THE TREATMENT OF WOMEN IN THE PLAYS OF

FRIEDRICH HEBBEL

by

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INTRODUCTION - BIOGRAPHICAL

Under the heading December 31, 1836, in his diary Friedrich Hebbel has inserted the following lines, "Eine Erfahrung von Bedeutung glaube ich über mich selbst im letzten Jahr gemacht zu haben, namentlich die, dass es mir durchaus unmöglich ist etwas zu schreiben, was sich nicht wirklich mit meinem geistigen Leben auf's Innerste verkettet." (1) The lines date from the period of his stay in Munich when his position as a writer was still very uncertain and his life a struggle against privation and obscurity. His experience in the world of letters, with its frequent failures and disappointments, had been limited, but the young dramatist had already realized, as shown by the lines quoted above, the vital connection between his literary production and his actual experience. It may indeed be stated that practically every work of the poet, certainly every work of permanent value, is based upon his own experience, either physical or spiritual, and it is necessary to appreciate this before the work can be judged.

Especially is this true in a consideration of his heroines for behind each lingers the shadow, even where only faint, of a human prototype. Therefore, before considering these fictitious characters, it seems desirable to review briefly the main facts of his life and from his diary and

(1) T. I. 548.
letters build up, in some degree, a definite picture of these women who were later to influence so largely his general portrayal of the sex.

Christian Friedrich Hebbel was born in the little village of Wesselburen, Schleswig-Holstein on March 18, 1813, and from his earliest days he had that close contact with poverty and privation which embittered the greater part of his life. The strongest influence in these days of early childhood came from his mother who, although by birth and education in no way superior to the mason, her husband, was, however, possessed of a very much more sympathetic and understanding nature. Young Friedrich, who from his earliest years showed the temperament common to all poets in its sensitiveness to the ugly and gloomy, was essentially in need of such a companion, and although even she failed, in many respects, to understand him, yet to her alone he owed certain advantages which were often denied to his young brother. To her he owed his early even if very inadequate tuition at a little private school, and to her also the fact that he was always kept in tidy, though patched, clothes and could hold his own, to some extent, with the richer children of the neighbourhood.

With the passing of years, the conditions in which Friedrich lived in no way improved. His father, a man of the greatest integrity, oppressed always by want and anxiety, grew more and more despondent and gloomy. From him the young poet could expect, and certainly received, no sympathy. Their natures were in every respect antagonistic
and, to this exacting father, a son with no definite plans for the future, especially future earning ability, was an encumbrance. Consequently, since Friedrich himself showed no marked inclination for any particular branch of practical labour and was now of an age to become a bread-winner, it was decided by his father that he should become a mason. Into this trade he was in due course initiated and probably nobody's expectations, not even those of his father, were shattered when he proved in every respect utterly unfitted for such a calling.

A few years after this Klaus Friedrich Hebbel died and since his life had been a continual struggle against complete destitution, the family was left in even poorer circumstances than before. Friedrich now did his scant best to help by running errands, while his mother was obliged to do any odd mending or washing that could be obtained. For Friedrich, however, better times dawned with his introduction as secretary into the household of Mohr, the parish warden. Here, besides acquiring a considerable knowledge of law and legal methods, he was fortunate in having the use of the warden's rather considerable library, and here he partially made up for the deficiency of his early education by reading, with an incredible industry, much of the world's best literature, ancient and modern. From this time dates his admiration for Schiller which continued throughout his life, and in the poetry which he wrote during these years the influence of Schiller is clearly demonstrated as is that of Hoffmann in his early, rather juvenile, prose.
The year 1835 brings to a close this early home-life of Hebbel; privation had been its main feature and the immediate future promised to offer him nothing very much better. A milestone had, however, been reached; his early lyrics and prose had won at least some recognition from Amalie Schoppe, the editress of a somewhat obscure periodical in Hamburg, and the result had been the offer of a position in that city. Wesselburen could promise Hebbel no future worth considering, his great hope was to achieve a solid literary reputation and here surely lay the nearest way. With the keenest sense of anticipation, the offer was accepted and Hebbel launched forth into the literary world. He saw before him the realization of his dream; his mother well-established and her son a man of letters. Although his home and its limited outlook were left almost with joy, the memory of those years was always most vividly retained and his gratitude to his first companion finds at her death beautiful expression when he writes: "Gute, rastlos um Deine Kinder bemühte Mutter, Du warst eine Märtyrin."(1)

Hamburg, to the young man let loose from the limitations of village life, seemed the open Sesame to boundless fame and financial solidity. These illusions were, however, all too rapidly dispelled and although his position offered him the opportunity to widen his scope in both learning and experience, its outlook toward self-establishment was anything but hopeful. Through the generosity of a friend of Frau Schoppe, Hebbel was assured of lodging, food and tuition; but to a youth with the

(1) T. I. 1295.
desire to support himself and offer his mother at least some monetary assistance, the situation was mortifying to the last degree.

The most significant experience of those few months of his early stay in Hamburg was the meeting with Elise Lensing. The acquaintance owed its origin to the editress, Frau Schoppe, who, however, on realizing the interest that Hebbel took in this young woman, began to direct all her energies to revoking her mistake. To Frau Schoppe there could be no advantage to her protégé in a friendship with a woman ten years his senior and possessing neither means nor social standing. Her efforts were, however, profitless for the bond became steadily closer and her only result was to reveal the meanness and pettiness of her own nature. "O wie gränzenlos hat sie in früheren Jahren Elise beleidigt" Hebbel writes in his diary under the heading of March 2, 1840, "Ich errôthe wenn ich mich errinere, dass ich so Vieles still hingehen liess."(1)

Elise became, from this time until his marriage in 1846, the outstanding factor in his life. Having herself known no real happiness in her youth, she was capable, as were few others, of understanding the poet's deep need. From her he received the most unselfish consideration and when his position under Amalie became unbearable, it was in the sacrificing love of Elise that he found relief. The irritation he felt in this bondage under Amalie's patronizing tyranny is very vividly displayed in his comment of March, 1841, where he writes: "Sie ahnt nicht, dass sie meinem Herzen

(1) T. II. 1922.
für jeden Pfenning einen Blutstropfen entpresst!" (1) While under the same date, his debt to Elise finds utterance in the words, "Gott, sie ist die letzte, die mir die Welt erträglich macht." (2)

This life of dependence, however, despite the counter-acting influence of Elise, at last became unbearable. The increasing coldness between Hebbel and Frau Schoppe was aggravated by the jealousy of a former friend, Alberti, and the poet resolved to leave these surroundings of bitterness and spite and seek a new field of activity. Eager to remedy some of the defects in his very inadequate education, he decided to study at the University of Heidelberg and, consequently, in 1837 he set out for that city. Elise, in her utter devotion, contributed to his support what she could earn from her scanty earnings, and, consistent with her attitude of complete self-sacrifice throughout, her one aim was to be able to keep him, during his term there, at a safe distance from actual starvation. "Elise ist es," the poet writes, "die mich mit Aufopferung ihres ganzen kleinen Vermögens, sowohl in Heidelberg als in München auf der Universität erhielt und die dafür keinen anderen Lohn begehre, als einen nicht gar zu unfreundlichen Brief!" (3)

Heidelberg, like Hamburg, however, failed to satisfy Hebbel and after a winter spent there, often completely destitute and obliged to remain in bed rather than run the risk of acquiring an appetite by unnecessary exercise, he

(1) T. II. 1934.
(2) T. II. 1935.
(3) T. I. 1865.
resolved to continue his course at Munich. The necessary money for the journey was supplied by the never-failing Elise and on September 30, 1836, Hebbel reached his destination after a journey made for the greater part on foot.

Munich, from the very first, appealed to the poet, not because he was financially more comfortable there but because of the feeling of independence which seemed to him to be in the very air. "Diese Stadt ist in Deutschland einzig und ohnegleichen," he writes at his departure, "man kann in ihr leben wie man will." (1) As a student at the university his stay here was probably not of very much value for he seems to have attended very few lectures and only those given by professors who in themselves appealed to his interest. He made great strides in his reading, however, and from the excerpts given in his diary of this date, it is evident that the works of such men as Gibbon, Jean Paul, Tieck, Tacitus, Sophocles and Dante were being read with great enthusiasm.

To these Munich days belongs also his love affair with Beppi the young daughter of his landlord, a poor carpenter. A pretty, charming girl, but of a frailer fibre than Elise, both intellectually and morally, Beppi, in her infatuation for Hebbel, soon became his willing slave. This tended to lower rather than to raise Hebbel's conception of woman and it is obvious that he never considered this attachment serious. Of this fact Beppi herself had warning in a dream, which Hebbel recorded in his diary: "Sie (Beppi) solle mich nur laufen lassen; ich verspreche jeder das Heirathen."(2)

(1) T. T. 574.
It is clear that Hebbel himself felt that if marriage were his ultimate duty, it was not marriage to Beppi but to Elise Lensing and his diary and letters at this time display a considerable amount of reflection upon this subject. "Es gibt Fälle, wo Pflicht-Erfüllen sündig heisst,"(1) shows in part his attitude, while in the letter to Elise, dated September 19, 1836, occurs a passage which is important in explaining very largely his present, as well as future, relations to her. "Meinen Ansichten über die Ehe wünsch' ich keinen Beifall am wenigsten unter dem weiblichen Geschlecht. Sie gehen überhaupt nicht auf die Ehe selbst sondern auf mein Verhältnis zur Ehe. Mir wird alles Unveränderliche zur Schranke und alle Schranke zur Beschränkung. Die Ehe ist eine bürgerliche, physische und in unendlich vielen Fällen auch geistige Notwendigkeit. Der Notwendigkeit ist die Menschheit unterordnet, jede aber ist mit Regalien verknüpft. Das Individuum darf sich der Notwendigkeit entziehen wenn es Kraft hat, den Freibrief durch Aufopferung zu lösen; darin liegt seine Freiheit. Ich kann alles nur das nicht, was ich muss."(2)

No one could, however, justly accuse Hebbel of failing to appreciate Elise's innate goodness, for certainly his gratitude to her has found innumerable expressions in his diary. "Ihr und nur Ihr danke ich was ich bin"(3) he wrote at a somewhat earlier period, and again, on leaving Hamburg for Heidelberg, "Das Mädchen hängt unendlich an mir; wenn meine künftige Frau die Hälfte für mich empfindet, so bin

ich zufrieden" (1) - a remark which, in its unconscious patronizing of Elise, also clearly indicates the fact that his love for her had ceased, if indeed the feeling he had entertained for her could ever really have been called love. The growing difficulty of his relationship to Elise, combined with the sudden death both of his mother in September 1838 and of young Emil Rousseau, who had during this period been his only intimate friend, caused Hebbel the greatest possible grief and the last months of his Munich visit were characterized by a marked despondency. But, however black the prospects appeared to his pessimistic mind, he had made some considerable advance toward his goal of literary recognition, as many lovely lyrics date from this time as well as some prose stories such as Schnook, Die Beiden Vagabunden and Die Obermedizinalrätin.

The thirty-first of March, 1839, found Hebbel again in Hamburg and, despite his questionings, again accepting, as before, the love and consideration of Elise. The latter, having passed the winter with her hope fixed always upon this day of reunion, was the first to greet him upon his return and the four years of this second sojourn in Hamburg saw them living together unconventionally as man and wife.

Frau Schoppe, forgetting, or at least concealing, her former antagonism, was also ready to receive Hebbel into the old literary circle, although her critical references to his private life seem to have been no less frequent or less bitter. Hebbel's former friendships were renewed and his circle of acquaintances widened. The meeting and somewhat

(1) T. I. 31.
intimate association with Gutzkow, the Jung Deutschland leader, is an important feature of his life at this time, although Gutzkow's personality never strongly attracted him and he disliked the principles of his literary school. For, although surrounded on all sides by the enthusiasm and consequent excesses of this new movement, Hebbel was strangely unaffected by the contact and his early works show him in opposition to these new principles and as a champion of the older theories of poetry and the drama.

Hebbel's first great achievement in the drama dates from this period and with Judith completed in January, 1840, his years of probation as a literary man were over and the veil was lifted before a promising career. The play was read and appreciated by several of his friends and through the efforts of Frau Schoppe it was early produced in the Berlin Hoftheater, and in December of the same year, in Hamburg. The audience witnessing the production was immensely enthusiastic and Hebbel immediately became famous. Amid all this acclamation Gutzkow's was the one openly dissenting voice and as the criticism offered by this literary theorist was in no way just or impartial, his attitude to Hebbel's work resulted in a complete breach between the two authors.

Although fame had come so suddenly to Hebbel and his literary prospects were in every way so promising, the young dramatist was at this time spiritually far from contented. His bond with Elise had been further strengthened by the birth of a son, Max, but the references in his diary show him to be, at least temporarily, infatuated with the daughter of an old
patrician family, Emma Schröder. The impossibility of the situation was painfully apparent and Elise, with fine tact, took the occasion to leave Hamburg for a short time in order to give Hebbel an opportunity of working out his own solution.

The months during which this infatuation ruled were far from happy ones. His relationship with Elise was no longer, if it ever had been, for his part, founded on real love. The sex attraction which had held him at first had long since passed away, and although he had always the greatest possible gratitude for the many sacrifices she had made for his sake, marriage to her he saw as the death of all his aspirations for the future. "Einen Brunnen unerschöpflicher Liebe" he calls her in one place and in another he cries "wie hoch stehst Du über mir, Du die Du so ganz Liebe bist"; yet although thoroughly conscious of the almost angelic beauty of her character, he felt that with marriage and its consequent limiting influence, his scope would be irreparably restricted. The spiritual anguish he must have experienced with the further aggravation of this already difficult situation, is very easily appreciated and it is not strange that in Genoveva, appearing at the height of this conflict and reproducing in some degree the same situation, he should have given such a powerful depiction of human passion.

Fortunately, however, Emma Schröder seems to have disappeared from his life almost as suddenly as she had entered it, although no satisfactory reason can be offered for the break. At a later date in his diary, August 29, 1843, on the occasion of seeing her again after his Copenhagen visit, he
writes, "Der Neid eines alten Weibes wusste uns aus einander zu bringen, er wusste ihr Bild in meiner Seele zu verdunkeln, indem er ihr Reden über mich und Elise in den Mund legte."\(^{(1)}\)

From this it is suggested that her attitude to Elise had been the chief cause and the breach may have been a proof of Hebbel's sincerity when he wrote "Wahrlich wer Elise auch nur im Geringsten vernachlässigt, der bleibt nicht mein Freund."\(^{(2)}\)

The completion of *Genoveva* was followed by a period of depression during which Byron was his favourite source of inspiration. More helpful and invigorating was, however, the influence of Uhland, who visited Hamburg at this time. Hebbel's meeting with this poet whom he greatly admired, and the favorable comments of the older man on his work, inspired him once more to action and he resolved to gain, if humanly possible, the opportunity for travel and its broadening influence. His hopes were centred upon Christian the Eighth, king of Denmark, and, consequently, with set purpose, he left Hamburg on November 12, 1842, for the Danish capital, Copenhagen. After months of discouragement and delay, Hebbel received the announcement of his success. On April 27 he left Copenhagen with the grant of a travelling bursary to begin in the autumn.

