

THE PROBLEM OF IDENTITY
IN THE DRAMAS OF
MAX FRISCH

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
Gordon Walter Zakrisson
1966



LIBRARY
Michigan State
University

ROOM USE ONLY

ROOM USE ONLY

L

**THE PROBLEM OF IDENTITY
IN THE DRAMAS OF
MAX FRISCH**

By

Gordon Walter Zakrison

A THESIS

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of German and Russian

1966

636592
2-17-66

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to express his sincere appreciation to Dr. Mark Kistler for his guidance of this work. He is also grateful to Dr. William Hughes and Dr. John Trojanowicz, the other members of his committee, for their critical assistance.

The author also thanks Dr. Stuart Gallacher who initially acquainted him with the works of Max Frisch.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER I THE PRISON OF MARRIAGE	7
A. <u>Santa Cruz</u>	
B. <u>Don Juan oder Die Liebe zur Geometrie</u>	
C. <u>Die grosse Wut des Philipp Hotz</u>	
CHAPTER II THE PRISON OF SOCIETY	25
A. <u>Graf Öderland</u>	
B. <u>Andorra</u>	
C. <u>Biedermann und die Brandstifter</u>	
CHAPTER III THE PRISON OF THE STATE	46
A. <u>Nun singen sie wieder</u>	
B. <u>Als der Krieg zu Ende war</u>	
C. <u>Die Chinesische Mauer</u>	
D. <u>Andorra</u>	
E. <u>Biedermann und die Brandstifter</u>	
CONCLUSION	71
BIBLIOGRAPHY	73

To

EDITH M. MORRISON

For encouragement
along the way

INTRODUCTION

Since at least the time of the Renaissance, human existence has been growing increasingly complex. The depersonalization of life, the proliferation of knowledge, and the collectivization of society have gradually relegated the individual to a precarious situation in which the preservation of his uniqueness has been severely endangered. This development has been especially accelerated during the last fifty years and, most important, since the advent in 1945 of the Atomic Age. Indeed this struggle to find and maintain one's identity, which can be called a major problem in our time, has been discussed by psychologists, sociologists, educators, theologians, and has been delineated as well by the Swiss dramatist Max Frisch. In order to understand Frisch's definition of the identity problem, we now refer to his Tagebuch:

Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen, heisst es, von Gott. Es durfte auch in diesem Sinne gelten: Gott als das Lebendige in jedem Menschen, das was nicht erfassbar ist. Es ist eine Versündigung, die wir, so wie sie an uns begangen wird, fast ohne Unterlass wieder begehen.¹

Basically, Frisch views the world as one into which an individual is born innocently. However, as he grows older and is about to pursue his own particular role in life, society, his peers, family, or future mates intervene and demand a specific role of him. Quite often this role

¹Max Frisch, Tagebuch 1946-1949 (Frankfurt, 1960), p. 37.

is contrary to the natural inclinations of the individual. However, in order to gain his niche in society, he adapts. The image, formed by this, causes the suppression of the individual's genuine identity. Those who commit the sin of image-making are individuals who refuse to accept others as they are, but mold them to fit a specific pattern. In so doing, an image has been created. The molded person, now wearing a mask, encounters the world. Denied his authentic existence, he assumes a new, false identity. This act Frisch denounces:

Leider Gottes zwingt uns unsere heutige
Gesellschaftsordnung immer wieder dazu, eine
Rolle in einem grossen Welttheater zu spielen.
Wir machen uns gegenseitig einen Riesenmummenschanz
vor. Es ist zum Lachen, es ist zum Heulen. Wir
werden daran gehindert, niemand anders zu sein als
der Mensch, der wir in Wahrheit sind. Das ist
das Elende. Wir zerfallen in einen unbefriedigten
innern Menschen und in einen Maskenmenschen, der
nach aussen Zufriedenheit und Glück vortäuscht.²

Recognizing that the identity problem consists of two basic components, the image-forming act itself and its subsequent mask, its manifestation should concern us also. In all of Frisch's works the image-effect is so strong that the actual freedom of the individual is impaired. As Eduard Stäuble states in his book Max Frisch:

² Eduard Stäuble, Max Frisch: Ein Schweizer Dichter der Gegenwart (Amriswil, 1957), p. 37.

3.

Immer wieder ist es der Anspruch des nackten alltäglichen Lebens, oder die Macht der Ordnung und des Gesetzes, oder die Begrenztheit unserer Freiheit, die Endlichkeit alles Menschlichen schlechten, die uns zurückhalten und zurückziehen von den Wegen unserer Sehnsucht.³

Because of this restriction of liberty, there is the ultimate act of attempted escape in order to discard the mask and regain one's true identity. It is "unser Versuch, einmal aus dem eigenen Gesicht herauszutreten, unsere verzweifelte Hoffnung gegen das Endgültige."⁴

Detailed analysis of the major dramas of Max Frisch reveals a threefold discussion of the identity problem. The world according to Frisch is composed of three separate realms where the identity crisis occurs. Marriage, society, and the state are these realms. Further, because of the restrictions imposed upon the freedom of the individual, each of these realms assumes a distinct form: the prison of marriage, the prison of society, and the prison of the state.⁵

For purposes of organization and discussion, we can classify each work of this dramatist according to this threefold prison concept. The prison of marriage is illustrated in Santa Cruz, Don Juan oder die Liebe zur Geometrie, Die grosse Wut des Philipp Hotz. Society's

³ Stäuble, p. 36.

⁴ Tagebuch, p. 175.

⁵ Karl Schmid, Unbehagen in Kleinstaat (Zürich, 1963), pp. 171-172.

prison is depicted in Graf "Oderland, Andorra, Biedermann und die Brandstifter. The prison of the state is revealed in Nun singen sie wieder, Als der Krieg zu Ende war, Die Chinesische Mauer, Andorra, and Biedermann und die Brandstifter. With this outline in mind, let us examine Frisch's solution to the identity problem.

