. His irresponsibility towards his family has a deep impact on his wife's well being; however, near the end of the play the father appears to realize the pain his family suffered because of his material and selfish interests. Moments before the rebel Anderson is going to sacrifice Annie because the Loyalist men fail to decide who will be the scapegoat, George breaks down:

Choose me! I'm an old man! I can't pull my weight! I left my life in Boston and I turned my back on my eldest son. I turned my back on Richard and Edward, I Choose me. (73)

Although not a full apology, George's willingness to sacrifice himself for the other Loyalists, including his family, makes it clear that he finally begins to recognize his past mistakes.29 His breakthrough is paralleled by the dawn light growing (73) and according to Zimmerman, "George poignantly confirms the values Joan espoused all along [family]" ("Sharon Pollock: Transfiguring" 12).

The ending of the play, which pairs off the couples in romantic comedy fashion, suggests that the family comes to some sort of agreement, and they are ready to move into the future. Daniel and Annie talk of marriage and leave the space together (77), Eddie/Emily and Wullie agree to "stay about here" and "make a place" together (79), and finally George's change of heart allows him to express what
appear to be sincere words to his wife: “I do love you. You know that, don’t you? I love you” (77). George’s moral inquiry brings out plenty of evidence against him, but the question of whether or not his willingness to sacrifice himself at the end of the play and apologize for past mistakes absolves him of his crime is overshadowed by the hopeful ending. When Joan notices “a small indentation in the dirt” (79), Pollock seems to suggest that the barren place is habitable and the possibility for a new home exists. The painful memories have been revisited, responsibility acknowledged, so the family appears to be ready to accept and forgive past actions and live for the present and future. As in Doc, the survivors in Fair Liberty’s Call appear to purge the past in order to live in a possible future. Instead of burning a letter, the Roberts family will cover up the past with the symbolic earth, despite knowing that underneath lay the bones of a tragic history.

The second metaphorical inquiry in Fair Liberty’s Call that I discuss concerns Annie and whether or not she should be held morally responsible for John Andre’s death. John Andre, “travellin’ under the name of Anderson” (42), was a British-born spy who managed to obtain the “West Point plans of defense” (75) from the Rebels. The night before he was to give the plans to the Loyalists, John Andre spent a night in Tarrytown with the Roberts family. Pollock’s text suggests that Annie and John Andre became intimate very quickly, so that when she “convinced
him” (74) to take the right road (Rebels) instead of the left road (Loyalists), as he had been instructed, he trusted her. Her betrayal cost him his life, because John Andre was hanged shortly after he was captured. Similar to Catherine in Doc, Annie undergoes a metaphorical inquiry and her own memories of the past provide the central evidence to determine her moral responsibility in the crime.

When Annie made the decision to betray John Andre, she was “thinkin’ of Arnold, not the Arnold who betrayed the Rebel cause, but the Arnold who betrayed my brother Richard” (74). Annie’s attempt to redeem the loss of her brother causes (or highly influences) the death of John Andre, and her moral inquiry attempts to determine her level of responsibility. In a conversation with John Anderson, who shares characteristics with John Andre, Annie articulates her moral dilemma: “Do you think a person should be held responsible for the hangin’ of a man, a man she found charmin’, ‘cause she just kept sayin’ ‘right’ ‘stead of ‘left’?” (74). Anderson cannot answer the moral question, but when he was asked a similar question by Annie earlier, he responded by saying that “[t]ill I’m sure I’ve all the facts, I hesitate to state an opinion” (44). All the facts and circumstances that led to John Andre’s death will never be known, but in Annie’s present dealings with Anderson and in his desire to revenge his brother’s death, Pollock suggests an alternative to “murder for murder” (61). Pollock’s text implies that now that the war is over and the Loyalists are settling in a new land with new rules, there is no reason to perpetuate such
atrocities. Eddie/Emily mentions how, during the war, to stop and think meant death, but now, “I ask, what did we do it for?” (49). Annie asks herself the same question, because she knows her betrayal of John Andre “changes nothin’ for Richard” (75)—he was already dead. Her dilemma becomes instrumental in the rebel’s final decision, because by recollecting and reexamining her story of revenge and betrayal she manages to persuade Anderson to “end the cycle of bloody reprisals” (Nothof, “Crossing Borders” 484). Anderson’s brother, like Richard, is already dead, and nothing will change that fact. Annie convinces Anderson that the solution lies not in revenge (as she regretfully did earlier with John Andre to revenge her brother’s death), but instead the focus should be on “lookin’ to a better world for our children. That’s the only way to serve our brothers” (75).