The intervening summer of 1843 was spent in Hamburg, during which time Hebbel busied himself with *Maria Magdalene* and the critical work *Mein Wort über das Drama*. In September he set out for Paris where, although living in a most frugal fashion, he was supremely happy. Paris delighted him in every respect and his visits to the historic landmarks were a

\((1)\) T. II. 2769.  \((2)\) T. II. 2356.
continual source of pleasure. Many literary friendships were made in this city which, to Hebbel, appeared so hospitable - one of his most valued privileges being his meeting with Heinrich Heine.

These months were by no means without sorrow, however, for in October, soon after his arrival, he received one of the greatest blows of his early life in the announcement from Elise of the death of their son Max. The sorrow and remorse felt by the father on this occasion were intense and his diary and the letters of consolation to Elise show how deeply this misfortune affected him. "Und wie oft war ich hart, grausam gegen das Kind, wenn es mir in finstern Stimmungen in seiner rührenden unschuldigen Lebenslust entgegen trat. O dass ich nie geboren wäre! Der Seufzer kommt mir aus tiefster Brust!" (1) The intense grief of this outcry remained acutely bitter for several months and the news of the birth of a second son heightened rather than relieved the sorrow at the loss of the firstborn. Yet, when he finally left Paris in September, 1844, it was not with the memory of the sorrow he had suffered but rather of the joys experienced there and lovingly Hebbel bids her farewell. "Paris wird immer der Mittelpunct aller meiner Wünsche bleiben. Lebe wohl, Du schöne herrliche Stadt, die mich so gastfreundlich aufnahm! Empfange meinen wärmsten Segen! Blühe länger als alle Städte der Welt zusammen genommen!" (2)

The visit to Italy, lasting from October, 1844, until November of the following year, was in no way as satisfactory

(1) T. II. 2805. (2) T. II. 3241.
as Hebbel had anticipated. His funds were rapidly shrinking and his mode of living was, of necessity, meagerly restricted, nor did Rome interest him as had Paris, due perhaps to the fact that his classical background was not broad enough. A friendly welcome was accorded him, however, for the fame of his early works had already been carried to Italy, but, although the period was rich in new acquaintanceships, it offered him little else. After having visited Sicily and Naples, therefore, and having climbed Vesuvius, he continued his travels back to Germanic soil and with his residence in Vienna a new chapter in his experience is opened, a chapter which reaches its conclusion only with his death.

The loneliness of his first weeks in Vienna had already persuaded Hebbel that he would remain there but a short time and in fact he was on the point of departure, when conditions suddenly changed for the better. Wilhelm and Julius Zerboni di Sposetti, two young noblemen, interested themselves in his work with the result that they included the young poet in their household and gave him all the advantages of their wealth and culture. As a consequence he soon came to regard Vienna as his home and there followed ere long another circumstance which bound him still more to the Austrian capital — this was his introduction to the actress, Christine Enghaus.

The meeting was the result of the direct wish of the actress who felt a desire to play Judith and Klara in Hebbel's already popular tragedies, but the interest felt soon extended beyond the plays themselves. The acquaintanceship soon developed into intimacy, then love, and, under a heading in
enormous script, May 26, in the diary of 1846, there appears the following entry, "Ich bin angekleidet um zu Mittag in die Kirche zu fahren und mich mit Christine Enghaus aus Braunschweig zu verheirathen." (1)

Marriage has always been the thing of which Hebbel was most afraid and that which he has felt he must most carefully avoid. "Die Ehe giebt dem Einzelnen Begränzung" (2) he had cried out and it was this "Begränzung" that he saw as the destruction of his talents as an author. Repeatedly he stresses this idea and rebels against the restrictions of marriage, - always, of course, with the thought of marriage with Elise in mind. With his growing love for Christine, however, such scruples were thrown to the winds - with his marriage to her, all is changed. Here the relationship is one founded on the most sincere and complete love, a love based on admiration, respect and mutual sympathy, not as in the case of his regard for Elise where gratitude had played a prominent part, a gratitude which with time had become irksome. "Darum sündigt ein Weib, das Liebe giebt, ohne Liebe zu empfangen; die Strafe trifft sie nicht allein," (3) these are Hebbel's rather harsh words of censure for Elise's attitude while he adds quickly, with keen satisfaction, "wie ganz anders ist es jetzt."

Regardless of our personal opinion as to the propriety of this marriage, it must, at least, be frankly admitted that this step alone is responsible for the remarkable literary activity of Hebbel's later years, an activity

(1) T. III. 3565.  (2) T. I. 1478.  (3) T. III. 3873.
which would have been impossible in the restricted environment and attendant poverty of life with Elise. From now on Hebbel is spiritually content. In Christine he had found one admirably suited to his own temperament and one furthermore capable, in the fullest degree, of understanding him and bearing with him in his periods of irritability and moodiness. Intellectually she was his equal and, as such, her interest in his work was a continual inspiration and incentive to greater effort.

It is pleasant to find, however, that with this new happiness the old friend was not wholly forgotten and in May, 1847, after the death of her son Ernst and after Hebbel too had experienced sorrow in the death of Christine's infant son, we find Elise staying as their guest in Vienna. The invitation had apparently originated from Christine's sympathetic nature and a few lines in the diary give an attractive picture of her kindness to her husband's friend. "Was war das Erste das meine Frau sagte als sie die Todesbotschaft wegen meines Kindes erfuhr? 'Lass sie - die Mutter - zu uns kommen, lass sie gleich kommen!' Und aufs Tödlichste war sie von der gekränkt und beleidigt. Lebt noch eine Zweite auf Erden die so spräche und gleich ein Zimmer einrichtete, Betten besorgte, u.s.w. Ich zweifle."(1) The visit, a happy and mutually friendly one, lasted for a year, after which Elise returned, spiritually more contented, to her old home in Hamburg where she died in November, 1854.

Vienna during these years had become more and more

(1) T. III. 4170.
kindly disposed toward Hebbel and his work. He was now the adored hero of a certain group of younger poets while, although such leaders as Grillparzer and Friedrich Halm were antagonistic, his position was too definitely fixed to fear their attacks. In the meantime, also, his reputation had been further strengthened by literary production for in 1848 Herodes and Mariamne and the two lesser works Der Rubin and Michelangelo were completed. In 1851 appeared the tragedy Agnes Bernauer which won unanimous approval at its initial presentation in Munich, and in November, 1854, there followed Gyges und Sein Ring.

Now, at last, Hebbel after years of disappointment and privation had reached his goal. His literary reputation was firmly established, his friends many and sincere, his private life supremely happy, and when in May, 1861, he witnessed the presentation of his last and most ambitious work, the Niebelungen trilogy, with his wife in the leading rôle, he must have felt the Faustian desire to cry to the moment "Verweile doch, du bist so schön." His literary work was now ended, his body worn out by disease brought on by privations of earlier years and on December 13, 1863, after a severe illness, Friedrich Hebbel died peacefully in surroundings of perfect harmony, attended by his wife, that true friend and companion, who had made possible the serene calm of his later years.
HEBBEL'S CONCEPTION OF TRAGEDY

Since Hebbel in his dramatic theories is in many respects extraordinarily modern in attitude, it may be well, before dealing with the plays themselves, to consider in a general way what the author means by the term "tragedy".

Like his forerunners in the dramatic field, Hebbel believes that the essence of tragedy is conflict, but Hebbel's conception of dramatic conflict differs from the traditional view. With Hebbel only a conflict that affects the order of the world is fit stuff for tragedy; no personal struggle in itself can, in his opinion, reach the height of significance that the dignity of the medium demands, and thus suitable themes become very much more difficult to find. Only in a period of change, during a struggle between a new and old order, can be found a conflict of universal significance, and only such a one, he holds, is worthy of dramatic presentation. That is, to Hebbel, the struggle in a tragedy must be symbolical, an outward manifestation of the spirit of the times and of the progress in thought and manners.

The conflict is, then, one of evolution and must inevitably result in one more step in world progress. The struggle must, however, be identified with the persons of the tragedy and thus in Hebbel we are constantly seeing, in the leading figures, a striking contrast in ideas and manners. Such we have in Judith where the conflict is superficially between
Holofernes and the Jewess, but which, in its deeper significance, is the last determined attack of Paganism against Monotheism. Such we have, also, in Herodes und Mariamne where the queen, so infinitely ahead of her age in her revolt against the oppression of individuality, is driven into opposition to her husband, the personification of eastern despotism. Here the clash between world orders is perhaps the greatest possible in history, that between the pre-Christian and the Christian eras.

In this struggle between old and new it is evident, however, that the victory can only be a gradual one; the world is never prepared in a minute to accept completely a new philosophy of life, and, therefore, it follows that the opposition will at first be almost strong enough to stifle progress. From this arises the second point which is to be noticed in a tragedy of Hebbel. The heroine, for the exponent of the new idea is usually a woman, is of necessity very much ahead of her period; her theories are those of an era not yet here and certainly, at least, not established. Thus she is a figure standing alone, apart from the age in which she lives and, therefore, antagonistic to its principles. Here lies the root of the tragedy. She, the exponent of a future doctrine, must stand in opposition to her century, an individual against the world, and her struggle, although it may end in temporary failure, is necessary for the progress of mankind.

There is, in the tragedies of Hebbel, no suggestion of
moral guilt on the part of the heroine; the catastrophe, in every case, arises from quite another element. The heroine may sin, as undoubtedly does Klara, but this is not the cause of her tragic death. It is not because Klara feels that her sin can be atoned for only by death that she chooses this course, but because she is forced out of the world by the narrow, prejudiced morality of her environment. The world in which she lives is not ready to recognize that it is not in the deed itself but in the intention that sin lies, and thus, since it is not able to judge from that standpoint, death is the only solution.

Tragic "guilt" then, in the old accepted sense of the word, is, as a working force, absent from Hebbel's plays, but in its place is substituted guilt of an entirely different nature. Hebbel sees that progress is only possible to society as a whole; no individual can, with impunity, travel too far in advance of his age. Such an exceptional person is necessarily crushed by the inevitable conflict between himself and his environment. That is the "moral guilt" rests in an excessive development of individuality, in the failure to fit into the notch assigned to one. Thus Judith, in her almost masculine boldness, Genoveva, in the perfection of her virtue, Agnes Bernauer, in her extraordinary beauty, rise above their contemporaries and as a result are doomed to a tragic end. Yet it is individualities, persons standing out apart from their age, that make for progress, and thus the tragedy is the more intense since these individuals are obliged to follow a course of action which will result in their own annihilation.
The catastrophe is based on an unshakeable "Inevitability", the conditions of the age are the ruling force and if its laws are violated, there must follow judgment. The tragic heroine, in Hebbel's eyes, is an "Opfer der Zeit", the victim of an unenlightened age.

Since it is in the characters that the historical struggle finds expression, it follows that the presentation of real, vital figures is essential. Hebbel's aim is always to reveal the psychological depth, to investigate the character's inmost thoughts and so discover the cause of his every speech and deed. It has been said that so completely had he allowed his mind to become absorbed with his characters, that he could recount in detail the boyish indiscretions of Golo and the events in the girlhood of Genoveva. As a result of this method, therefore, his tragedies are full of living people, so highly individualized are they, in fact, that many critics have found this a fault. They base their complaint on the fact that, to the reader, these characters are always exceptions, they are not typical enough, and thus their tragedy has not sufficient contact with ordinary life.

There may be some measure of truth in this charge, for certainly it would be very difficult indeed to find a Mariamne or a Rhodope among our own circle of acquaintances. Yet, again, how few of our fellows are fit to become tragic characters; the qualities needed are seldom all found in one person, but does it make Mariamne the less convincing that she is the embodiment of much that is best in woman? Surely not. Mariamne is real and vital, but a woman placed by
destiny in an age which cannot understand her, with her heart antagonistic to its spirit and her ideal unconsciously approximating that of the Christian era about to dawn.

Hebbel's tragedy is a character drama, not for the purpose of individual character presentation alone, but for this evolutionary idea which lies behind the action. With artistic judgment he avoids definite expression of this underlying idea, but instead, by slight suggestions, builds up his significant background. The struggle between the two forces continues with tragic insistence till the victory of one is at length assured and the ruin of the other. In this ruin we see more than an individual catastrophe, it is the futile gesture of organized society against an idea which it is not ready to accept.
To the ordinary reader the source from which Hebbel derived his material for this, his earliest tragedy, would seem uninspiring. In the Apocryphal book Judith, a cold, bare account is given of the death of one Holofernes, the oppressor of the Jews, at the hands of a Jewish widow, and in this meagre anecdote Hebbel, with the fine discrimination of a born dramatist, saw stuff for one of the most impressive of modern German tragedies.

Obviously, as he himself immediately realized, the story as it there stood could not be adopted. The heroine in the Biblical account is a widow, she performs the horrible deed with an almost cold-blooded resolution, and when Holofernes has met his death at her hands, she returns to her people, singing a song of triumph and bearing on her shoulder, the prize, the head of her victim. Hebbel at once saw that in that form the story was crude and repelling, and, moreover, did not coincide with his idea of woman. Yet, although rejecting many incongruous elements, he saw in its broad outlines the framework for a real tragedy, and on its foundation he has built freely with the result that the completed work is a true masterpiece.

In the character of Judith herself Hebbel felt it necessary to make important changes, for the Biblical heroine, a hard, unattractive figure, was, in no way, adaptable to the ends of tragedy. Here Judith is no longer a widow in the
ordinary sense but, as Hebbel states, a "jungfräuliche Wittwe", one who has believed for years of her life that a curse rests upon her head, and who only too late realizes, with horror, that her maidenhood has been preserved as a sacrifice for her country. By giving her this equivocal position, he achieves better psychological motivation for a course of action so foreign to his conception of woman.