In his Tagebuch the author delineates his solution to the identity question:

Eben darin steht ja die Liebe, das Wunderbare an der Liebe, dass sie uns in der Schweben des Lebendigen hält, in der Bereitschaft, einem Menschen zu folgen in allen seinen möglichen Entfaltungen. Wir wissen, dass jeder Mensch, wenn man ihn liebt, sich wie verwandelt fühlt, wie entfaltet, und dass auch dem Liebenden sich alles entfaltet, das Nächste, das lange Bekannte. Vieles sieht er wie zum ersten Male. Die Liebe befreit es aus jeglichem Bildnis.⁶

With love, Frisch believes man can free himself from the image and regain his identity. Further, individuals form images of one another because they do not love one another. When Frisch speaks of love, he means a love which forms no image and accepts the individual as he is. There is no attempt to pattern according to false concepts. Once image-making occurs, love is dead and futile. Where there is love, however, the individual possesses true identity and is truly free.

Frisch's solution to this problem has yet another

⁶
Tagebuch, p. 31.

aspect and this he discussed in his acceptance speech upon receiving the Georg Büchner Prize in 1958 at Darmstadt. Basic to this second solution is the word "Emigrant" and for its significance, we refer to Frisch's remarks in context:

Wir sind Emigranten geworden, ohne unsere Vaterländer zu verlassen; wir müssen es nur noch uns selbst zugeben.⁷

Included in this Emigration advanced by Frisch is a sense of not belonging. This disassociation from the collectivity of society is important for the author because he sees in it another means for the individual to escape from the snare of the image-formers. As long as the individual remains intimately associated with society, he subjects himself to the molders. Struggle as he may at first, he will eventually wear a mask which corresponds to his false identity. However, by making a direct break with society, by disassociating from a collective group, by becoming the individualist, the true essence of Emigration, he is released from this prison and gains his freedom.

As we look back upon our discussion up to this point, we see that the identity crisis as treated by Frisch is defined as the image and the mask. It is characterized by a restriction of freedom and an attempt to regain this

⁷Max Frisch, "Rede zur Verleihung des Georg-Büchner-Preises," Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung-Jahrbuch, (1958), 103.

6.

lost freedom. Further, this identity phenomenon manifests itself in the form of three prisons: marriage, society, and state. Finally, only love or Emigration emerge as possibilities of escape from the loss of identity.

To date, there has not yet appeared a work which has devoted exclusive attention to the identity question in the dramas of Max Frisch. Instead, the available secondary literature has only analyzed individual works and discussed their motifs and themes. Unfortunately, an exhaustive treatment of all dramas as an organic whole has been conspicuously absent. This investigation, then, seeks to examine the problem of identity in the dramas of Max Frisch for it is the one dominant theme which unifies his work. To achieve this, the prisons of marriage, society, and the state will be examined respectively. As each prison is inspected, three primary objectives will be fulfilled. First, the image perpetrators will be exposed. Second, the degree and type of freedom restriction, coupled with the manner of the escape attempt, will be depicted. Third and finally, the solution to the identity question in each drama will be probed. This is the proposed plan this study of the identity problem in the dramas of Max Frisch proposes to undertake. Aside from the literary value underlying such an investigation, it is also hoped that ultimately we may thereby gain a better insight into a major problem of our time.

CHAPTER I

THE PRISON OF MARRIAGE

Marriage, the first prison for discussion, becomes for Frisch a primary reflection of the identity question because of the peculiar image formed. Frisch does not portray marriage as a pleasant domesticity but rather as a diabolical binding force limiting the freedom of the individual. The relationship between man and woman, apart from the sexual union, appears as one in which both husband and wife mold one another. Due to the new roles they must assume, they lose their authentic personality and degenerate into a highly regimented existence. The right to be themselves is forbidden. To achieve this, the only solution is a break, a definite release, from the shackles of matrimony.

Die Ehe erschien als Sinnbild einer Gebundenheit, aus der man unter Umständen fliehen wollte, als Sinnbild menschlicher Gefangenschaft überhaupt.⁸

First and foremost among the dramas constituting the marriage prison is Santa Cruz. In this drama we meet the cavalry captain and his wife Elvira who have lived together happily for seventeen years. This domesticity is interrupted by the untimely appearance of Pelegrin. It is soon revealed that he is for both the captain and Elvira

⁸Hans Bänzinger, Max Frisch und Friedrich Dürrenmatt (Bern, 1960), p. 17.

8.

the symbol of the true life which they would have led, had they not married. The cavalry captain yearns for the wild and adventurous life led by Pelegrin, for in him he sees his true life unfolded. Elvira, on the other hand, entertains a deep love for Pelegrin which she has attempted to conceal. With Pelegrin's appearance, these inner desires and conflicts within her are reactivated. This results in two events. First of all, Elvira dreams of the past because she desires its realization in the present. Second, the captain departs for the true life. This scheme in mind, let us look at the individual details separately.

Basic to our analysis of Santa Cruz is a realization of the manner in which the image-sin is evidenced. This sin is a twofold one in this drama. First, Elvira does not truly love the cavalry captain. Her heart had been captured by Pelegrin years ago and although he abandoned her, that feeling for him lingered within her. When the captain offered to marry her, she accepted and feigned reciprocal affection. In so doing, she molded the captain to believe she loved him. Here the first image was formed.

In similar manner, the cavalry captain's case may be sketched. Essentially, he was a man who longed for distant lands with exotic climes, the mark of an adventurer. Unable to see fulfillment of his ideal, he married Elvira.

9.