Annie’s moral inquiry, like Catherine’s in Doc, illustrates how both daughters acknowledge their responsibility in the crimes from the past, but in order to move on with their lives in the present they need to forgive themselves. Ev and George are both reluctant to accept responsibility for neglecting their families, yet the evidence against them is difficult to counteract. At the end of Doc, Ev does not express any true remorse for sacrificing his family; whereas with George, the text suggests that the father figure begins to accept the blame and appears ready to change. However, George’s crimes are much more heinous than Ev’s. He sacrificed the lives of his children to protect his material interests, whereas Ev’s sacrifice was to save the lives
of people in New Brunswick (or so he says!). It is worth noting that in both plays it is the women who come forward and provide the opportunity for forgiveness. Catherine accepts and forgives Ev’s irresponsibility to his family, and Joan’s, Annie’s, and Emily/Eddy’s actions allow George to partially redeem himself for his selfish acts. The women in the two plays symbolically burn and bury the social injustices inflicted by the father figure in their efforts to ensure “a better world for [their] children” (75).
Chapter 5

Conclusion

A past beyond recovery seems to many unbearable. We know the future is inaccessible; but is the past irrevocably lost? Is there no way to recapture, re-experience, relive it? We crave evidence that the past endures in recoverable forms.

-David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Place* 14

This project began with a curiosity about the memory play. That initial query led me to Sharon Pollock and her use of moral inquiries within the memory structure. My research and exploration provides an approach to study Pollock's memory plays; however, even though I focus on one playwright, many of the ideas and concepts discussed are transferable to other writers who make use of memory theatre. In this sense, this project hopefully opens the door to some much needed research in the
fascinating field of the memory play. In order to fully appreciate Pollock’s work, an understanding of her preoccupation with memory and moral dilemmas appears central, and the objective of this study is to examine how these two concepts are applied in six of her plays. In my examination, it becomes evident that Pollock grapples with a similar issue in practically all of her dramatic works. An individual re-examining the past in hopes of understanding, justifying, and/or defending their actions is central to each of the plays investigated in this thesis. The memory play becomes a vehicle or structure through which to stage the moral inquiries, so that the circumstances and forces that brought the individuals to the breaking point can be illuminated in the re-staging of the past. The severity of the social injustices and the structures of the various memory models differ in the individual plays; nonetheless, it becomes apparent that the playwright’s quest for social justice lies at the heart of her theatre. Her use of memory allows her characters to look back and re-examine their actions from a present situation, which enables them to better understand their present state of mind. What the various memory structures also introduce is the subjectivity of historiography. Pollock deliberately demonstrates that the presentation of history is a reconstruction and our interpretation relies heavily on our angle of observation. Fact, truth, and objectivity about the past are depicted by Pollock as myths for the most part, and questionable at best. Her plays deliberately suggest that how we come to know and understand the past relies on personal observation, which is riddled with subjectivity. The characters in Pollock’s memory
plays look to the past—their own or others’—to tell them who they are, to solve old conflicts and mysteries, to redeem their reputation, to find explanations which will prevent similar tragedies in the future, to help them understand what they have been through. Some find what they are looking for; others do not. The inquiries find some characters morally responsible, yet most often there are reservations—circumstances make the culpable actions of the past partially pardonable. Pollock deliberately maintains a level of ambiguity, so that her audience leaves the theatre with questions rather than definite answers.

The different uses to which memory is put in these plays (from personal to societal), the different strategies employed by the rememberers, and the many differences in the plays themselves should not lead one to wonder over their lack of commonality, but to recognize therein the great complexity and mystery of memory and morality itself. The complexity of Pollock’s memory plays develops substantially from the earlier historical examinations (Walsh, The Komagata Maru Incident) to her more personal dramas (Doc, Moving Pictures), and her desire to find more subtle and imagistic ways to play with time and space is increasingly apparent in the later, more personal works. The non-linear sequencing and multiple time frames within Pollock’s recent works no doubt challenge her audience. These sophisticated developments in her structure parallel the complexity and intricacy of her content; however, all of her plays return to “the necessity of making moral choices ... and being forced to live with the results” (Pollock in Metcalfe 40).
Analyzing her plays through the lens of a moral inquiry yields a greater appreciation and clarification of the complex and layered memory structure.