The play opens with good effect, not in the Jewish city, Bethulien, but rather in the camp of the oppressor, Holofernes, where the tragedy proper is later to be played. Curiously enough, Judith, who is later to become the centre of the action, is not once mentioned in the first act and the dramatist's whole powers are concentrated on portraying the dreaded enemy of the Jewish people and, above all, of the Jewish faith. The omission is curious but only so when superficially considered, for surely a moment's consideration will reveal clearly the artistic motive. Holofernes is to become, before long, Judith's most hated enemy, but it is not in this antagonism that the tragedy consists. The real catastrophe arises not from the fact that Judith hates her opponent, but rather from the fact that she does not hate him enough. We see clearly, in the opening scene of the second act, that it is not anger and loathing alone that Judith feels in her rebellion against her country's oppressor, but a considerable degree of interest in this man who dares all and before whom nothing can stand. "Ich mögt' ihn sehen!" she cries eagerly and immediately checks her wish, dimly conscious
that the fulfilment might lead to sin, the sin of respecting
the enemy of her people.

The brilliant presentation of Holofernes in the opening
act is thus exceptionally striking. We, who are to see the
heroine of the tragedy attracted to her enemy by an admiration
which she cannot suppress, are here witnesses of his cruel
strength. Holofernes is, it must be admitted, an imposing and
impressive figure and, as our own interest is aroused in his
character, we become the more sympathetic with the fault which
later proves Judith's downfall. With the most vivid strokes
the leader is presented before our eyes in all the bright and
glaring colours of an eastern despot - a brutal figure
certainly and yet how irresistibly compelling! "Mein Wille ist
die Eins und Euer Thun die Zwei, nicht umgekehrt"(1) he roars
to an unfortunate servant who has presumed to anticipate his
wishes, and thus indirectly suggested a knowledge of Holo-
fernes' character. This is exactly what the despot forbids,
"Mein Heute passt nie zum Gestern"(2) he remarks proudly, and
on this quality of wilful inconsistency, whether logical or
not, he bases his power to rule.

This first act, then, is a cleverly contrived psychologic-
al preparation for the following one, designed not only to set
the plot in motion, but to create in the mind of the audience
a sympathy for Judith's action in the later scenes. Our
interest is held by the enigmatical character before us, and
how much more sympathetic is our judgment on the heroine when
we are able to see with her own unwillingly partial eyes. We

(1) W. I. 6. (2) W. I. 7.
feel that Holofernes is utterly ruthless, a man totally
incapable of a selfless thought or act, and yet one who
stands out almost as a hero amid his vices. "Hätt ich doch
nur einen Feind nur Einen, der mir gegenüber zu treten
wagte! Ich wollt' ihn küßen, ich wollte, wenn ich ihn nach
heissem Kampf in den Staub geworfen hätte, mich auf ihn
stürzen und mit ihm sterben." (1) His power has become almost
a curse to him and he cries out longingly for an opponent
whom he may crush and yet respect. All too soon such an
enemy arises, but the tyrant, his wish fulfilled, dies without
knowing that he has met his equal.

The second act opens with a discussion between Judith
and her waiting-maid, Mirza, in which we learn of the strange
conduct of Judith's dead husband upon their wedding-night,
and the consequent fear of the Jewish girl that her beauty is
her curse. "Meine Schönheit ist die der Tollkirsche, ihr
Genuss bringt Wahnsinn und Tod!" (2) How ironic are these
words to us in the audience who know that Holofernes is later
to find how bitterly true is this superstitious utterance.
The agony felt by Judith in her undefined position between
wife and maiden is keenly expressed in the words in which she
sums up her theory of woman's sphere: "Ein Weib ist ein
Nichts; nur durch den Mann kann sie Etwas werden; das Kind
das sie gebiert ist der einzige Dank den sie der Natur für
ihr Dasein darbringen kann. Unselig sind die Unfruchtbaren,
doppelt unselig bin ich, die ich nicht Jungfrau bin und
auch nicht Weib!" (3)

(1) W. I. 7.   (2) W. I. 19.   (3) W. I. 19.
Her attitude is an entirely conventional one, she believes that nowhere should the sphere of woman infringe upon that of man and that a wife and mother has fulfilled, in the fullest sense, her mission in life when a husband has been obeyed and a child reared. Little does she realize that circumstances and her religious zeal are to demand that she overstep these narrow bounds and assume a duty which she feels is only fit for a man to perform. Realizing keenly the danger to her people from the besieging enemy, she sees their only escape in the death of the oppressor. Holofernes must be killed, she explains to Ephraim, and with a woman's faith in the courage of the man who professes love for her, she demands that he perform the deed. Her hope is, however, doomed to disappointment; Ephraim is not equal to such heroism and the realization dawns on her suddenly, "Ich habe sie von Dir (Ephraim) gefordert; ich muss beweisen, dass sie möglich ist!"(1)

Judith becomes, with this resolve, the opposing force to Holofernes. As yet she has not the slightest conception of the turn which events are to take, but mentally, at least, she is preparing her enemy's downfall. Three days of fasting are kept in close communion with her God, the great Jehovah, but no suggestion comes to her of the path of action. Then, at length, a flash of realization! Her mocking words to Ephraim three days before were ironically true. "Dann braucht ich je nur zu ihm hinaus zu gehen und Stadt und Land wären gerettet!" This is the course that her God bids her

(1) W. T. 24.
pursue. "Der Weg zu meiner That geht durch die Sünde! Vor Dir (Gott) wird das Unreine rein. Wenn Du zwischen mich und meine That eine Sünde stellst, wer bin ich, dass ich mit Dir darüber hadern, dass ich mich entziehen sollte! Ist nicht meine That so viel werth, als sie mich kostet? Darf ich meine Ehre, meinen unbefleckten Leib mehr lieben wie Dich?"(1)

In a flash the difficulty is overcome and Judith is prepared to sacrifice herself to the cause of her people and her God. But even here while fired by patriotic and religious zeal, the disturbing thought grips her and she cries beseechingly "aber schütze mich, dass ich nichts Gutes von ihm sehe!"(2)

With her mind thus resolved there is for Judith no turning back and, in fact, the despairing resignation of the besieged Jews strengthens rather than weakens her determination. "Seht Ihr im Unglück" she remonstrates with her people "nur eine Aufforderung es Euch durch Gemeinheit zu verdienen,"(3) while in her own mind is only the hope that she may have strength to carry out her deadly purpose. Her thought turns repeatedly to Holofernes and his attitude to women and when Achior, in answer to her question "Er liebt die Weiber?" replies, "Ja, aber nicht anders als Essen und Trinken" her heart leaps with joy of strengthened hope and she asks anxiously "Ich bin doch für ein Opfer schön genug?"(4)

It is with this attitude of mind that Judith dares an entrance into Holofernes' camp; a fiery, almost fanatical,

(1) W. I. 26. (3) W. I. 37.
(2) W. I. 27. (4) W. I. 43.
religious zeal inspires her with the courage and resolution of a man, but there is present, unfortunately, another incentive of which the helpless woman is totally unconscious. This is the desire of a woman to see this superman whose personality has so aroused her curiosity; cleverly Hebbel has suggested this mingling of a purely sexual curiosity - though at first unconscious - with the religious and patriotic motive.

With the opening lines of the fourth act the struggle between the two opposing forces begins - a double conflict. Woman dares to resist man in a duel of the sexes and Judaism challenges an effete Paganism. Judith, at once, impresses Holofernes with her remarkable beauty, "Nur die Blinden sind elend!" he cries. "Fürchte Dich nicht Judith, Du gefällst mir, wie mir noch Keine gefiel."(1) To these reassuring words the Jewess replies with ironic ambiguity, "Dies ist das Ziel aller meiner Wünsche," but we, the audience, realizing Judith's twofold meaning, wonder whether she herself can, as yet, suspect that a third interpretation could be supplied and that in this lies the cause of her ultimate failure. With fascinating charm, she draws her enemy into her net, but her own inevitable doom is likewise approaching rapidly. She leaves Holofernes' tent in tears, tears, she says, of joy for the success of her first plan; but we feel that there is mixed with them the woman's pity for her victim, for she cries in dread at the step she has taken, "Ich schaudere vor der Kraft der Lüge in meinem Munde."(2)

Five days elapse, days of terror and anguish for Judith

(1) W. I. 50. (2) W. I. 56.
surely, during which time her faith in her God could be the only refuge against the dread tormenting her. Then comes the time appointed for her return to Holofernes' camp, the time, as he believes, for the surrender of herself and her people; but, for her, the hour for the performance of a bloody duty. Holofernes awaits her with restless impatience and his vaunting words ring out as a warning to the courageous Jewess, "In ihrem Herzen wohnt Niemand als ihr Gott und den will ich jetzt vertreiben!" (1) With the fiery love-making of an eastern despot, the tyrant seeks to soften Judith's cold manner, while she, in almost frantic alarm, braces herself to resist the passion that his advances promise to awaken. "O warum bin ich Weib!" she cries to herself in agony as she realizes her involuntary response to his embrace, and feeling her courage and hate weakening, she gladly accepts his offer of wine, "Ja im Wein ist Mut, Mut!" (2)

The temptation is almost irresistible and Judith, doubting her own power, turns in her danger to her God. "Gott meiner Väter" she cries, "schütze mich vor mir selbst, dass ich nicht verehren muss, was ich verabscheue! Er ist ein Mann." (3) She sees now that Holofernes is intruding between her and her religious faith and when at length she has made herself a sacrifice as she had intended, it is with hesitation that she approaches her final deed, the murder. "Ich muss," she persuades herself, "ich will - pfui über mich in Zeit und Ewigkeit, wenn ich nicht kann!" (4) In this last horrible moment she does not fail, but it is not as the tool of God

(1) W. I. 59. (2) W. I. 61. (3) W.I.63. (4) W.I.66.
that she performs her task, but as the wronged woman avenging her own injury. Neither patriotism nor religious obedience is the immediate incentive to her hideous act, and it is with the cry of an indignant human that she raises the sword, "Bin ich denn ein Wurm, dass er mich zertreten und als ob Nichts geschehen wäre ruhig einschlafen darf?"(1)

Jehovah and Christianity are now victorious and the Jewish people freed from the bonds of tyranny, yet in the heart of Judith the woman, there is the consciousness of complete failure. "Nichts trieb mich, als der Gedanke an mich selbst"(2) she cries despairingly, and the glad shouts of a liberated people only increase her anguish. Sadly she realizes that her way to victory was not by the path her God would have desired; her deed had not been performed in the right spirit and had ceased to be a sacrifice. She, a woman having gone beyond the bounds designed for her sex, had fallen a victim to instincts which she little understood. The thought of the possible consequence of bearing a son to Holofernes presses heavily upon her and, with horror, she cries for death. Yet although Holofernes was powerful enough to make her forget for a moment her religious faith, it was only for a moment and now it is to this that she turns for hope. To Jehovah she prays for the averting of the awful consequence and the play closes with her words of renewed hope, "Vielleicht ist er mir gnädig!"(3)

(1) W. I. 70.
(2) W. I. 72.
(3) W. I. 81.
B. Genoveva.

Genoveva, probably more than any other play of Hebbel, may be regarded as a revelation of the author's own feelings and emotions during a certain period of his life, and, although it is always a mistake to fix one's attention too closely upon the autobiographical element in a great work, to the possible exclusion of other qualities, yet it is interesting to inquire in part at least into the circumstances which may have influenced his choice of subject and his manner of treatment.

The work dates back to the month of his second residence in Hamburg. As a literary man his position is fairly well-founded and the prospects, although perhaps not brilliant, are, at least, not depressing. Spiritually, however, this is a period of great doubt and uncertainty; his bond with Elise has, with time, become the more firmly welded, while, as an aggravation to a mind already tormented with regard to his treatment of this woman whom he does not wish to make his wife, comes a new element into his life, his infatuation for a beautiful girl Emma Schröder. Hebbel was, of course, sane enough to recognize that the situation was an impossible one and that this new love must be immediately stifled. The struggle was, however, none the less acute, and from the whirlpool of his spiritual agony and doubt, from his passion for Emma, and his respect and pity for the much-wronged Elise, emerges his Genoveva, a remarkably vivid presentation of the power of
passion and the steadfastness of a woman's love.

It is significant that, while in the character of Golo, Hebbel has presented his own failings and the emotions he felt in his love for Emma, it is not Emma but Elise whom he has pictured in Genoveva, the object of Golo's passion. Her beauty of soul, her self-sacrifice and above all her steadfastness, are the qualities which Hebbel has long seen and admired in Elise, and thus, although the play was composed during a period when his affections were transferred to another woman, it is pleasant to see that it is not the qualities of Emma that he regards as heroic but those of the woman he neglects.

The character of Genoveva is not so complex as that of Judith and the later heroines. As a woman she is probably the least interesting of Hebbel's characters, a condition which arises not from a less successful portrayal but from the fact that, throughout the piece, she plays an almost completely passive part. The directing of the course of events lies not in her hands, as it had done in the case of Judith, but in those of Golo, and as a natural consequence it is in Golo that our chief interest is centred and not in the wronged countess.

Despite this fact, however, Genoveva is an exceedingly beautiful character and although in our more modern eyes, her extreme submissiveness might invite criticism, we are obliged, even there, to admit that her unresisting acceptance of injustice is founded on a virtue, not a fault, on courage not on fear. Very beautifully Hebbel reveals to us, even in the first scene, the depth of her love and her implicit faith
that love is returned. In Siegfried she places her whole affection, rejoicing in the fact that it is so and yet modestly reluctant to reveal the true extent of her love in order to surprise him in an hour of sorrow. "Ich aber fühle mich jetzt so arm, so arm," she cries when at his insistence she has expressed her feeling for him, "Als ein Geheimnis kaum mir selbst bekannt, durch's Leben tragen wollte ich mein Herz. Erst in der dunklen Stunde, wo mein Grab sich auftut wollt' ich's Öffnen gegen Dich."(1)

This opening scene is an affecting one as it portrays a separation which may perhaps be for ever, but yet, despite her intense sorrow, there is on the part of Genoveva no hesitation; she is a soldier's wife and, as such, she has taught herself that courage which is a warrior's first duty. "Ein Weib verhüllt den Schmerz denn er ist hässlich und befleckt die Welt." Such is her theory and although she little dreams that this principle is later to be so severely tried, she feels a stout courage, equal to whatever misfortune the future may offer. Golo, alone, the figure in the background, has an insight into the true nature of the situation. He alone suspects that Siegfried is not capable, at least as yet, of appreciating the beauty of his wife's personality and it is he who has been able to see and admire to the full the perfect selflessness of Genoveva's love. His heart rebels when he sees Siegfried fail to return that depth of love which he so eagerly receives. "Sie ist ein Weib wie keins!"(2) cries Golo in wonder and admiration, yet a hideous fear rises within

(1) W. I. 95. (2) W. I. 98.
him, fear lest his wonder should after all reveal itself as love.