In so doing, he professed false love. The formation of another image was complete.

From this we see clearly that both the captain and Elvira sinned. They molded each other to believe they loved one another when, in actuality, the opposite was true. They confront one another wearing masks. This continues until Pelegrin appears and causes the masks to disappear. For the first time the couple confront one another with their true identity. This is dramatically illustrated by Elvira who confesses:

Warum konnten wir nicht „ehrlicher sein? Es fehlte so wenig. Wie hätten wir einander begriffen! Du hast deine Sehnsucht begraben, wie du schreibst, Jahre lang, damit sie mich nicht erschreckte, und ich habe mich meiner Träume geschämt, Jahre lang, weil ich wusste, sie würden dich erschrecken. Keines wollte das andere enttäuschen...das ist die kleine Komödie, die wir so lange, so lange gespielt haben.⁹

Throughout this work the feeling of restriction is evident. This feeling is voiced by Elvira, the cavalry captain, and Pelegrin. Let us examine this feeling more closely. Elvira, languishing in her marriage to the captain, seeks a means of escape. This she achieves in a unique manner: her dreams. These become for her the fulfillment of a desire for union with Pelegrin. When

⁹ Max Frisch, Santa Cruz (Frankfurt, 1962), pp. 82-83.

past events concerning Pelegrin, the captain, and her are brought before the eyes of the reader, they are presented in such a manner that present events are also injected. Past and present unite to enable Elvira's escape. For her, the ultimate in this life is marriage with Pelegrin. She seeks not to discard matrimony, but only change mates.

A totally opposing freedom concept is represented by the cavalry captain. He finally comes to the realization that life has cheated him of the best and in order to regain that which was lost, he must break his bonds of marriage with Elvira. If he would not do this, the shackles of marriage would prevent him from embarking upon the adventurous life of his dreams. For him, marriage is a prison and he must escape.

Elvira, ich möchte noch einmal leben, noch einmal lieben können und erschauern vor dem Duft einer Nacht, jauchzen können. Wir erinnern uns kaum, was das war; es waren ja nur Augenblicke in Jahren. Ich möchte noch einmal fühlen, welche Gnade es ist, dass ich lebe, in diesem Atemzuge lebe.¹⁰

This desire to escape which eventually leads to the captain's abandonment of Elvira, is nothing less than Emigration. He seeks to disassociate from the ties of society expressed by the marital institution. Although his attempted Emigration is not totally successful, it is

significant, for it mirrors Frisch's answer to those languishing under the yoke of the image-builders.

Since Pelegrin, according to the captain, leads the ideal life, he becomes the very embodiment of freedom in the drama. The cavalry captain expresses this so:

Ich möchte ihn noch einmal kennenlernen, ihn,
der mein anderes Leben führt. Nur dies. Ich
möchte wissen, wie es ihm ergangen ist. Ich
möchte hören, was ich alles nicht erlebt habe.
Ich möchte sehen, wie mein Leben hatte aussehen
können. Nur dies.¹¹

Another symbol for freedom is Hawaii. This isle, frequently mentioned throughout the work, represents a paradise where one can be free, independent, and true to oneself.¹² In this light it assumes importance for both Pelegrin and the captain because in it they see a place where they can be themselves without restrictions.

Frisch develops further the marital prison concept by arming Pelegrin with a pointed denouncement of marriage. In his eyes, matrimony becomes a force which thwarts, subdues, and kills. The regimented life of marriage he can not endure. He rejects it totally. Observe Pelegrin's reactions during his discussion with Elvira:

¹¹
Santa Cruz, p. 24.

¹²
George E. Wellwarth, "Friedrich Dürrenmatt and Max Frisch: Two Views of the Drama," Tulane Drama Review, VI, (March, 1962), 29.

Niemand kann leisten, was er nicht wollen kann...
und nicht einmal du kannst es wollen: Ich werde
in dem Hause sitzen, dir zuliebe, aber meine
Sehnsucht wird gegen dich sein! Kannst du das
wollen? Elvira, ich kann nicht heiraten. Ich
kann das nicht.¹³

Our discussion of Santa Cruz, in which the freedom and marriage conflict is basic, has observed in detail the exact degree of freedom restriction and the manner employed in attempt to destroy this bond. Into the negative aura of this situation Frisch has injected the final solution to the identity problem by permitting Elvira to gain ultimate insight into the essence of the perplexing situation.

Wir dürfen uns lieben, wir alle, jetzt kann ich
es sehen: das Leben ist anders, die Liebe ist
grösser, die Treue ist tiefer, sie muss unsere
Traume nicht fürchten, wir müssen die Sehnsucht
nicht töten, wir müssen nicht lügen.¹⁴

The solution advanced, as mentioned earlier, is love. Despite their awareness of the redeeming element, the characters in Santa Cruz do not regain their freedom. Pelegrin dies, the cavalry captain returns, and the appearance of the child Viola, herself symbolic of the rebirth of the freedom struggle, indicates that the entire

¹³ Santa Cruz, p. 57.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 83

process will begin again. The escape attempts of Elvira and the cavalry captain have been foiled. They have once again been sentenced to solitary confinement within the prison of marriage.

Of Frisch's dramas treating marriage as a prison, another most direct and outspoken discussion of this is manifested in Don Juan oder die Liebe zur Geometrie. This drama characterizes Don Juan as a man who is violently opposed to marriage. His only desire in life is the pursuit of geometric studies. Consequently Don Juan opposes marriage because he regards it as a prison in which he would be forced to curb his true passions.