My thesis examines a mixture of her earlier, middle, and later plays and traces the playwright's gradual development of the memory models as well as the growing complexity of the moral inquiries. A search for social responsibility is consistent throughout her plays yet, as mentioned by other Pollock scholars, a noticeable shift from public to more domestic issues is apparent. In turn, this shapes the repercussions of the moral decisions made by the characters. For instance, Walsh's decision to follow his duty rather than humanity has larger social consequences than Shipman's more personal decision to pursue her art at all costs, while neglecting her family. The urgency of the dilemma remains similar, but as Pollock moves more inwards with her plays, arguably closer to her personal story, the ramifications become increasingly domestic and personal. However, a closer look at the artist or family does not necessarily diminish Pollock's quest for social justice. Her more personal inquiries extend themselves to larger public concerns, such as the role of women and artists in society. Her later, more personal memory plays coincide with the use of multiple rememberers, which results in more perspectives from which to examine the moral dilemma. In all of her plays, Pollock makes an effort to show both sides of the dilemma, but her later works are less polemical and the multiple memories allow different points of view to surface more subtly.

In dividing Pollock's memory plays into three separate categories I suggest
models by which to study this genre. The three models are flexible and each play helps define and stretch the parameters; however, the effect of having a third-person rememberer differs from having a first-person one or multi-person rememberers. For instance, in comparison to the third-person rememberer who functions like a storyteller or narrator, the first-person rememberer can exist in both the present and past frames simultaneously, and this often provides a dual meaning to individual scenes, which complicates and layers the experience for the audience. Significant differences also occur with multi-person memory plays, because having more than one person responsible for the re-staging of the past sheds light from various angles on the moral inquiry. The power to manipulate time and space is shared among characters and consequently the play can shift time frames much more easily. The multiple perspectives do not necessarily solve the moral dilemma more readily yet they offer multiple ways of looking at the crime or social wrongdoing.

This study does not propose to find the meaning of, or provide a formula for, Pollock’s work; instead, the analysis offers a lens through which to investigate the memory plays in hopes of shedding light on the playwright’s socially conscious theatre. The connections I make between historiography, inquiry, and memory in Pollock’s plays serve to illuminate the texts, so that a greater appreciation and understanding can occur when examining her sophisticated dramaturgy. I have found the plays to be as complex, intriguing, and rewarding to study as their common subjects: memory, inquiry, and history.
Notes

1. See Herbert Lindenberger's discussion of periods of intense national consciousness, where he shows how these periods produced numerous historical dramas in England and Germany. (7)

2. The Prairie Players were a touring company in Alberta, the forerunner of Theatre Calgary. (Zimmerman, *Playwrighting Women* 95)

3. *The Komagata Maru Incident* was produced by the Vancouver Playhouse, yet it was staged at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre as part of the Playhouse's "New Series." The published text by Playwrights Co-op suggests that it was produced at the Playhouse; however, a few people who attended the opening (Malcolm Page and Errol Durbach) and the *Canadian Theatre Review Yearbook 1976* confirm that the play was performed at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre (385).

4. During an interview with Wallace and Zimmerman Pollock comments on this irony: "I've always been fortunate to be produced by major Regional Theatres. If I think of who's produced me in the alternate theatre, I'd have to admit that I really haven't come out of that scene. I came out of the Vancouver Playhouse and Theatre Calgary. ... I suppose ... I identify with the alternate scene more than the main stage scene. I may get produced on the main stage but I don't generally like main stage programming" (116).

5. In their critical work, Diane Bessai, Cynthia Zimmerman, and John Hofsess, among others, have noted this shift of focus in her plays from public to private.


7. Much of my information on inquiries in Canada stems from conversations with two Prince Edward Island lawyers: Frank Levandier, a lawyer for the provincial government on Prince Edward Island and a Law Instructor at the University of Prince Edward Island, and Ewan Clark, a litigation lawyer with Cox, Hanson, O'Reilly, Matheson in Charlottetown.