All too soon this dread becomes a certainty for no sooner is Siegfried gone than the sight of Genoveva's bitter grief and the indignant remembrance that Siegfried parted from her without tears, drives him into an excessive demonstration of his pity. With feverish concern he kisses the unconscious Genoveva and thereby takes the first step which is to lead to so much that is ugly and cruel. With this one act, innocent in intention surely, he has for a second lost his self-control and it is never again recovered. From this moment he is doomed to wrestle with a passion he is powerless to master, a passion, first love, then hate, but in either shape terrible, brutal.

The manner in which Hebbel has handled the rising storm in Golo's soul is masterly to the last degree. Step by step we follow the progress of the conflict and at every point we can sympathize and pity. Here is no innately wicked man but one too sorely tempted, and when at length he falls, after repeated efforts to regain his former self-restraint, we feel that he is, after all, human and that few in his place could have conquered. Genoveva, in her innocence, is completely ignorant of the cause of Golo's strange uneasiness. "Sünde kann sie sich nicht denken"(1) are Golo's words of her; her mind is too pure, too foreign to evil thought, to suspect for one minute that Golo is tormented by a guilty love, and least of all, a love for her who is herself incapable of

(1) W. I. 120.
anything but the strictest fidelity to her husband. Thus, in her dedication of Golo's sword to the cause of purity, there is a bitter irony which only her guardian can appreciate. "Ein Schauder fasst mich" he mutters with dread, "Ist es nicht Gott selbst, der also zu mir spricht durch ihren Mund?"(1)

With dreadful impetus the tide of tragedy sweeps ahead pushing aside any resisting forces but itself not diverted an inch from its destined course. Horribly the realization breaks upon Genoveva that Golo is faithless and, furthermore, that he would have her so also. The thought is dreadful, repelling, yet even in the face of such danger Genoveva has the courage to stand resolute. With tragic insistence Golo, knowing that in death lies the only solution, demands her permission thus to end the conflict, but Genoveva, although conscious that a sign from her will end for all time this hideous struggle, is not for a second in hesitation as to her course. Suicide is not the Christian solution to temptation and therefore there is in such an escape no victory. Thus, without a tremor of doubt or fear, she decrees boldly,

"Bleibt ihm die Wahl noch zwischen Sünde und Tod
So ist er edel und wird nimmermehr
Vollbringen was er schaudernd selbst verdammt."(2)

With these words Genoveva boldly rejects security, but Golo, although stirred by her purity, is so completely subject to his passion that nothing short of a miracle could restore his former self-control.

Such a miracle, unfortunately, does not take place but

(1) W. I. 121.  (2) W. I. 155.
instead the insidious suggestions of the witch, Margareta, aggravate rather than relieve the situation. Golo, spurred on by a fear for his safety, becomes almost mad because of his baffled intention and his one thought is now to bring upon Genoveva at least the suspicion of dishonour. With malicious cunning he achieves this, Genoveva is made to appear false to her marriage vow, but even now the success is only superficial. Genoveva, surprised into the consequences of a malevolent trick, is complete mistress of herself. The consciousness of her own innocence is her strongest weapon of defence and, without any attempt to justify herself, she says quietly to her accusers,

"Führt mich wohin es sei, nur führt mich hin
Wo ich dies Blut nicht seh'!" (1)

From this point Genoveva becomes the object of Golo's cruel spite. He has failed in his primary purpose and in revenge for this failure he doubles his efforts to make Genoveva repent her fidelity. Her condition in prison is made as rough and comfortless as possible, her food scanty and coarse, yet even now nothing can alter her resolution. With despair Golo realizes that his attempts are futile, that Genoveva is above his power to harm and that the only thing that could break her would be suspicion and doubt from the husband for whom she suffers.

"Es gibt nur Einen Mann
Der mir vertrauen muss, den Einen nur
Liess ich hinab in meine Seele schau'n!" (2)

(1) W. I. 186. (2) W. I. 191.
These are Genoveva's words to Golo while in prison, only to Siegfried does she feel that she owes an explanation, and her implicit faith in her husband persuades her that he certainly can never doubt her fidelity.

But her faith is not justified. Upon the unexpected return of Siegfried, Golo craftily poisons his mind against her and the struggle of Othello is repeated; again it is Iago who is victorious. In a frenzy of jealousy Siegfried gives Golo his sword with the words,

"Todten sollst Du sie
Und widerruf' ich den Befehl mich selbst!" (1)

and Genoveva and the infant born to her in prison are carried off to death. But her martyrdom is not yet complete for in the last minute Golo, with a final gleam of hope, offers a way of escape through flight with him. Even in the face of death, however, Genoveva's fidelity is unshakeable and she accepts her cruelly unjust fate in a spirit of forgiveness.

But so appealing did she seem to Hebbel in her patient resignation that he was forced to relent in the matter of her death. "O Genoveva!" he writes in his diary, "Du machst mir viel Kummer! Lieben darf ich dich nicht und vernichten darf ich dich auch nicht!" The compromise is not an entirely happy one but, since Siegfried's jealousy was aroused by the venom of a slanderous tongue, a reconciliation seems still possible. So, after years of suffering, Genoveva is allowed once again to enjoy a husband's love, a husband whom time and grief have molded into a character more worthy of her sacrifice.

(1) W. v. 224.
Hebbel's third great drama is entitled Maria Magdalene, ein bürgerliches Trauerspiel. From this we are given an indication of the type of play we are to expect but not until we have read it can we realize how fully the classification is justified. Maria Magdalene is probably the greatest play of its class of the nineteenth century and it holds a worthy place with the two greatest of the preceding century, Emilia Galotti and Kabale und Liebe. These two are tragedies of the middle class but it is a middle class exploited and sinned against by a corrupt aristocracy. Maria Magdalene is "bürgerlich" not only in the sense that it deals with persons of the middle class as had done its predecessors; it is much more than that - it is the tragedy of the middle class itself, the tragedy of its principles, its petty and dogmatic conventionality and, above all, of its pitiless observance of externally imposed laws of morality.

Hebbel did not choose his subject solely to satisfy an artistic impulse. He also wished to present a criticism of a social condition which he regarded as ruinous both to society as a whole and - even more so - to the individuals over which it tyrannizes. This conventionality of middle class "Respectability" is, in Hebbel's eyes, an obstacle to ethical progress; it demands a continual halt, a turning for precedent to the principles of our fathers, and consequently any individual attempt to follow self-imposed rules is looked
upon as sinful. Although the basic principle of this society is morality, it is a morality of a pitifully limited nature. There is no idea in the minds of these bigoted citizens that the root of moral uprightness lies not in dogma but in conscience, rather they regard that man alone as righteous who observes strictly the accepted moral precepts, although his obedience may arise, as generally happens, from fear, not conviction, from the dread lest this monster "Sittlichkeit" crush him if he disregard its supremacy.

Such is the world in which Klara has been reared and in Master Anton, her father, all the principles of this narrow-minded community are fully embodied. To him morality means an observance of the letter, not of the spirit of the law and the hard, unsympathetic quality of his nature is the logical result of such a creed. His chief object is to maintain through life the respect of his fellowmen for his upright character and to die at last with his reputation unspotted, and so, with a clear conscience, to be able to stand before his Judge. To him religion has little concern with charity or love - it is a primitive thing - simply the avoidance of an open violation of the Ten Commandments.

This is the morality which Klara's father has, by precept and example, taught his family. He himself, by years of discipline, has schooled himself into a dogged conformity with its teachings and has neither sympathy nor understanding for any breach on the part of another, least of all on the part of his own family. Karl, his somewhat wild and reckless son, he dislikes, almost hates, because he does not
sufficiently respect these standards, and in the conviction of his own moral stability, the tyrannical father cannot realize that it is his own hard unbending righteousness that has awakened this spirit of rebellion in his son.

In Klara, however, Anton believes he sees the product of his own theory. She is a loving and dutiful daughter and has, he is sure, laid for herself the foundations of a righteous, law-abiding life. Never has his daughter rebelled against the code of her environment and as a contrast to Karl, the prodigal, she offers him a feeling of satisfaction, a consciousness of his own virtue. To Klara, however, the oppression of her family surroundings has been as trying as to her brother. This life where everything is done according to rule, where, as Karl states "wir haben im Hause zweimal zehn Gebote"(1) has been a weight upon her spirit, and although she little realizes it, she is ready to revolt against its warping pressure.

Klara is intensely human, a girl just as other girls and, in some ways, more genuinely upright than most. A loving daughter, her relationship with her mother is very close indeed and although she, in all probability, cannot, in a true sense, love her father, yet she is wholly considerate of his comfort and ready always to do his bidding. She, too, is apparently the only one who is capable of understanding the rough Karl, whom her mother pampers and her father abuses, for throughout the play, and especially toward the end, there is the suggestion of a bond of sympathy between them.

(1) W. II. 62.
Klara's sin is not, either in her own eyes, or apparently in Hebbel's, a very heinous one. She has yielded to the importunity of her lover, to prove to him that she means to keep faith with him - for well he knows that her love is given to another. Then, with the supposed theft of Karl, comes the loss of her dowry as well as the disgrace upon the family and the cad Leonhard deserts her for a more advantageous alliance, caring nothing for the fact that he is leaving her to face disgrace and shame. But her first thought is not for herself but for her father. His honour will be spotted, his life ruined and his daughter the cause. She knows that the one thing to crush her father is the scorn of the world, the finger of censure. Karl's trouble has shown her the effect that disgrace has upon him. Master Anton believes without hesitation in his son's guilt although Klara vigorously defends him, and with characteristic egotism his first thought is now, not the establishment of his son's innocence, but the prevention of another such shame. An ugly thought enters his mind and, turning to Klara, he bids her swear that she will never bring disgrace upon him. With the realization of one alternative which will at least spare her father the disgrace of her action, with the resolution to seek death if necessary, she swears "Ich schwöre Dir dass ich Dir nie Schande machen will!" (1)

Klara is no ordinary Magdalene; the fear that oppresses her arises not from the consciousness of sin, but from the realization of its consequences. Still more intense becomes

(1) W. II. 36.
her dread when Master Anton, harassed by the scorn shown by some of his fellow citizens, swears to kill himself if he ever find his daughter in disgrace. "Ich kann's in einer Welt nicht aushalten, wo die Leute mitleidig sein müssten, wenn sie nicht vor mir ausspucken sollen."(1) The announcement of Karl's innocence, coming at such a moment, is almost crushing. Her love tells her she should rejoice and yet she cannot. "Nun bist Du's allein"(2) is her one thought and almost in a frenzy she seeks a means to prevent her own misfortune. It must be averted before too late and yet the means must be honourable; thus, when her former admirer, Friedrich, the man she really loves, returns all unsuspecting and eager to marry her, she reveals the truth, though by so doing she cuts off this way of escape.

Her sole hope now lies in Leonhard, the man who has spurned her, and she resolves at once to fly to him and throw herself at his feet. "Ja Vater, ich geh! ich gehe," she cries, "Deine Tochter wird Dich nicht zum Selbstmord treiben" and then the thought of an easier way occurs to her, but with courage she stifles its tempting suggestion, "Drei Brunnen triffst Du an dem Weg zu ihm - Dass Du mir an Keinem stehen bleibst, noch hast Du nicht das Recht dazu!"(3) Before Leonhard she makes the greatest sacrifice a woman can make; in desperation she begs him to marry her, to make her, in the eyes of the world, an honorable woman and in return she will be his slave, a dog upon which to vent his spite, anything, everything that he may desire.

(1) W.II.40. (2) W.II.46. (3) W.II.53.
Her humiliation has, however, been for nothing, Leonhard is incapable of an unselfish action and Klara's doom is settled. "Mein Vater weiss von Nichts, er ahnt nichts und damit er nie Etwas erfährt, geh' ich noch heute aus der Welt." *(1)* This she now sees as the only solution. "Was ich jetzt thu' das kommt über mich allein," *(2)* she argues and this, although a sin, is not so great a one as to be the cause of death to another. Hesitatingly the words of the Lord's Prayer come to her lips and with the words "O Gott, ich komme nur weil sonst mein Vater käme" *(3)* she goes to her death. Master Anton is left alone with his shame, unenlightened, narrow as before, muttering in puzzled bewilderment, "Ich verstehe die Welt nicht mehr." *(4)*

Klara's life was forfeited as a sacrifice to the morality of middle class society. She never seems oppressed with the thought that her sin as a woman was not atoneable but it was her sin as a daughter that only death could cover up. If her fault were discovered, her father would be made an object of scorn and a stainless reputation would be blotted forever. Thus a stern necessity drove her to her death, a necessity arising, however, solely from the conventional morality of her environment.

*(1) W. II. 59.*
*(2) W. II. 59.*
*(3) W. II. 67.*
*(4) W. II. 71.*
D. Summary

With Maria Magdalene the early period of Hebbel's authorship is brought to a close and before turning to the works of the later period, it may be well to sum up briefly what we have found to be Hebbel's theories in regard to woman in these early years and the relation of these theories to the characters created.

Woman is, as yet, in Hebbel's eyes the subordinate and entirely passive sex whose supreme function in life is to love and minister to man. This attitude is a very natural one, arising directly from his own experience. Beginning with his mother, whose attitude towards him had always been one of unquestioning devotion, all the women who had entered intimately into his life had fostered this idea. Elise, Beppi and perhaps even Emma, had been easily attracted to him, and both Elise and Beppi had become almost slaves to his wishes. This in itself, although showing woman's power of self-sacrifice, succeeded in emphasizing, in Hebbel's mind, his belief in the superiority of man, and consequently we are not at all surprised to find in Judith, Genoveva and Maria Magdalene, that woman is looked upon as a creature to whom love and submission are all-important. Elise is clearly the predominant influence in these early works for even where a temporary inspiration may have some effect upon the work, as in the case of Genoveva, it is always Elise's characteristics of love and self-sacrifice that are idealized.
This we see most clearly when we compare Judith and Genoveva. The Jewess, although politically victorious, is, through her overstepping of the bounds of her sex, brought to a spiritual defeat. Genoveva, the submissive, on the other hand, by keeping strictly within the limits of woman's sphere, by remaining steadfast to her love against all obstacles, is at length restored to happiness. Here we have Hebbel's early ideal of woman; to such heights of perfection woman may attain within her own limited field while in the earlier heroine we are given a warning of the disastrous results following woman's encroachment upon man's sphere of action.