Don Juan really loves no one. Despite this, he plays the role of the great seducer. He does so, not out of lustful desire, but out of necessity. He seduces these women in order that he may rid himself of this nagging entourage and then resume his true pursuit: study of geometry. When, in the end, Don Juan consents to marry Miranda, he does so because he erroneously sees in it the only means whereby he can achieve the ultimate in this life: undisturbed geometric contemplation. Isolated in the castle of Ronda, he pursues his goal. In this entire affair, Don Juan wears a false mask to conceal his true identity. With this brief sketch in mind, let us examine the drama according to our planned analysis.

To gain the proper understanding of the image formed in this drama, we must first look searchingly at Don Juan. In this work Frisch has taken the traditional figure of Don Juan and made some significant modifications. Vital among these changes is the alteration of his basic personality. He is characterized not as the great lover, but as the devoted student of geometry. Aware of his goal in life, Don Juan comes into conflict with the society of Sevilla. His father, Tenorio, assisted by Don Gonzolo and Donna Elvira, a noble couple, seeks to arrange a marriage between Don Juan and Donna Anna. At first Don Juan cooperates and permits the marriage arrangements. However, at the last minute he spurns marriage and flees. As time passes, we learn that Don Juan consents to marry Miranda, the prostitute. He agrees for two reasons. First, he desires to rid himself of the women who seek to lead him astray and second, he hopes that by marrying Miranda he can ultimately return to his geometry. We see here that Don Juan, plagued so severely by women to marry them, finally submits to their moulding, "thereby creating a self-perpetuating legend that has nothing to do with his true personality."¹⁵ By marrying Miranda he dons a mask which conceals his true

¹⁵ Theodore Ziolkowski, "Max Frisch: Moralism Without a Moral," Yale French Studies, XXIX, (1962), 138.

identity. His acceptance of marriage, a direct consequence of his new image, destroys his authentic personality and in its place emerges a false person, a false image, and a false Don Juan.

This entire matter of knowing one's real self, which is the element at stake in the entire image crisis, is expressed by Don Juan when, first torn between the demands and Sevilla and those desires deep within his soul, he speaks to his friend Don Roderigo:

Sei nicht wissbegierig, Roderigo, wie ich! Wenn wir die Lüge einmal verlassen, die wie eine blanke Oberfläche glänzt, und diese Welt nicht bloss als Spiegel unsres Wunsches sehen, wenn wir es wissen wollen, wer wir sind, ach, Roderigo, dann hört unser Sturz nicht mehr auf, und es saust dir in den Ohren, dass du nicht mehr weisst, wo Gott wohnt. Stürze dich nie in deine Seele, Roderigo, oder in irgendeine, sondern bleibe an der blauen Spiegelfläche wie die tanzenden Mücken über dem Wasser--auf dass du lange lebest im Lande, Amen.¹⁶

Cognizant of the mask he wears, he says the following when dwelling in Ronda:

Ich bin ja ihr Gefangener, vergessen Sie das nicht, ich kann ja nicht aus diesem Schloss heraus; wenn man mich draussen sieht, ist meine Legende hin, und das heisst, ich hatte abermals als Don Juan zu leben.¹⁷

Of considerable importance for our discussion of Don Juan's identity are the notes of Frisch, for they provide

¹⁶ Max Frisch, Don Juan oder die Liebe zur Geometrie (Frankfurt, 1962), p. 48.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 80.

new insights into Don Juan's personality. We read:

Don Juan ist ein Intellektueller, wenn auch von gutem Wuchs und ohne alles Brillenhafte. Was ihn unwiderstehlich macht für die Damen von Sevilla, ist durchaus seine Geistigkeit, die ein Affront ist, indem sie ganz andere Ziele kennt als die Frau und die Frau von vornerein als Episode einsetzt--mit dem bekannten Ergebnis freilich, dass die Episode schliesslich sein ganzes Leben verschlingt.¹⁸

Mask motifs, essential to Frisch's presentation of the identity question, are revealed again by Don Juan's role. It is further depicted in the drama in three different instances. First, the drama itself opens depicting a masquerade ball. This is a vivid visual portrayal by Frisch of concealed identities. Second, Miranda disguised herself as Donna Anna in order to trick Don Juan into marrying her. Finally, Lopez, disguised as the Bishop of Cordoba, encounters Don Juan. This mask symbol serves to demonstrate questionable identities. In the same vein, Eduard Stäuble in his study Max Frisch, suggests two further meanings of the mask. First, it is "das immer wiederkehrende Symbol für die Unaufrichtigkeit, für die Unwahrheit, Unehrllichkeit und Verstellung" and second, "Symbol für die Erstarrung, für die Starre."¹⁹ Further, in this world of masks, then, it is only proper that we call to mind Don Juan's

¹⁸ Max Frisch, "Nachträgliches zu Don Juan," Don Juan oder Die Liebe zur Geometrie, (Frankfurt, 1962), p. 313.

¹⁹ Stäuble, p. 33.

evaluation concerning the true nature of the world:

Das sage ich ja schon seit zwölf Jahren: Es gibt keine wirkliche Hölle, kein Jenseits, kein Gericht des Himmels. Herr Lopez hat vollkommen recht: Nichts als Theater.²⁰

Any and all discussion of freedom restriction in Don Juan must center around marriage, for it is the triggering action for all events in the drama. Matrimony is totally alien to Don Juan and in no uncertain terms he rejects it:

Sie sind die Dame, die mich heiraten will. Sie sind das Schloss mit den vierundvierzig Zimmern. Ihre Ausdauer ist erstaunlich, Herzogin von Ronda, Im übrigen haben Sie recht: obschon mich ein Schach unwiderstehlicher lockt als ein Weib, ist mein Leben voll Weib. Und dennoch irren Sie sich! Noch hat das Weib mich nicht besiegt, Herzogin von Ronda, und eher fahre ich in die Hölle als in die Ehe.²¹

Once again contributing insights into the drama he penned, Max Frisch, by way of his notes, maintains the following concerning Don Juan's limitations:

Hinter jedem Don Juan steht die Langweile, wenn auch mit Bravour überspielt, die Langweile, die nicht gähnt, sondern Possen reißt; die Langweile eines Geistes, der nach dem Unbedingten dürstet und glaubt erfahren zu haben, dass er es nie zu finden vermag; kurzum die grosse Langweile der Schwermut, die Not eines Herzens, dem die Wünsche ersterben.²²

As previously stated, geometry is the very embodiment

²⁰ Don Juan, p. 74.