8. Canadian plays written in recent decades that make use of the memory device include *The Occupation of Heather Rose, The Glace Bay Miners' Museum, Memories of You* (Wendy Lill), *Play Memory* (Joanna Glass), *Lilies* (Michel Marc Bouchard), *Albertine, in Five Times* (Michel Tremblay), *Of the Fields, Lately* (David French), *The Hope Slide* (Joan MacLeod). I have only found one book length study discussing the memory play: *Memory-
9. For specific information regarding these dramatic movements, see Sherrill Grace’s *Regression and Apocalypse* for expressionism (particularly the first chapter), Kenneth Cornell’s *The Symbolist Movement* for symbolism, and John Willett’s *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht* for epic theatre.

10. The structure of Ibsen’s *Peer Gynt* comes close to the parameters of the contemporary memory play.

11. Heidi Holder mentions in her essay “Broken Toys” how *Walsh* can be read as an extended flashback in the older Walsh’s mind (140). Diane Bessai in “Sharon Pollock’s Women” comments on the memory structure in *Whiskey Six Cadenza* (133).

12. Madness or insanity figures in other Pollock plays (*Doc, Fair Liberty’s Call, Getting It Straight*), but this is the only play where a male appears to be lacking control over his sanity.

13. *A Compulsory Option* was produced at the Vancouver Art Gallery by the New Play Centre in 1972, and it remains unpublished.

14. The edition of *Walsh* used throughout this study is the 1986 (5th printing) edition by Talonbooks.

15. Sharon Pollock in an unpublished programme note for the first production of *The Komagata Maru Incident* (quoted by Page 107).

16. In her review of the 1974 Stratford production, Audrey Ashley suggests that the three unforgettable moments in the production were deeds that happened off-stage and were told second-hand (“Stratford Director” 50).

17. Diane Bessai mentions that the original version of *Walsh* included “anonymous voice-over delivery of the historical documentation of government policy during these years [1873-1898]” (“Sharon Pollock’s Women” 127-28).


19. The edition of *The Komagata Maru Incident* used throughout this study is the 1978 version published by Playwrights Co-op in Toronto.

20. It should be noted that T.S. Baxter was the mayor of Vancouver at the time of the
Komagata Maru’s stay in Burrard Inlet. The other T.S. that may have influenced Pollock is T.S. Eliot (Dunn 5).

21. One Tiger to a Hill was also produced at the Manhattan Theatre Club in 1981 (Wallace and Zimmerman 124) and the Stratford Festival in 1990.

22. Sherrill Grace’s two unpublished, forthcoming articles on Pollock investigate the relationship between the artists in the plays and the playwright as artist: “Sharon Pollock’s Portrait(s) of the Artist” in Theatre Research in Canada and “Creating the Girl from God’s Country: Nell Shipman and Sharon Pollock” in Canadian Literature.

23. Artists in Pollock’s work include: Harry the storyteller in Walsh, the Actress in Blood Relations, Catherine the writer in Doc, the filmmaker Shipman in Moving Pictures, and Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald in Angel’s Trumpet.

24. Tom Tursky edited Shipman’s autobiography which was published posthumously.

25. Theatre Calgary (1984); Toronto Free (1984); National Arts Centre (1984); Workshop West (1985); Theatre New Brunswick (1986); Neptune Theatre (1987); Manitoba Theatre Centre (1987); Vancouver Playhouse (1990).

26. Critic Brian Gorman in his review of GCTC’s recent production of Doc supports the claim that an affair is taking place by suggesting that Oscar is “Bob’s lover” (1).

27. In the premiere production of Doc, the cast represented an intense family affair. Michael Hogan, who played Doc, was married to Susan Hogan who played Catherine. Katie was played by Pollock’s daughter Amanda, and Bob was played by Kate Trotter, director Guy Sprung’s wife. Chuck Shamata, who played Oscar, was the only cast member not related to someone else—fifth business (Knelman 73). It is also worth noting that Doc has been played by Pollock’s ex-husband Michael Ball in subsequent productions, including the 1990 production at the Vancouver Playhouse.

28. It should be noted that when the Loyalists arrived in the 1770s there were several Acadian families settled along the Saint John river, who like the indigenous people were forced to leave because they had no legal rights to the land despite having lived there for a few decades (Daigle 52).

29. George’s change of heart shares some characteristics with Hopkinson’s transformative act near the end of The Komagata Maru Incident where he willingly offers his life for past mistakes.
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