Hebbel, then, in this early period has depicted women as he had known them, and since he had found boundless love and submission to be their chief qualities in actual life, so too are they made the characteristics of his early heroines. In Maria Magdalene Hebbel has gone even farther; not only has he given to the heroine the qualities of Elise and Beppi, but he has taken the circumstances also from his actual experience, while living with the carpenter's family in Munich. Although the situation is that of Beppi, however it is chiefly Elise whom we see in the character of the heroine. Elise, too, had been subject to censure in Hamburg because of her relations with the dramatist and, as a result, the unsympathetic treatment of society in regard to such matters of morality was keenly felt by Hebbel. Here, although in the question of woman's place in life there is no development, we see a change in viewpoint which is ultimately to lead to a new conception.
of woman. He has come to look upon woman's relation to society in a different light. In Judith he had maintained that woman in asserting her rights was a rebel against society; now, however, he is looking at conditions from the point of view of the heroine and sees that society, too, can sin against the individual. This is a distinct development and with the opening of the second period we see still another and final step - in the realization that woman is primarily a human being with the right to demand recognition and respect for her individuality.
IV

LATER HEROINES

A. Mariamne

_Herodes und Mariamne_ may be regarded as the first tragedy of Hebbel's maturity. The period of youth and experiment with its attending exuberance and excess, is now definitely over and the new period opens with the precision and power of mastery. Her, for the first time, do we see the height to which Hebbel's genius can attain, a height which is to be sustained to the conclusion of his literary activity. In its balance and moderation of treatment and subtlety of characterization, the play far excels anything seen in the earlier works.

Probably nothing is more definite evidence of the mature mind behind the work than is the marked change in the portrayal of the character of woman. Mariamne is the new heroine, the ideal of the older man with his more sympathetic and appreciative estimate of her sex and in her, for the first time, we see a woman who challenges our fullest admiration. The change has been wrought by Hebbel's wife, Christine, whose inspiring comradeship had shown him the true worth of woman as years of Elise's sacrifice had failed to do. It is not surprising that this heroine should reflect in so many respects the spiritual beauty of the woman he most admires. Mariamne is neither a Judith nor a Genoveva. Here it is not the woman who errs in assuming the duty of man, nor the
patient sufferer accepting with resignation all the injustice that man may heap upon her. The new heroine is quite another woman; she is a queen, the daughter of a line of heroes. Yet her pride is not based upon birth alone,—rather upon the intrinsic worth of her own soul. Her love, like that of Genoveva, is utterly selfless, capable of complete sacrifice, yet unlike her predecessor, she is prompted by another quality, self-respect. From the man who loves her she demands much more than passion; of the essence of love are to her honour and esteem. Without these spiritual qualities, so-called love is rather a degradation than an honour—especially if accompanied by the mad jealousy which inspired Herod's conduct.

Herod's jealousy is founded, of course, in the nature of his love and the perfection of Mariamne's beauty. (So lovely is she that he fears Anthony would, at the sight of her, forget Cleopatra!) But with fine psychological effect Hebbel has shown us this jealousy fanned to a mad fire by Herod's consciousness of having grievously wronged his wife by the murder of her brother, Aristobolus. The inevitable effect of this sense of guilt is that he becomes suspicious of her love and good faith,—although we learn from Mariamne that it was not the murder itself so much as Herod's hypocritical attitude which alienated her. The death of Aristobolus has not really shaken her love for Herod whom she recognizes as the promoter of the deed. She is willing, in her heart, to recognize the cruel act as politically necessary, although her lips dare not frame the words of acquiescence.
The play opens at what may be regarded as the crisis of this spiritual conflict. Several months have elapsed since the drowning of Aristobolus during which period Herod has vainly tried to persuade himself that his relations to his wife are unchanged. Yet the past stands between them, the guilt in his mind forms an invisible barrier, a barrier which he himself is unconsciously erecting. Thus his mind is prepared to doubt and, when he is summoned to appear before the capricious Anthony, jealous love for his wife and the fear that her love has been altered prompt him to ensure her fidelity by placing her under the sword. The act is a cruel one, the deed of a tyrant not of a devoted husband, and to one of Mariamne's nobility of soul, unbearable. She feels herself lowered to the level of a valuable possession which must be kept safe against the robber.

Herod, too, is vaguely conscious of the injustice of his act and mentally seeks to persuade himself that his motives are honorable.

"Das wird mich spornen
Zu thun, was ich noch nie gethan, zu dulden
Was ich noch nie geduldet und mich trüsten
Wenn es umsonst gescheht."\(^{(1)}\)

It is significant, however, that these words of self-justification close with the motive which we feel to be the sincere one. The danger threatening Mariamne may add an impetus to his endeavors, but he goes, we know, believing his safe return unlikely. Thus the deed has been prompted fundamentally by

\(^{(1)}\) W. II. 232.
distrust; he is blinded to the fidelity of Mariamne who would follow her husband so unquestioningly to death. Woman is regarded now as a soulless possession to be fought over and carried off by the victor.

Already we have seen enough of Mariamne to know just how deeply such a blow at her honour would wound. In the splendid scene between Herod and his wife before his departure, there is given a vivid insight into Mariamne's principles of life. To her that love is nothing which cannot trust nor does love, in her opinion, consist in a continual protestation of one's fidelity and readiness to make a sacrifice, but rather in the courage to make, if necessary, the sacrifice demanded. Love itself neither hesitates nor doubts the love of another for, conscious of its own faithfulness, it cannot fear the infidelity of which it itself is incapable.

"Man stellt auf Thaten keinen Schuldsehein aus Viel weniger auf Schmerzen und Opfer Wie die Verzweiflung zwar, ich fühl's sie bringen Doch nie die Liebe sie verlangen kann!" (1)

These are her words in response to Herod's appeal that she swear to kill herself should she hear of her husband's death. The kindling fear in Herod's mind has, for the moment, smothered his better nature and he asks for something now which Mariamne feels he has no right to demand. The appeal, furthermore, is an illogical one, she argues, for what gives value to an oath save the personality of the one who swears it?

(1) W. II. 220.
"Und leistete ich den, was bürgte Dir
Dass ich ihn hielt? Immer nur ich selbst
Mein Wesen, wie Du's kennst. D'rum denke ich
Du fängst, da Du mit Hoffnung und Vertrau'n
Doch enden musst, sogleich mit beiden an!"(1)

By asking for this oath Herod has, she believes, cheapened her fidelity. He has, if unintentionally, sought to make it a thing to be bound by the external claims of obligation rather than by the internal law of love, and thus it becomes a duty rather than a privilege. Herod, in his eagerness for an assurance of her affection, has mistrusted the sacrifice which her love will willingly offer and in so doing has injured her personality. Thus she refuses to comply with his wish thereby strengthening Herod's suspicion and providing an instigation for the deed which is later to wound her so cruelly.

When, at length, therefore, Marianne learns of Herod's order to Joseph, we feel no surprise at her reaction. The strange conduct of her guardian has for some time oppressed her with an uncertain fear, yet her love and faith have prevented it from taking actual shape. Now, however, the suspicion is verified, Herod after all has not dared to leave her in a world where an Anthony still lives and, to assure his own comfort, has disregarded her personality and taken the expression of her fidelity out of her own hands. The realization of his doubt is horrible and still more the consciousness of the injury to her nature. "Von jetzt erst fängt mein Leben an, bis heute träumt' ich!"(2) With horror she sees her

(1) W. II. 221. (2) W. II. 266.
present position as the real one, the past of apparent respect and trust an illusion, and she cries out in agony: "Ich war ihm nur ein Ding und weiter Nichts."(1)

The return of the king finds Mariamne stunned while Herod, full of good spirits at his unexpected safety, fondly hopes to resume the old happy relations. An understanding is, however, impossible and little by little the realization breaks upon Herod that Mariamne knows of his deed of distrust and is unwilling to forgive "Nimmer lösch' ich's in ihr aus!"(2) He understands his wife's nature well enough to know that such an act can never be justified and yet, forcing itself upon this feeling of remorse, comes another suspicion

"Am welchen Preis erfuhrst
Du dies Geheimniss? Wohlfeil war es nicht!
Mir stand ein Kopf zum Pfand!"(3)

The disintegration of his character has begun; suspicion has been given a hearing and its voice now cannot be stifled.

The second call from Anthony gives a momentary flash of hope for a reconciliation, but it is all too soon extinguished. "Er zieht noch einmal fort! Dank, Ewiger Dank!"(4) cries Mariamne in the ecstasy of renewed hope and in her heart is the prayer that now Herod will reveal the nobility of his nature and thereby prove that the former act was the impulse of a thoughtless moment.

"Jetzt werd' ich's sehen, ob's bloss ein Fieber war,
Das Fieber der gereizten Leidenschaft
Das ihn verwirrte oder ob sich mir

(1) W.II.267.  (2) W.II.278.  (3) W.II.279.  (4) W.II.287.
In klarer That sein Innerstes verrieth.  
Jetzt werd' ich's sehen!"(1)

Herod is now, however, completely mastered by his suspicion and Mariamme's rejoicing cry is read as an indication of her infidelity.

"Mag ich auch an Deiner Menschheit  
Gefrevelt haben, das erkenne ich klar  
An Deiner Liebe frevelte ich nicht!"(2)

The moment of a possible understanding has passed with the dawn of a new doubt in Herod's mind. "Das Rad der Zeit" has been turned back in vain and the repetition of the former brutal act comes as a deathblow to reconciliation and atonement.

Mariamme has now been insulted and degraded beyond the limits of reparation. She has been treated for a second time as a senseless possession and for a second time also her fidelity has been questioned. Now there lies nothing before her but revenge and death. Herod has proven himself twice in relation to her and once again in his treatment of Soemus, a tyrant, a feelingless oppressor, and there cannot be a revival of former happiness. "Du stehst zu ihm wie ich" she says to Soemus,

"Du bist wie ich in Deinem Heiligsten  
Gekränkt, wie ich zum Ding herabgesetzt!  
Er ist ein Freund wie er ein Gatte ist  
Komm auf mein Fest!"(3)

The feast is to be her great revenge. Herod has doubted

(1) W.II.288.  (2) W.II.289.  (3) W.II.308.
her love and now she will give him cause. True, he is reported
dead but she does not believe the report. Her self-respect
must still be reestablished and now he shall see her rejoice as
he had expected. She will dance madly, rapturously but, al­
though the feast must appear a thanksgiving, it will be the
dance not of joy but of death. So it is effected and Mariamne,
dancing in wild frenzy, performs to perfection the part of the
faithless wife rejoicing at her release. The return of Herod
in no degree changes her attitude and with satisfaction she
realizes that her revenge is within reach.

Seeing before him the justification of all his suspicions,
Herod summons Mariamne before a tribunal on the charge of
infidelity, "Du habest Deinen König und Gemahl betrogen"(1) is
the accusation made at the trial, but Mariamne, refusing to de­
fend herself in any way, replies only,

"Betrogen? Wie? Unmöglich!
Hat er mich nicht gefunden wie er mich
Zu finden dachte? Nicht bei Tanz und Spiel?"(2)

The evidence of her actions supports Herod's opinion and
Mariamne is sentenced to death. Now her complete revenge is at
hand and to Titus, the Roman, she entrusts its fulfillment. He
alone learns from her lips the truth and he is chosen as the
agent through whom Herod shall learn of his injustice. Having
thus revealed the purity of her soul, she can meet the death
which fate demands.

"Kann ich noch leben?
Kann ich mit Dem noch leben, der in mir

(1) W.II.341. (2) W.II.341
Nicht einmal Gottes Ebenbild mehr ehrt?" (1)

Death is inevitable but now she can meet it willingly as a release from an impossible world. She was born too soon. But though she, as an individual, perishes, the principle for which she has stood is triumphant. Through the heralds of the new-born babe in Bethlehem we learn of the dawn of the new era.

(1) W.II.353.
**B. Agnes Bernauer**

In his next great play, *Agnes Bernauer*, Hebbel depicts another beautiful and attractive heroine, but this time his sympathies are obviously more with the man who was forced to become her bitterest foe. In some respects *Agnes Bernauer* can be compared with *Maria Magdalena*. In both plays the problem arises from the conflict between the individual and organized society. In the case of *Maria Magdalena* this problem is a purely social one, it is the indictment of a society whose false standards force an erring girl like Klara out of the world. *Agnes Bernauer* on the other hand presents a political conflict - that between the individual and the state. The heroine by her excessive beauty becomes an obstacle to the existence of the state and as a consequence she must fall as a sacrifice to political security.

Just as Genoveva stood apart from her age in her virtue, Judith in her courage, so Agnes, in her excessive beauty, is abnormal; she does not fit into the groove which society has allotted to her and thus she must be swept aside. Her beauty becomes, though innocently, the cause of a breach between father and son, of a rising between farmers and townspeople and eventually of civil war. Thus she is dangerous to the general welfare and, as a consequence, her own single happiness must be offered for the security of the masses.

Agnes herself is completely innocent, everyone is willing to admit that. Even Herzog Ernst, who as a prudent statesman feels her death to be a political necessity, signs her death
warrant with a feeling of genuine sorrow and his words express his emotion as well as his motive for the cruel act, "Es ist ein Unglück für sie und kein Glück für mich, aber im Namen der Wittwen und Waisen, die der Krieg machen würde, im Namen der Städte, die er (Albrecht) in Asche legte, der Dörfer, die er zerstörte: Agnes Bernauer fahr' hin!" (1) With these words he gives his signature and Agnes dies in order that the horrible consequences of war might be averted.

It is a mark of Hebbel's great genius that he has been able to make us feel sympathy for both parties of the struggle. Our emotions are undoubtedly engaged on the side of the lovers; we feel that it is cruel to the extreme to disturb their happiness, yet our impartial judgment compels us to recognize the justice of the duke's cause. Hebbel puts the case for either side vividly before us; we see, on the one hand, the height of happiness open to the individual when personal wishes are followed, while, on the other, lie political confusion, rebellion, war. It is with this that Albrecht and his wife are to buy personal happiness, but the price is too great. The sacrifice of many to the good of a mere two is contrary to all human law and instead of individual pleasure being purchased with political chaos, political order is bought at the cost of personal happiness, at the cost of a woman's life.

With rare delicacy Hebbel has created in Agnes Bernauer one of his most lovely heroines. In her innocence and devotion she invites comparison with Genoveva, but is much more vital and appealing. Genoveva, to be sure, played always a passive

(1) W.III.204.
rôle; the author purposely kept her, for the most part, in-active, yet, although this is true also in a great measure of Agnes, though she, too, is the object not the agent of the action, yet she is much more convincing than the suffering Genoveva.

The opening act presents the "Engel von Augsburg" in her customary surroundings. She is poor and of humble birth, yet she stands out from her fellows in almost startling contrast. They, too, are conscious of the difference, some feeling a genuine admiration for her charm and regarding her almost as an angel, while others, especially the young girls of her own age, look upon her with jealousy, grudging her the attention she receives and hating her for her remarkable beauty.