²¹ Ibid., p. 60.

²² "Nachträgliches," p. 319.

of freedom for Don Juan. In it he sees "etwas höheres als das Weib,"²³ a means to overcome the mundaneness of this life and achieve total happiness. He expresses this so:

Ich fühle mich frei wie noch nie, Roderigo, leer und wach und voll Bedürfnis nach männlicher Geometrie... Hast du es nie erlebt, das nüchterne Staunen vor einem Wissen, das stimmt? Zum Beispiel: was ein Kreis ist, das Lautere eines geometrischen Orts. Ich sehne mich nach dem Lauteren, Freund, nach dem Nüchternen, nach dem Genauen; mir graut vor dem Sumpf unsrer Stimmungen. Vor einem Kreis oder einem Dreieck habe ich mich noch nie geschämt, nie geekelt. Weisst du, was ein Dreieck ist? Unentrinnbar wie ein Schicksal: es gibt nur eine einzige Figur aus den drei Teilen, die du hast, und die Hoffnung, das Scheinbare unabsehbarer Möglichkeiten, was unser Herz so verwirrt, zerfällt wie ein Wahn von diesen drei Strichen. So und nicht anders! sagt die Geometrie.²⁴

This zeal on the part of Don Juan to seek the state of ultimate knowledge is Frisch's manner of making him an Emigrant. Don Juan seeks to become the individualist. To achieve this, he must disassociate. He does not effect total Emigration, however, but once again this is shown as a "way out".

In order to escape from the restrictions to his happiness, Don Juan is forced to enter marriage. That which was formely repulsive to him, he now believes can help him. Accepting Miranda's offer of marriage on the condition that he will be free to pursue his studies

23

Don Juan, p. 35.

24

Ibid., p. 46.

undisturbed, seems to him a means to an end. Living in Ronda, which has become a citadel of freedom for him, he gradually comes to the realization that although he is in seclusion, he is not totally secure from the world's temptations. To this end,

Verzweifelt über das Unmögliche seiner Existenz, ...ist es nunmehr Don Juan selbst, der die Legende von seiner Höllenfahrt inszeniert--als Oper, als Schwindel, um zu entkommen, gewiss; als Kunst, die etwas Absolutes nur vorgibt, als Poesie, gewiss; aber dann erweist es sich, dass diese Legende, womit er die Welt zum Narren hält, nur die Ausdrucksfigur seines tatsächlichen, seines inneren und anders nicht sichtbaren, doch ausweglos-wirklichen Endes ist.²⁵

This accomplished, Don Juan would then aspire to eternal study of geometry.

Considering the means employed by Don Juan, "striving to be independent and resisting domesticity,"²⁶ we are made aware at the close of the drama that all has been futile, for Miranda announces her pregnancy. The very means whereby Don Juan sought liberation, have condemned him.

In the dramatic piece Don Juan as in Santa Cruz, Frisch does not depict a hopeless situation without also providing a redeeming means. Once again this is love. This noble truth is voiced by Pater Diego during his

²⁵ "Nachträgliches," pp. 320-321.

²⁶ Wellwarth, 32.

conversation with Donna Anna during the masquerade ball:

Braut und Bräutigam waren fortan die einzigen, die sich in dieser Nacht umarmen durften, gesetzt, dass sie einander erkannten aus allen Larven heraus: Kraft ihrer wahren Liebe.²⁷

Here, love is strong enough to break through the masks. In Don Juan this love, a potential redemptive agent, is absent and the characters degenerate into the gross sin of image-forming.

Third and last among the dramas which treat marriage as a prison is Die grosse Wut des Philipp Hotz. This work affords a glimpse into the lives of Philipp Hotz and his wife Dorli. The critical issue at stake in this situation is their marital relationship. At the outset of the work, the reader is made aware that Hotz has decided to terminate his marriage and resolved to join the Foreign Legion. In the course of the subsequent action, the marriage problem, adultery in this case, is outlined and, most important, the exact fashion of image-building is evidenced and to this we now turn our attention.

Both Philipp and Dorli have committed the sin of making an image. In the first instance, Philipp has molded his wife to such an extent that she believes his life of adultery. Central to the difficulty between the couple is the pending divorce suit which Dorli has suddenly nullified by her

²⁷ Don Juan, p. 20.

retraction of her complaint in the struggle. This angers Philipp and he seeks to convince her of his alleged infidelity. Here he succeeds, for we later view Dorli adamantly asserting his adultery with Clarissa. During the conversation between the two women, Dorli maintains:

Du kannst sagen gegen meinen Mann, was du willst, und gegen die Männer überhaupt, aber so ist keiner, weisst du, dass er auch noch Ehebrüche gesteht, die nie stattgefunden haben, weisst du, und das vor aller Öffentlichkeit.²⁸

By making Dorli believe he will finally desert her, he will compel her to pursue him and then dissuade him from leaving. Hotz doesn't really want to leave, but makes Dorli believe this by reinforcing his threat: this time he will join the Foreign Legion. His molding is successful, for this threat is sufficient to motivate Dorli's pursuit. Her shock and sorrow upon his actual departure are significant. Note especially Hotz's own words relative to his image-building activities:

Wenn Dorli jetzt erfährt, dass ich überhaupt keinen Ehebruch begangen habe, und wenn sie es glaubt, dann glaubt sie mir überhaupt nichts mehr!--dann muss ich wirklich gehen.²⁹

Closely related to Hotz's image-building is that practiced by Dorli. Her image of Philipp demands him to

²⁸ Max Frisch, Die grosse Wut des Philipp Hotz (Frankfurt, 1962), p. 191

²⁹ Ibid., p. 189.

believe he really loves her. She knows that he will never leave her because she has molded him to assume this frame of mind. She expresses this in the following manner:

Ich kann doch nicht jedesmal, wenn er mit seiner
Fremdenlegion droht, an den Hauptbahnhof rennen
und ihn vom Trittbrett reißen--bloss damit er
glaubt, dass ich ihn erstnehme...Weil--bloss weil
--weil ich--gesagt habe: Das--wirst du nicht tun,
Philipp, ich--kenne-dich!³⁰

That Philipp is aware of the mask he must wear because of Dorli's image of him, we see revealed here:

Dorli, das ist keine Art, eine Ehe zu führen. Du
verlässt dich einfach darauf, dass ich dich liebe,
und machst mit mir, was du willst. Was du willst!
Bloss weil du die Schwächere bist.³¹

From the image-building activities of both Philipp and Dorli, it is apparent that a vicious circle has been created. Philipp does not seek to leave but makes Dorli believe this. Dorli, on the other hand, forces Hotz to believe he will not desert her because of the love between them. The announcement of Philipp's infidelity is another false device used. In essence, the images formed by Hotz and Dorli have been effective in ensnaring both individuals in a trap.

Any discussion of freedom limitation in Die grosse Wut des Philipp Hotz necessitates examination of the marriage problem. Here, as in the other two dramas of this

³⁰ Philipp Hotz, p. 179.

³¹ Ibid., p. 184

prison previously scrutinized, marriage becomes a definite negative institution. In this light, note Philipp's remarks:

Es ist hoffnungslos. Sieben Jahre lang habe ich erklärt, was ich unter Ehe verstehe, oder wie meine Frau es nennt: Vorträge gehalten--dass die Ehe nur geht (für mich) als ein Bündnis in Freiheit und Offenheit.³²

With this, Hotz states his prime requisite for marriage. Since this openness is totally absent from his marriage, the events which do occur, are plausible. The actions of both his wife and himself contradict this principle of candour.

Finally, Philipp's desire to escape from the bondage of marriage is embodied in the French Foreign Legion. It is the concrete realization of Hotz's only means to freedom. Here he can be a man totally independent of the image network. In this same vein, Hotz's destruction of the household furniture represents a symbolic destruction of his marriage.

Consistent with his desire to include a solution to the identity crisis in each drama, Frisch here employs the means of Emigration. Philipp's desire to join the Foreign Legion is his attempt to become the individualist and thereby disassociate from the collectivity of society in general and its reflection in marriage in particular.

³²
Philipp Hotz, p. 177.

However, because the network of image-creation has become so involved, Hotz is forced to return. His freedom is stifled and he is once again lost in the maze of marriage.

Our investigation of the identity question in the dramas of Max Frisch has, up to this point, undertaken the task of scrutinizing those works which illustrate the marital prison. In so doing, the image-building sin was confined to that intimate relationship between man and woman. Its evil, the restriction of personal liberty, was also vividly portrayed. Further, the solution to the problem, be it by love or Emigration, was advanced.

Despite the presence of these redeeming elements, albeit in embryonic form, they have not been effective in overcoming the images. In the end, the individuals find themselves still imprisoned. Significantly, it serves to point out the critical nature of this crime in the sacred institution of marriage and bring man to the final realization that it must be overcome at all cost, "weil sie ins Nichts führt."³³

³³ Bänzinger, p. 70.

CHAPTER II

THE PRISON OF SOCIETY

Society, the second prison for discussion, crystallizes for Frisch into another primary reflection of the identity question because of the peculiar image formed. When speaking of society's prison, attention will be focused upon those relationships existing between individual members of society, apart from marriage, which provide additional opportunities for the perpetration of the image sin. Significantly, Frisch, by his sociological analysis, reveals a problem which, like a malignant disease, continues to grow at an alarming rate and threatens to exterminate man. Max Frisch sees society dominated by the ruthless technological mechanisms of the day. Life, so regimented, has forced individuals to mold their lives according to a definite pattern. Society as a whole, moving at a deadly pace, demands its members adapt or face ostracism. They must become part of the whole. What was previously alien, contrary, and repulsive to them now becomes the necessary pattern of existence. In so doing, they have been molded, and to be accepted, don false masks. Their capitulation is complete and their identities are destroyed.

Quite often, specific individuals, languishing under the burden of this tyrannical force, attempt to destroy the power of their oppressors by engaging in an escape attempt.

They seek to remove themselves as much as possible from society, for they see in it the necessary force capable of transforming them into meaningless entities. They must disassociate to gain freedom from society's prison. They realize the evil and must choose between existence and non-existence. This "unheimliche Gespaltenheit des Menschen in Schein und Sein, in Larve und Mensch"³⁴ is the outrage basic to Frisch's society and for its particular reflection in dramatic form, we now turn our attention.

Of his three dramas which treat society as a prison, Frisch's Graf Öderland is a most definitive example. At the outset we are introduced to the public prosecutor who is engaged in a legal suit involving a bank employee who, without apparent premeditation, murders a bank guard one evening. The prosecutor is perplexed by this case because he himself has come to the shocking realization that he understands the true motives for the murder. In so doing, he explains the triggering action of the drama itself and also relates Frisch's concept of society as a prison.