The scene between Agnes and Barbara in the first act pictures very vividly the relationship between the surgeon's daughter and the other girls of the town. Here we see all the jealousy that one woman can feel for the beauty of another, the spite amounting almost to hate, while in marked contrast is the calm simplicity of Agnes, her sorrow at being the cause of ill-feeling and her ignorance of the true reason. She knows she is beautiful, no doubt, it would have been impossible for her to have escaped that knowledge, yet she cannot realize to what an extent. This is no mere temporary charm of youth; it is something very much deeper, more far-reaching in its influence. This is the beauty that is later to plunge the state into civil war and which, in atonement, is to fall as a sacrifice to peace.

The immediate infatuation of Albrecht for Agnes is the natural consequence of their meeting. The mere sight of her
inflames him with a desire to win her for his wife and soon all thought of his duty to the state vanishes. He knows, of course, that a woman of her humble birth would never be allowed to ascend the throne, that his own succession might even be barred, yet there is not a moment's hesitation. He is now the individual asserting his own rights and he will recognize no other law but his own will.

Agnes, however, is not easily swept away by the flattering thought of a man's homage, even when that man is infinitely her superior in rank. She loves Albrecht sincerely, has indeed from her first sight of him, yet she is sane enough to see that this love is a menace to his good. "Ich frage Dich, ob Du mich lieben kannst" so Albrecht had eagerly questioned upon their first meeting, but Agnes, restraining, no doubt, her feeling as an individual, had reminded him of his position. "Das fragt eine Fürstentochter, doch nicht mich!"(1) She sees the relationship as a dangerous one, that such a match would be unconventional and hazardous. With dread she recalls the malicious words of the jealous Barbara. "Wer rief mir doch heute morgen zu, geh' in's Kloster?" she cries with a realization of the only alternative open to her, "Mir dacht, ich sehe jetzt einen Finger, der mich hinein weist!"(2) If Albrecht's love is to be renounced, if she must force him to leave her with his heart free and his mission to his country as his sole inspiration, then for her there is no longer a life to live. The primary urge of her existence has been sacrificed and her future would be nothing but a weary waiting for the

(1) W.III.156. (2) W.III.157.
releasing hand of death.

This is the conflict in Agnes' mind and she grasps the difficulty in all its seriousness. On the one hand is infinite personal happiness as the wife of the man she loves, on the other is the sacrifice of her own desire to the good of the state. Yet, after all, she is a human being; she, too, has a life to live and happiness to win or lose as fate may decree. Thus, with a complete consciousness of the step she takes, she follows the course of instinct, crying in warning to her father, "Kein Wort von Gefahr! Erinnert mich nicht, dass Muth dazu gehört!" (1) and then adding with courage in the face of foreboding evil "und müsst' ich's mit dem Tode bezahlen - das thätte Nichts!" This is Agnes' only sin. She has followed the path of individual desire rather than that of political wisdom and thus she embraces her own ruin. By this step, the happiness of two individuals is assured but on the other hand lies the misery of many. The normal course of things has been diverted into an unnatural channel and it must be turned back even if it cost the sweeping aside of the barriers which have altered its direction.

Agnes and Abrecht find happiness, but not security, yet there is no sense of regret on their part for the stand which they have taken. Agnes is now completely happy and although in the moment of her new found joy she is still conscious of the inequality of the marriage and, with humility, waves Albrecht's gifts away with the words "Nicht doch! was bliebe noch für eine Prinzessin!" (2) Yet the complete satisfaction

(1) W.III.172. (2) W.III.186.
of the situation counterbalances any qualms she might feel for the future. In the back of her mind, however, there lurks still one uneasy thought. "Es ist nicht Furcht, was mich bewegt!" she assures her husband, fear has been dispelled or at least conquered, yet there is something else - "es thut mir weh, wenn ich mir denke, dass ganz Augsburg mich für etwas Anderes, als für Deine Gemahlin hält."(1) It is a regret that the secret of her real position must be kept, but even in this she has courage to face the world if it means the possibility of their continued happiness. "Doch ich will es gern mein ganzes Leben lang ertragen, wenn's nur zwischen Dir und Deinen Vater Friede bleibt."(2) She has been bold in accepting this love and she is resolved to be bold in enduring its consequences.

These consequences are, unfortunately, not long in presenting themselves. Already the state has seen the menace and is resolved to crush the disturbing influence. The succession is in danger, the people restless and rebellious, the country on the verge of civil war and the cause of all this lies in nothing more than the beauty of a woman. "Sie trug keinen Schleier und schnitt sich die Haare nicht ab!"(2) This is Agnes's sole crime in the eyes of the statesman Pfeifing and for this she is to be condemned. "Es ist doch auch entsetzlich dass sie sterben soll bloss weil sie schön und sittsam war!"(3) he argues to Herzog Ernst, who nods in agreement. Yet there is no alternative. In the death of the invalid Adolph, who had become successor in Albrecht's stead, the duke

sees the hand of God and believes the only way to draw Albrecht back to his duty is by the death of Agnes. "Das Sacrament ist mir heilig" (1) Ernst stoutly maintains and he rejects the suggestions of the retirement of the wife to a cloister. Albrecht can only be made free by death and thus it is with this assurance that his father signs the warrant decreeing her doom.

Agnes, however, is, we feel, prepared even for this drastic measure. Her modesty had persuaded her from the outset that a girl of her station could not make, in the eyes of the world, a fit wife for a reigning duke. She has entered this difficult position fully conscious of the dangers inherent to it, glorying in the happiness it has brought to both herself and her husband yet grimly aware that this joy cannot last. So sure has she been that her life will not long be granted her that she has even had her own vault built, the sight of which offers her comfort rather than dread. "Es ist mir eine Freude, dass ich die Stätte, wo ich meinen längsten Schlaf halten soll, jetzt schon kenne, ja dass ich sie betreten und dort im voraus für mich beten kann." (2) The opinion of the world as regards her act of marrying Albrecht has been from the beginning inimical, she knows that and it is significant that she can sympathize with the public view. When she hears the announcement of Adolph's death, the third bereavement in the royal house during the last half year, a wave of realization sweeps over her. "So bin ich wieder Schuld?" she cries in grief at the sorrow she is causing, "O

(1) W.III.203.  (2) W.III.207.
The sudden seizure of Agnes during the temporary absence of her husband comes, therefore, as a shock to the victim but not wholly as a surprise. So conscious is she of the state's attitude to her that she needs no explanation for this bold deed but reads in it the doom which she has long foreseen. With infinite self-control and silent courage she gives herself up to her enemies without a struggle, yet, remembering even now that she is a duke's wife, she warns them of the consequences of their daring. "Ich folge Euch" she says quietly "aber vergesst nicht es ist Herzog Albrechts Gemahlin die Ihr in seinem eigenen Schloss überfällt."(2)

Her imprisonment, instead of showing her in the power of her goalers, proves her to be, in the fullest sense, free. Here the noble traits of her character are thrown into high relief against the temptation she must meet. Death lies before her - death or an impossible alternative, the renunciation of her husband. "Ich mich von ihm trennen" she cries in horror at the mere suggestion, "eher von mir selbst."(3) The thought of buying safety for herself by such a means is to her abhorrent. She who has bound herself to him in the face of danger, to fail in her pledge now that death is the payment! The idea is degrading and, waving Pfeifing back with indignation, she gives herself up to death. "Fragt ihn, wenn ich dahin bin" she cries in her last triumph, "ob er lieber eine Unwürdige verfluchen als eine Todte beweinen mögte! Ich kenne seine Antwort! Nein, nein, Ihr bringt Euer Opfer nicht

(1) W.III.209.  (2) W.III.215.  (3) W.III.217.
so weit, dass es sich selbst befleckt. Rein war mein erster Hauch, rein soll auch mein letzter sein! Thut mir wie Ihr müsst und dürft, ich will's leiden! Bald weiss ich, ob's mit Recht geschah!"(1)

The sacrifice has been made and, in due course, peace is once more restored. By the death of Agnes, the course of events flows back once again into its natural channel, the world order is again established and the law of the whole is supreme over the law of the individual. All that now remains to be accomplished is the conversion of Albrecht to the broader viewpoint, to the realization that the state, too, has a claim upon him and, at that, the larger claim. Gradually this also is achieved. "Ich wüsste nicht," he says sadly, but with awakening understanding "dass der Tod darauf steht eine Perle aufzuheben, statt sie zu zertreten, aber ich hab's gethan und will's büssen."(2) With these words his new life begins, a life in which every faculty is dedicated to his country and, in a thankful consciousness of the success of his great battle, Herzog Ernst can now offer his homage to the beauty he was forced to destroy. "Was ich ihr im Leben versagen musste, kann ich ihr im Tode gewähren und ich thu' es gern denn ich weiss, dass sie's verdient."(3) Such is his tribute to Agnes' loveliness and innocence, while Albrecht, with a vision of his new place in life, swears with resolution "Ich will - ich will was ich noch kann!"(4)

Though, in one way, as has been said, the play Agnes Bernauer may be regarded as a parallel to Maria Magdalene, in

(1) W.III.222. (2) W.III.232. (3) W.III.234. (4) W.III.234.
other ways the character of Agnes may more easily be compared with that of Genoveva. Here again is very obvious Hebbel's changed views on woman. The ideal of the colorless, submissive victim has yielded to a live warm-blooded girl, who, while just as virtuous and innocent, yet fights for her happiness. When she loses, she accepts her fate with proud dignity - every inch a queen.
C. Rhodope

Emil Kuh, Hebbel's biographer, in commenting upon Gyges und sein Ring, remarks, "Hebbel verdient un dieses Gedicht's willen von den Frauen als der Frauenlob unserer Tage gekrönt zu werden." The words are a sincere appreciation of the work which, standing beside Herodes und Mariamne, may be regarded as the highwater mark of Hebbel's dramatic achievement, and surely the praise is not extreme. Rhodope herself is one of the dramatist's loveliest monuments to woman and in her problem we find one of the most sympathetic presentations ever given to the individual rights of woman.

Rhodope may be regarded as the champion of her sex, yet her struggle is not for emancipation in our modern sense; nothing could be more foreign to her retiring nature than a desire to infringe upon the sphere of man. The only thing she demands is the recognition of her personal rights, the rights of woman in the sphere assigned to her as peculiarly her own. The same note had, of course, been struck effectively some year's before in Herodes und Mariamne but not with quite so fine a touch.

To Herodotus Hebbel owes the broad framework of his plot but, as in former cases, he has treated his source with the greatest possible freedom. The coarse realism of the original has here been relieved by a softening veil of unreality and the action now takes place in a dim, almost mythical, region. Yet even with the addition of many fanciful elements, the play
never recedes into a shadowy obscurity; never do we feel that this is the tragedy only of fictitious characters. The magic ring has given us admission to this mystical country and its tragedy for the hour becomes our own.

The play is, in many respects, a counterpart to Herodes und Mariamne and perhaps it was even the dramatist's intention that it should be so regarded. Each is a tragedy of woman's rights and in each the catastrophe arises from man's disregard of these rights. Herod, the man of uncontrolled passion, places his wife under the sword lest, at his death, she should marry another; Kandaules, the man obeying always the impulse of the moment, with the pride of possession, allows his friend a sight of his wife unveiled. Both have wounded woman's soul; Mariamne feels that she has been regarded as a "thing", a possession to pass from one hand to another, one without the strength or the love to prevent such a disgrace by a voluntary death. Rhodope's modesty has been violated; she has been exhibited as a costly jewel, as one devoid of the will or the right to object to such treatment. Yet woman, too, has her own code of life; she, too, is a personality with feelings to be considered and rights to be observed and when the laws of her sphere are broken, it is for her to demand atonement. This is the incentive to the action of both Mariamne and Rhodope. They have both been regarded as chattels; the most sacred rights of their innermost beings have been violated and in each case the wrong is intensified by the fact that it is perpetrated by the one person from whom each has a right to expect understanding and consideration.
Rhodope herself, rather elusive and ethereal perhaps, is the embodiment of "die Idee der Sitte," the typical mystical and dreamy princess of India, living a life of contented retirement from the world with the beauty of her face veiled from the sight of all men but that one who, by marriage, has won the right to enjoy it. The veil to her is the symbol of her purity, the barrier which divides the sphere of woman from that of man; behind her protecting veil she is secluded from the grosser world of man, within this calm and serene domain of woman.

From the very early lines of the play there is a marked emphasis upon the modesty of Rhodope; Kandaules himself is keenly conscious of this virtue in his wife. Being himself a man of another race, a Libyan, and, moreover, a man of advanced views, the extreme to which Rhodope pushes her retirement he sees as almost unnecessary. He admires her beyond measure, her beauty and charm of manner are perfection in his eyes, yet an uncertain discontent oppresses him. He alone knows of this priceless possession, "Keiner ahnt wie reich ich bin" (1) he complains to his friend Gyges, and without the knowledge that another envies him his good fortune, he cannot be completely happy.

"Blast auch der frische Wind an allen Orten
Die Schleier weg; Du haltest den Deinen fest." (2)

Such are his words to Rhodope, words mixed with admiration and reproach. He feels but little respect for convention or traditions of any kind and utterly fails to realize what the veil means to her. He is proud of her fidelity to him, yet

(1) W.III.267. (2) W.III.261.
deep down in his heart he feels a resentment that he alone should know of the worth of the great treasure he possesses.

With this element of discontent ever present in his love, it needs only a slight incentive to persuade Kandaues to gratify his desire. A man of impulse, accustomed always to satisfy the whim of the moment, he sees in the magic ring of Gyges a means of proving to another the value of the jewel he keeps hidden. "Ich bin erst glücklich" he confesses to his friend, "wenn Dein Mund mir sagt, ich sei's." (1) The proposal is, however, to Gyges, the Grecian, repellent. With the principles of a more highly cultured civilization behind him, he sees the consequences to a woman of Rhodope's sensitive fibre. "O nimmermehr" he remonstrates,

"Für den Mann wär's eine Schmach
Doch für ein Weib, und für ein Weib, wie sie
Das selbst bei Tag - " (2)

His objections are, however, cut short. Kandaules answers with the decision of finality, "Sie kann's ja nie erfahren." (3) The ring is the medium by which the deed may be rendered possible and, since Rhodope will not know, there can be no harm done. In the selfish impulse of the moment he is blind to the fact that the wrong is even more intense when covered by a cloak of secrecy and it is this that Gyges, in the moment of temptation is to realize so acutely. Now, with his fears stilled, if not dispelled, he agrees to the deed but he cannot, in the height of his temptation, carry it through in all its gross injustice. He realizes, at last, the enormity

(1) W.III.267. (2) W.III.267. (3) W.III.267.
of the act and by a turn of the ring makes himself, for a moment, visible to Rhodope's eyes. "Denn frevelhaft erschien das Wagnis mir"(1) he explains to the indignant Kandaules and when the latter remonstrates, "Ich hatte es Dir erlaubt"(2) he answers in a thought which strikes the very root of the tragedy,

"Wohl! Doch mir war in jener schwülen Stunde
Als hättest Du nicht das Recht dazu gehabt."(3)

The tragic consequences are immediately apparent. "Du bist ein And'rer, Gyges, als Du warst"(4) says Kandaules in puzzled concern at his friend's uneasiness, and then, with dawning realization, "Du liebst Rhodopen!"(4) "Herr, ich kann Dir Blass nicht länger dienen"(5) replies Gyges sadly. This is the first and the least of the tragic results; the sight of Rhodope's beauty has awakened love in Gyges' heart and his continued existence here is impossible. "Niemals dürfen wir uns wieder seh'n"(6) decrees Kandaules as they part, while each is filled with remorse for the act which is to bring such dreadful results.

The sacrilege has, however, been committed and no earthly power can now avert its fatal consequences. Rhodope, although as yet ignorant of the part which her husband has played in the deed, and, in fact, still unconscious that Gyges was the offending person, feels yet the shame which her modesty has suffered. A strange eye has seen her unveiled and thus her womanhood has been outraged. "Ich bin befleckt wie niemals

noch ein Weib." (1) A curse rests upon her now whose taint cannot be washed off and she cries in distress to her gods,

"Ruht denn ein Fluch auf mir
Ein Fluch von Anbeginn, der Eure Kraft
Im Styx gebunden hält, dass Ihr den Frevel
Den Keiner gegen meine letzte Sclave
Nur zu versuchen wagt, an mir selbst
Gelingen liesst, als wär's die frömmste That?" (2)

With joy almost she receives her husband believing that he, feeling with her the monstrous blot upon her soul, comes to purify her by her death. It is, however, not as the avenger but as the accused that he stands before her, while Rhodope, in her complete trust of him, never for a moment suspects his position. "Ich habe Dich gekränkt" he cries remorsefully, "es soll nicht mehr geschehen," (3) but Rhodope replies sadly "Zu spät! zu spät." The harm has been done and Kandaules' protection and love cannot now restore her to her former purity.

Then, at length, comes a moment when the tragic course might be stayed. Rhodope, recalling the outrage of the previous night, bases her proof of its reality upon the loss of the diamond which Gyges had slipped from her neck. This Kandaules produces and, in a burst of thanksgiving, Rhodope sees all her fears dispelled. It was all, then, an illusion as her husband would have her believe and she had doubted without cause. "O Tag des Glücks" she cries in ecstasy and then adds in words so weighted with unconscious irony,

(1) W.III.288. (2) W.III.289. (3) W.III.292.
"Ich sorgte immer
Es sei mehr stolz auf den Besitz als Liebe
In der Empfindung, die Dich an mich fesselt
Und Deine Neigung brauche schon den Neid
Der Anderen, um nicht völlig zu erlöschen
Nun fürcht' ich das nicht mehr."(1)

How little she realizes the bitter truth of these words which bear down on Kandaules with all their dreadful significance. "Stolz auf den Besitz," this exactly was the incentive to his act and with horror he realizes his weakness. "Und niemals sollst Du's wieder fürchten"(2) he adds with contrition, seeking to reassure his wife.

Yet tragedies are not so averted and the moment is passed before it can be grasped. Rhodope's faith in her husband has been strengthened but events are not destined to rest there. Kandaules, desiring to comfort his wife whom he feels he has of late neglected, speaks the very words which reawaken her fears. "Mein Günstling Gyges geht!"(3) A still worse suspicion rushes to her mind "Kein Anderer ist 's als Gyges!"(4) and then comes the realization of Kandaules' fault,

"Und dieser Gatte, dieser König zückt
Nicht Schwert, noch Dolch er lasst den Frevler flieh'n." (5)

She has then been doubly wronged, first by the wanton Gyges and secondly by the husband who would not avenge her shame. Now it is time for her to act; she herself must be the means of her own purification; she, the woman, must bring Gyges back and compel her husband to avenge her wrong.

(1) W.T.II.297. (2) W.T.II.297. (3) W.III.298. (4) W.III.301.
"Dann sprech', ich zu Kandaules: hier bin ich, 
Dort der Günstling, wähle, dieser Dolch 
Ist für mich selbst, wenn nicht Dein Schwert für ihn." (1)

Horrible as the situation may now appear to the wronged woman, still she has not yet received the full force of the blow. That she has been spiritually injured she knows only too well, but as yet she little suspects her husband's guilt. "Je mehr ich sinne um so weniger begreif' ich meinen Gatten"(2) she reflects in bewilderment but her thoughts are concerned only with the haunting question, why did he not kill Gyges? Then, in the midst of her speculation, comes another gleam of hope, terrible in its tragic intensity since it is so soon to be extinguished. One possible explanation still remains; Kandaules may have arranged Gyges' death secretly so that his wife should be spared the shame. "Habt Dank, Ihr Ewigen, auch das kann sein!"(3) she cries with renewed hope, but almost before the words are out of her mouth, Gyges appears before her unharmed.

Now only is Rhodope to learn how deeply she has been wronged and how very much more difficult is to be the atonement. Kandaules, confronted with the accused Gyges, exposes the truth regarding the horrible night,

"Ich bin vor Allem 
Ein Mann der für den Frevel den er selbst 
Beging, nicht einen Andern sterben lässt."(4)
The secret of his inaction is now revealed and the truth

(1) W.III.302. (2) W.III.307. (3) W.III.308. (4) W.III.316.
strikes Rhodope with terrible impact. The atonement is now not so easily effected; the death of Gyges is no longer necessary or sufficient, but in his place the husband must die and the friend must become the husband. This is, in Rhodope's eyes, the only possible solution. "Wir dürfen Beide nicht fragen ob's uns schwer wird oder leicht."(1) So she reminds Gyges in charging him to kill Kandaules and she, for her part, never, for a moment, allows herself such a question. This is the only course and it must be followed however cruel the torment.

Kandaules, too, sees the justice of the plan; he has sinned through selfish pride and he is ready to pay the price, "Wer frevelte

    Muss Büße thun und wer nicht lächelnd opfert
    Der opfert nicht!"(2)

With these words he prepares for the combat with Gyges, promising his opponent that his defence will be whole-hearted and his defeat genuine. "Ich muss ihr zeigen dass ich so viel Schönheit nicht leicht verliere."(3) But he was destined to lose.

By Kandaules' death Rhodope feels herself only partly avenged. The guilty one has met his judgment but still the stranger lives who has seen her face. One more step remains to be taken and, without hesitation, she prepares for her last sacrifice. Before the altar of the goddess Hestia Rhodope becomes Gyges' wife, then, plunging a dagger into her heart, she bids him an immediate farewell,

(1) W.III.320. (2) W.III.332. (3) W.III.337.
"Ich bin entsühnt

Denn Keiner sah mich mehr, als dem es ziemte.

Jetzt aber scheide ich mich so von Dir!"(1)

It has been charged that the punishment by far outweighs the crime, but such a comment fails to appreciate the character and ideals of Rhodope. If she is inexorable in her demands, it is because her most sacred instincts have been violated, her soul degraded. From her point of view her purity can only be restored by the course of action she pursues. To her, as to Mariamne, life itself is nothing in comparison with the loss of spiritual ideals.

(1) W.III.344.
D. Brunhild and Kriemhild

Hebbel's last achievement was a dramatization of the medieval German epic, Das Niebelungenlied, a task which was attempted also by other German dramatists with varying degrees of success. Hebbel's Trilogy undoubtedly far excels the work of his rivals, but even his treatment, with all its wealth of beauty, colour and vigour, lacks, to a certain extent, that vital dramatic nerve we have come to look for in a play of Hebbel. The material is essentially epic, the action, not the characterization, is its main quality. Although Hebbel has adapted the source to fit his own particular purposes and greatly deepened the psychological motivation, he has, nevertheless, been handicapped by the complexity of the plot. Thus although as a dramatized epic it is a masterpiece and, though furthermore in such characters as Hagen, Kriemhild and Gunther's queen Brunhild, he has created intensely realistic persons, there is lacking that subtlety and fineness of characterization which is so marked a quality of the earlier plays.

In neither Brunhild, the Valkyrie, nor Kriemhild, then, can we hope to encounter the highly sensitive and complex personality of a Mariamne or a Rhodope. The painting here is done with a coarser brush, in brilliant colours certainly, but without the intricately delicate detail of the former portraits. Brunhild and Kriemhild are vivid indeed, but they are the heroines of an epic and in the epic flow of the plot
individual characters are necessarily somewhat submerged. Yet it must not be imagined that Hebbel has treated them indifferentley; he has, in fact, made a marked effort to emphasize their qualities and so motivate their actions that they become more comprehensible to our modern point of view.

In Siegfrieds Tod the second part of the trilogy the two heroines are presented side by side, for the first time. The contrast is a striking one even to the persons of the court. "Es ist ein Unterschied wie Tag und Nacht" says Truchs while Wulf, the champion of Brunhild, replies stoutly "Wer läugnet das? Doch Mancher liebt die Nacht." The one is the last of her kind, the superwoman endued with the strength of a man yet at heart wholly feminine, while the other is the gentle, tender woman with an infinite capacity for love yet with the hidden ruthlessness of a man in seeking a just revenge. This side of her character is, however, not even suggested until after Siegfried's death, for it has never before been brought to light and only when her love has thus been attacked, does she show herself in all her grim resolution.

Hebbel has made the most of those little incidents which help to bring out the less conspicuous qualities of these two heroines, and these scenes number among them some of the most exquisite passages in the whole trilogy. The scene of Brunhild's arrival in Worms is one of these which, in its colorful poetry, stands out in almost lyrical beauty. Here the superwoman of the past is brought into the world of civilization and, with the pagan love of beauty, her eye, in attempting to

(1) W.IV.80.
accustom itself to the strangeness of the southern landscape, lights with rapture upon the new Nature before her. The red, yellow and green of the flowers delights her and when Kriemhild plucks a violet for her, she exclaims with pleasure at its remarkable fragrance,

"O der ist schön!
Und diese kleine Blume haucht ihn aus,
Die einzige die mein Auge nicht bemerkte?
Der mögt' ich einen süßen Namen geben
Doch hat sie wohl schon einen." (1)

This little incident, insignificant as far as the main plot is concerned, is not only remarkably beautiful as an isolated passage, but is important also in revealing the feminine delicacy of BrunhiId's character which her masculine strength has caused to be concealed. Now, however, she is the conquered woman; man has, in some inexplicable manner, overcome her and thus to man she now feels herself bound in duty and submission. Her last revolt is on her wedding night, but when conquered she expresses in her words to Gunther the perfect obedience which she feels to be her obligation,

"In Dir und mir
Hat Mann und Weib für alle Ewigkeit
Den letzten Kampf um's Vorrecht ausgekämpft
Du bist der Sieger und ich fordere Nichts
Als dass Du Dich nun selbst mit all den Ehren
Wonach ich geizte, schmücken sollst." (2)

Gunther, her husband, now becomes her sole pride; her one de-

(1) W.IV.72.    (2) W.IV.99.
sire is to see him all-powerful since she believes it is he who has overcome her. She can graciously acknowledge her defeat and honour the man who has proven himself her superior. All too soon, however, she realizes her misplaced homage and learns that her instinctive attraction to Siegfried had been justified. At once her feeling for Siegfried is transformed into the most bitter hate and she demands vengeance upon the man who has deceived her.

Kriemhild, vexed by the somewhat arrogant remarks of Brunhild in her praise of Gunther and the consequent deroga-
tion of Siegfried, reveals the fact that it was Siegfried not Gunther who had twice conquered the proud princess. The revelation comes from the irritation of a moment and Kriem-
hild, at once, sees her mistake, but the harm is already done. Brunhild is a woman endowed with all the reserve and delicacy of her sex and just as Rhodope and Mariamne felt themselves spiritually wronged, so too is Brunhild bitterly conscious of the injustice of this ruse. Twice she has been tricked by unfair methods; she who could be conquered only by the greatest hero, has been robbed of her supremacy and made the subordinate of an inferior man. Thus her self-respect has been destroyed and in anger she cries for atonement. "Das ist noch mehr als Mord und dafür will ich Rache, Rache, Rache!"(1)

Her love for Siegfried, the real hero, has been the cause of the growing complications, a love which is represented as being more an instinct than a passion. She, as the last superwoman, has been drawn by an inexplicable attraction to

(1) W.IV.113.
Siegfried, the last of the supermen, and from this attraction arises the catastrophe which results in the demolition of the old race of giants. Hagen characterizes this love in the following words,

"Ein Zauber ist's
Durch den sich ihr Geschlecht erhalten will
Und der die letzte Riesin ohne Lust
Wie ohne Wahl, zum letzten Riesen treibt." (1)

Kriemhild has driven Brunhild to this thirst for revenge quite unintentionally. From the very first appearance of Brunhild in Worms her attitude has been one of kind consideration and good comradeship. She has welcomed her as a sister and has accepted with good-will the criticism of the latter regarding her marriage with Siegfried. Yet Kriemhild is, after all, a woman and the taunts of Brunhild at the expense of her husband become at length unendurable and in a second of scorn she reveals the supremacy of her husband. In a moment she is filled with regret; her tender heart repents the torture she has dealt and she begs Brunhild to realize the instigation which her arrogance has offered.

"Ich weiss wie schwer ich sie gekränkt und werde
Mir's nie vergeben ja, ich mögte eher
Dass ich's erlitten hätte als gethan." (2)

Such are her words of regret to Hagen, but it is, unfortunately, now too late for any understanding. Kriemhild has unwittingly revealed the one thing which for her husband's safety she should have kept secret. The catastrophe is now inevitable; Siegfried

(1) W.IV.132.  (2) W.IV.124.
is doomed and the gentle Kriemhild is soon to be forced by fate to become his ruthless avenger.

Hebbel, with a remarkable delicacy of treatment, has revealed in a charming manner the love of Kriemhild and Siegfried. There is a lyrical beauty in the conversations between the two and the intense grief which Kriemhild feels at his death is readily understood. Yet now, for the first time, do we see that side of her character which her former happiness has not brought to light. With frenzied horror she realizes the infidelity of Hagen, the champion of Brunhild and she swears revenge against the murderer of her husband. Ute, her mother, grasping the possible issues of such a resolution, begs her to control her anger, "Halt ein! Du wirst Dein ganzes Haus verderben."\(^{(1)}\) but Kriemhild, throwing herself on the dead body of Siegfried, steels herself for her horrible task, "Es mag geschehn! Dem hier ist's überzählt!"\(^{(2)}\)

From this point Kriemhild's one object in life is revenge. Brunhild had cried for revenge by the death of Siegfried and through Hagen had achieved it, while now Kriemhild in turn cries for the avenging of that death. Her mind is no longer concerned with the things of the present but longs continually for that moment when Hagen shall be forced to pay for his treachery. To achieve this revenge she is willing to sacrifice her own comfort and security and when, after many years of impatient waiting, a possible means of gaining her ends presents itself in the offer of marriage from Attila, king of the Huns, she grasps it without hesitation or shame.