Essential to our analysis of this work is total comprehension of the exact manner in which the image sin is evidenced. In this drama it is a twofold one. First of

³⁴

Stäubli, p. 29.

all, the information concerning the murderer, Wolfgang Schweiger, immediately reveals the commission of the image sin. Wolfgang, an average man, sustains himself by working in a bank. Because of his occupation, his life is prescribed to the minutest detail. Consequently, any display of personal initiative is precluded. He must mutely accept the predetermined role dictated to him by society. Here Wolfgang is molded to such an extent that he becomes a mere human robot in a mechanized world. Schweiger's authentic identity is flagrantly cast aside and he is forced to don the imposed mask of his false self.

Intimately associated with Wolfgang Schweiger is the public prosecutor who represents the plaintiff. Strangely, during the proceedings, he comes to the realization that his life is no better than that led by the murderer. The attorney in his profession is required to lead a specific type of life already prescribed by the society in which he lives. The regimentation of this system has usurped the characteristics peculiar to a distinctive, unique personality and in its place has created a mask for the attorney to wear. We see, then, that he, like Schweiger, assumes a false role in order to gain his niche in society. Once again the assuming of an identity in an image-forming society precipitates a crisis, as we see from the attorney's

admission: "Wenn ich bloss wusste, wer ich selbst bin."³⁵

Prevalent throughout the work is the feeling of restriction and imprisonment. This feeling is manifested in two specific instances. First, the bank employee, Wolfgang Schweiger, goes about his daily routine week after week, month after month, year after year, with a deep sense of frustration. There is no hope for change, only a helpless confinement to the strictly orientated meaninglessness of daily existence. Only the weekends offer a brief respite from this relentless state of being. As his last name implies, he remains silent to all of this. Out of pure disgust for and frustration in this wretched state, Wolfgang takes an axe and kills the bank guard. Driven to the breaking point, he can do nothing else but give vent to his feelings, albeit in violent manner. Restricted freedom has brought him to the brink of endurance:

Sie kommen sich nicht vorstellen, Doktor, wie vertraut mir dieser Anblick ist: Immer diese sieben Stäbe, dahinter die Welt, so war es auch hinter dem Shalter, als ich noch arbeitete, als ich noch frei war.³⁶

The public prosecutor now applies this situation to himself and becomes aware of his own miserable existence. In it he sees only:

³⁵ Max Frisch, Graf Öderland (Frankfurt, 1962), p. 324.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 317

Hoffnung auf den Feierabend, Hoffnung auf das Wochenende, all diese lebenslängliche Hoffnung auf Ersatz, inbegriffen die jämmerliche Hoffnung auf das Jenseits, vielleicht genügt es schon, wenn man den Millionen angestellter Seelen, die Tag für Tag an ihren Pulten hocken, diese Art von Hoffnung nehmen würde: gross wäre das Entsetzen, gross die Verwandlung.³⁷

Coupled with his denunciation of society's strangulation grip, is the realization that his freedom is limited. This idea is expressed personally by him and others through the work.

Wenn man so denkt, was man anfangen könnte mit diesem Leben, um die ganze Welt könnte man segeln, und was man hier in Wirklichkeit tut.³⁸

The attorney now begins to reflect upon the problem in earnest. In his office he suddenly notices a model ship. It is the silent symbol of his desire to "get out". Gradually slumber overtakes him and he lapses into a dream world where he devises an escape mechanism. He has now been transformed from the public prosecutor to Count Öderland with the axe, who sets out to become the great liberator of society. Along the way he encounters little Inge, who is also languishing in the prison of society, and rescues her. His name, too, has significance, for he is to be active in a land made desolate by society's aberrations. His escapades of murder and robbery continue until he is able

³⁷ Graf Öderland, p. 307.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 350.

to organize a group of adherents who desire to journey to the freedom paradise of Santorin. Eventually the Count becomes a political rebel who is in the process of overthrowing the government of Santorin. Just at this moment, however, he awakens to discover that it was only a dream.

Two items from the preceding discussion now deserve closer attention: the Count's axe and Santorin. The axe in this work plays an important function for it serves as a visual "symbol of freedom, independence, and self-realization".³⁹ The Count, so confined within the walls of society's prison, found it necessary to break out and the axe represents his instrument to gain release from the monotonous routine imposed upon his life by social position and profession. After he has succeeded in escaping from a world, a society beset by false values,⁴⁰ the next step in his plan was to live on the Isle of Santorin, for it becomes for him the very embodiment of freedom. Only there can he rid himself of the stultifying nature of society and be his true self. This he expresses in the following manner:

³⁹ Wellwarth, 30.

⁴⁰ Walter E. Glaettli, "Max Frisch, a New German Playwright," The German Quarterly, XXV, 253.

Santorin? Ich kenne es nur von Bildern: ein erloschener Krater im Meer, Felsen wie Blut und Kohle, so schwarz, so rot. Und hoch über der rauschenden Brandung: Die Stadt. Hoch über der schäumenden Brandung. Eine Stadt wie aus Kreide, so weiss, so grell, emporgestürzt in den Wind und ins Licht, einsam und frei, trotzig, heiter und kuhn, emporgethürmt in einen Himmel ohne Dunst, ohne Dämmerung, ohne Hoffnung auf Jenseits, ringsum das Meer, nichts als die blaue Finsternis des Meeres...Und da wollen wir hin. Und was wollen Sie dort machen? --leben, Madame.⁴¹

As in the other dramas previously discussed, Max Frisch also injects one redeeming element into this drama in order to provide a means to overcome the sin of image-building. In Graf Öderland this solution is Emigration. By his attempt to disassociate from the collective body of society, the Count seeks to neutralize the deadly influence others have over him. It is his desperate attempt to cast aside his false and regain his true personality. He yearns to be the public prosecutor and not anybody else. By becoming Count Öderland, he assures his escape. His Emigration has been successful, but unfortunately only in his dreams. Upon awakening, he discovers to his great dismay that what actually occurred in his subconscious, has now been transferred to the realm of present reality. This is embodied in the ultimatum directed to him: he must either head a new government or be tried for murder. The

⁴¹ Graf Öderland, p. 353.

very power he fled, once again threatens to destroy him. In anguish, he cries: "Ich will nicht die Macht! Ich möchte leben."⁴² In the end, we see that Emigration, the solution to the identity question in this drama, although partially achieved by the attorney in his dreams, is not totally effective in overcoming the image formed by society. The network of the image-builders is so well-developed, that in the final analysis the public prosecutor is once again faced with eternal abode within the impregnable prison, the walls of society.