\(^{(1)}\) W.IV.124. \(^{(2)}\) W.IV.172.
Her acceptance of the proposal is an act of the greatest self-sacrifice. The idea of having another husband after Siegfried is most repellent to her, yet she sees here a direct path to her goal. "Meine Hand hat einen Preis," this is the thought behind her apparent fickleness and in becoming Attila's wife, she sees the first step toward the fulfillment of her revenge.

Several years pass, however, before there appears any immediate hope of accomplishment, then, at last, after repeated postponements, Gunther and his followers resolve to pay the visit to Attila's court which was promised at the time of Kriemhild's remarriage. Hagen, the object of her hate, is purposely uninvited for Kriemhild, knowing the man's courage, feels certain that his pride will prompt him to defy the danger of such a visit. As she had expected, Hagen is among the visiting guests upon their arrival and Kriemhild sees now her supreme opportunity. If her brother cannot be brought to agree to Hagen's punishment, then there is left but one course of action. Hagen alone is the object of her revenge, but if her brothers make a ring of defence about him, then they too must be struck down in order that a path may be cleared to her victim.

Her repeated attempts to persuade her brothers to desert Hagen are futile; they are bound to him by the old German "Treue" and nothing can cause them to break this faith. To Kriemhild their attitude is almost incomprehensible; she, their sister, had broken the loyalty of marriage in accepting the hand of Attila only because she saw in the act a means to
a more complete evidence of her fidelity to Siegfried.

"Und müsst' ich hundert Brüder niederhauen
Um mir den Weg zu Deinem Haupt zu bahnen
So würd' ich's thun, damit die Welt erfahre
Dass ich die Treue nur um Treue brach."(1)

With these bitter words she had openly declared to Hagen her hatred and since her relatives are staunch in their loyalty to him, she must now carry out her threat.

With grim resolve she plans the death of her victim and when Hagen, in anger at the destruction of his men, cuts off the head of her son, the formerly impartial Attila, too, draws his sword. Now at last there is open slaughter but Kriemhild even yet is not content. "Nein, Etzel, Mord um Mord" she cries to her husband; the sin for which she demands revenge was murder and only murder itself can atone. She becomes a fury in her ruthlessness, a murderess, taught by Hagen to murder, a traitress taught by Hagen to betray.

"Bin ich
Verrätherisch und falsch? Sie lehrten mich
Wie man den Helden in die Falle lockt.
Ich bin in allem nur ihr Widerschein."(2)

More and more furious becomes the slaughter until at length Gunther and Hagen alone of the Burgundians remain. Yet while her brother lives there is still one barrier between Kriemhild and Hagen and even now her resolution does not waver. The head of Gunther is presented before the eyes of the captive Hagen and in response to her victim's defiance, Kriemhild cuts

(1) W.IV.282.  (2) W.IV.282.
off his head. Now, at last, her revenge has been fulfilled; her apparent faithlessness to her former husband has proved itself the most complete fidelity and with her mission accomplished, she falls by the avenging sword of old Hildebraut, atoning through her death for the cruel relentlessness of her revenge.
E. Summary

Thus in this, the second and last period of his dramatic activity, Hebbel presents in his four great plays, as central figures, splendid and heroic women who challenge our deepest interest and admiration.

The first of these is Mariamne, the ideal portrayed in the early days of his married happiness. In this play we see, for the first time, the new Hebbel and the new heroine. "Den neuen Hebbel danken wir Christine", says Friedrich Kummer and he might have added with even more truth, "und die neue Heldin." The inspiring devotion of Christine, combined with her strength of character, evidenced for example in her firmness in dealing with Hebbel's selfish whims, had revealed to him possibilities in woman never dreamed of before. He realizes now that perfection does not consist in resignation but that submission is often a weakness rather than a strength. So the passive heroine of the early plays changes now into an active one; although her sphere is outwardly not less restricted, she is given the right of human personality - her first fidelity is to the demands of her own soul. From this arise her new self-respect and consequent freedom.

Judith had summed up the early attitude of Hebbel toward woman in the words, "Ein Weib ist ein Nichts, nur durch den Mann kann sie etwas werden" while how very different are the opinions expressed in the mouths of the later heroines! Gentle Agnes Bernauer, for example, when deceived into
believing that Albrecht has deserted her, breaks out with the words of reproach "Auch mich hat Gott gemacht!" She feels that she has been grossly injured and that in thus trifling with her love, Albrecht has regarded her as a soulless toy to be discarded at will. Mariamne and Rhodope, probably the greatest of Hebbel's women, are driven to a horrible revenge because the most sacred claims of their womanhood have been disregarded. No longer is woman a creature which must endure patiently all injustice as did Genoveva; she is a human soul with the same rights and privileges as man and if these are violated, tragic consequences inevitably follow. "Du bist wie ich zum Ding herabgesetzt" cries Mariamne in indignation to Soemus while Rhodope, with her sense of modesty outraged, reproaches Golo with the words, "Er hat gefrevelt am Heiligstem". Love and obedience are no longer the sole motives of woman's life, rather self-respect is given the preeminence. Judith, prompted by an unconscious desire to reestablish her self-esteem, had murdered her enemy Holofernes; in this she had sinned and was ruined. Mariamne, Rhodope and Kriemhilde, however, carry out the revenge they feel to be necessary to a resultant triumph. Death ensues, to be sure, but it is no longer the death of defeat for, supremely "masters of their fates", they voluntarily shape their own final destiny.
IV

HEBBEL'S PLACE IN THE LIBERATION OF WOMAN

Hebbel, great dramatist as he is, has only in comparatively recent years received the admiration that his remarkable genius demands, and the ultimate cause for this increasing popularity can, with some degree of certainty, be traced to another great modern artist, Henrik Ibsen. This remarkable Scandinavian in the year 1879, when the world was still basking in the serene sun of a social conservatism, stormed this placid content by his revolutionary play, A Doll's House. The doctrine so forcibly presented was presumably a new one, the personal liberty of woman, and so clearly and resolutely did the author cry for a just hearing that the work was immediately looked upon as dangerous to social security. Yet, although denied, for sometime, a public presentation, the play soon found a hearing and Ibsen was proclaimed the champion of woman and her personal liberty.

The furore caused by the new voice from the north led naturally to a consideration of the problems which his works themselves presented, and it was not a far step to a realization that although these problems were treated in an original and essentially modern manner, yet at least some of the germs of the dramatist's thought could be discerned in earlier works. This is, in all probability, one of the reasons for the growing respect in which Hebbel came to be regarded during the later years of the past century, since his social theories
in regard to women are in so many respects similar to those of his successor. Although his voice was less arresting, his medium of expression conservative rather than revolutionary and his treatment delicate, poetical in contrast with the energetic and realistic prose of Ibsen, yet in the last analysis when such a work as Herodes und Mariamne or even Gyges und Sein Ring, is compared with the convention-shattering A Doll's House, it will be found that the doctrine of Ibsen there presented is, in essence, that of his predecessor.\(^\text{1}\)

The modernity of Hebbel on the question of woman's rights is remarkable and it is even the more surprising when we consider the prevailing social theories of his day and still more the little support which his own tenets could find in the preceding ages and their literary expression. During the early years of the nineteenth century, and even before, there had been isolated movements toward a more liberal attitude toward woman, but the efforts had been, on the whole, weak and ineffectual. In literature the question of woman's place had been a frequent subject for discussion, but though there was an occasional variation of opinion, the ideas for the most part were extremely conventional.

In the late eighteenth century, in the years immediately following the sensational appearance of Rousseau's La Nouvelle Heloise, the Frenchman's conception of woman and

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\(^{\text{1}}\) This is not the place for a discussion of Ibsen's indebtedness to Hebbel in the matter of technique.
and her sphere was generally accepted in Germany also. Sentimentality ruled literature and the supreme virtue which woman could possess became "Empfindsamkeit". Thus the woman who embodied both an appealing helplessness and a charmingly pathetic ignorance was regarded now as perfection and with the appearance of Rousseau's Emile these theories were still further strengthened. Woman's one function in life was to please, to provide an inexhaustible fascination for her chosen mate and by subordinating herself to his will, to exalt him and, in him, the dominant sex to a position of still greater glory.

A reaction against such an extreme was, of course, inevitable and the reaction itself proved, in turn, extreme. In the seventies and eighties Storm and Stress excesses found expression in literature and the sentimentalized woman was rejected in favour of one morally free and given the wildest possible license in the adjustment of sex relations. Woman became now a being with a great force of will and possessed of extreme sensuality which her liberty taught her to satisfy. The ideal for this school and for the Romanticists who later accepted many of these theories, was found in the figure of Goethe's Adelheid von Waldorf although it is significant that Goethe himself soon emerged from this sort of excess and came under the more balanced and moderate creed of the Classicists.

This taught saner as well as - from the woman's standpoint - juster theories on this question and in the works of Wieland, Lessing, Goethe and Schiller, we see woman presented
in extremely glowing colours. Here a balance is struck and a nobler conception of womanhood takes the place of the extreme views of the earlier years. Germany's classicists are essentially humanitarian in their doctrines and their opinions on the question of woman are, as would be expected, liberal. Woman becomes in the works of these artists, a human being of marked nobility of purpose and with a will and heroic determination to carry out this purpose. No longer is she the foil of man but is placed in a position of equality and in such masterpieces as Maria Stuart, Iphigenie and Die Jungfrau von Orleans, we even find her depicted as in many respects man's superior.

Yet, although such views were commonly expressed in the literary works of Germany's leading classicists, these theories were by no means common nor, for the most part, were these principles carried into actual experience by the great minds which propounded them. However, although the conceptions thus presented were obviously highly idealized and considered in the light also of artistic effect rather than of cold logic, yet the school exerted, unconsciously perhaps, an immense influence upon the later attitude to this question.

Much more conscious and deliberate were the views of the Romanticists, who definitely taught the doctrine of the liberation of woman and gave expression to such ideas in their works. These teachings were, in large part, accepted and carried on by the Young Germany movement. The members of this school were essentially propagandists and among
these young enthusiasts there was shown a marked effort to make their theories conform to the requirements of actual life. They sought, by journalistic devices, to make their doctrine universally known and appreciated. They preached not only the moral freedom of woman but they carried their creed even farther and sought also to find a wider place for woman in social life. Their influence was immense. By clever propaganda they sought the spread of their ideas over Germany and soon this radical doctrine of woman's moral and social freedom became a subject of common discussion.

In the early works of their contemporary, Hebbel, who was temperamentally a conservative, we see a distinct attempt to counteract the influence exerted by these extremists and the early heroines are, by no means, the morally free, unfettered women of the Young Germany creed. Judith, Genoveva and Klara are very definitely bound by the laws of propriety and feminine modesty, and in Genoveva, the "patient Griselda", not in the over-aggressive Judith, we see the ideal which Hebbel sets up against the emancipated woman of the movement he opposes.

In the plays of Hebbel's maturity, however, as has already been pointed out, there is evidence of a change in his attitude to womanhood and its rights. His viewpoint becomes very much more liberal and yet there remains a moderation, a sanity in his theories which never permits of an approach to excess. Woman again attains the place of honour given her by Goethe and Schiller but Hebbel goes a
step beyond these artists and openly discusses the question of woman's sphere. Schiller's *Jungfrau von Orleans* and Goethe's *Iphigenie* both present noble womanhood yet the struggle in which they take part is not social as are those of Mariamne and Rhodope. Woman is there pictured as man's equal certainly, but there is no definite attempt to deal with the injustice of her forced submission. This is, on the other hand, definitely Hebbel's aim in his two most remarkable tragedies and in his presentation of the struggles of Mariamne and Rhodope he seeks to present his arguments for a more generous treatment of the sex. Thus while Hebbel is not by any means the first to see woman's nobility, he is among the earliest to demand that this nobility be granted its due consideration.

In this respect, then, Hebbel may be regarded as the forerunner of Ibsen and not only are their aims in part similar, but in *Herodes und Mariamne* Hebbel even presents, in a romantic and colorful manner, the same problem which Ibsen in his realistic and ungarnished style has so effectively treated in *A Doll's House*. Nora and Mariamne stand side by side in their battle for the recognition of their individual rights; the latter dies in the struggle while the fate of Nora is left unsolved, yet both, even if temporarily defeated, have remained spiritually triumphant in the battle which is ultimately won.

Like Mariamne, Nora, too, rebels at the treatment she receives and like her predecessor who had cried in indignation
"Ich bin ihm nur ein Ding und weiter nichts," she resents the similar injustice to which Torvald has subjected her. "I have existed only to perform tricks for you!" she complains while, when her husband reproves her for her rebellion with the words "Before all else you are a wife and mother," she replies confidently "I don't believe that any longer. I believe that before all else I am a reasonable human being just as you are!"(1) How clearly these words recall the lines spoken by Mariamne before her death when she had uttered the weighty lines,

"Kann ich noch leben?
Kann ich mit Dem noch leben, der in mir
Nicht einmal Gottes Ebenbild mehr ehrt?"

The cry in either case is for a broader, more liberal consideration of woman's rights and while the one appeal is made in beautiful, musical verse, the other, in pithy prose, the resulting effects are not, in the last analysis, so very dissimilar. Both Nora and Mariamne awaken our entire sympathy while for Herodes and Torvald, the blinded materialists, we feel the pity which arises from an understanding of their point of view. The realism of Ibsen gains in power perhaps, what Hebbel's more romantic treatment gains in poetic appeal. The two plays are the sincere expressions of two widely dissimilar minds; their stagecraft is obviously different, their treatment poles apart, yet with these obvious differences, they are at one in one important respect - in the liberal theories which they seek so earnestly to express.

(1) Vol.VII.147.
That Hebbel, many years before Ibsen, voiced in part at least the Norwegian's opinion on the question of woman's rights, reflects to his glory and detracts nothing from the fame of his successor. Hebbel, an artist and poet certainly, could never have caught the ear of the public as did Ibsen years later. Their geniuses are very different although their social theories were similar, and while Hebbel's voice was among the first to raise the cry for the liberation of woman, it was Ibsen who gave power and volume to that appeal.

Approved -
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[Signature]
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