The total formidability of society's prison is further advanced in Andorra, for here Frisch focuses attention upon the image sin in its ugliest form. The plot essentially concerns itself with the young lad Andri who is really not a Jew but is forced to believe the contrary by the Andorrian society in which he lives. The basis for the entire complex matter rests with the teacher. Years ago he had an illicit affair with the Senora, a lady from the Black Ones. Andri emerged from this union. The teacher, however, deserted the Senora and brought Andri back to Andorra. Rather than tell his fellow countrymen that Andri was the offspring from one of the Black Ones, he maintained that his son was a Jewish boy he had rescued. Afterward he

⁴²
Graf Öderland, p. 389.

remarried and a daughter, Barblin, was born to the the couple. Andri, however, was told that he was a Jew and was accepted as such by society. When the Senora paid an unexpected visit to Andorra and the truth was finally revealed about Andri, both society and he refused to accept it. The image was so strong and the false identity so well-established, that Andri had to be a Jew. The wages of the image sin were death: Andri's death.

A perusal of Andorra, reveals the diabolical nature of the image-builders. We are confronted with Andri, who, to all appearances, is as normal as anyone else. Yet the Jewish stigma he is compelled to wear, sets him aside and makes of him a prime target for the hate and malice of society. They have taken Andri and although not a Jew, have molded him into one. His true personality is destroyed and he has become a non-being individual.

In this light, this drama is replete with individuals who have one thing in common: they have molded Andri. Some achieved this in varying degrees, but the end result was the same: a false Andri. At the present stage in our investigation it would be advantageous to single out each individual guilty of the molding sin and lay bare his crime to public scrutiny. To this aspect we now direct our attention.

First we encounter society, for as a collective whole, it is responsible for the outrage. In general, the society of Andorra entertained a preconceived notion concerning a Jew. If a particular person is a Jew, he must naturally behave in a particular Jewish manner. Andri, "having been seen as a Jew by the others, has now become a Jew and cannot but be a Jew."⁴³ According to their preconceived notions, then, he also displays this distinctive Jewish behavior. To inform the people now that Andri was not a Jew would shatter their image. This could never occur. Andorrian society remained adamant in its refusal to acknowledge the true identity of Andri. In so doing, two crimes were committed: destruction of the God-like image in Andri⁴⁴ and submission to his eventual death at the hands of the Black Ones.

First and foremost among the image-builders is the teacher, Andri's father. He, more than anyone else, precipitates the entire chain of catastrophic events by his refusal to acknowledge Andri as his legitimate son. Out of cowardice, he made a Jew of Andri. His son, thus molded, wore the Jewish mask. He confesses:

⁴³ Martin Esslin, "Max Frisch," German Men of Letters, III, (1964), 318.

⁴⁴ "Morality Plays," London Times Literary Supplement, (January 11, 1963), 19.

Ich habe gelogen, und ihr habt ihn gestreichelt,
solang er klein war, und jetzt ist er ein Mann,
jetzt will er heiraten, ja, seine Schwester--
Das gibt's Neues...ich weiss, was ihr denkt, im
voraus; Auch einem Judenretter ist das eigne Kind
zu schad für den Jud.⁴⁵

Second to join the image-builders was the priest. As the alleged spiritual leader of Andorra, he shirks his responsibility by failing to tell Andri of his non-Jewish ancestry. Instead he offered advice which was designed to enable Andri's acceptance of his false identity among the Andorrian people. With his deeds, Andri's mask became more form-fitting. The priest summarizes his guilt in the following passage:

Da sollst dir kein Bildnis machen von Gott, deinem Herrn und nicht von den Menschen, die seine Geschöpfe sind. Auch ich bin schuldig geworden damals. Ich wollte ihm mit Liebe begegnen, als ich gesprochen habe mit ihm. Auch ich habe mir ein Bildnis gemacht von ihm, auch ich habe ihn gefesselt, auch ich habe ihn an den Pfahl gebracht.⁴⁶

When Andri resolved to learn a trade, he chose that of a carpenter. To this end, he sought apprenticeship with the carpenter, the third man who molded him. This individual, however, antisemitic by nature, disregarded all of Andri's achievements and relegated him to the rank of

⁴⁵Max Frisch, Andorra (Frankfurt, 1962), p. 239.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 254.

money-dealer. According to the carpenter, Jews behave in a certain fashion. Because Andri was a Jew, he also behaved in this distinctive manner. Because of this, no Jew could be a carpenter. This included Andri. That Andri realizes this fact, is evidenced by his own words: "Ich kann tun, was ich will, ihr dreht es immer gegen mich, und der Hohn nimmt kein Ende."⁴⁷

The fourth image-maker is Pinder, the soldier. Taking full advantage of the social situation, he constantly taunts Andri and finally, out of pure maliciousness, rapes Barblin, Andri's love. Basic to his preconceived mold of Andri is the trait of cowardice: "Aber du hast Angst! Weil du feig bist...Weil du Jud bist."⁴⁸

The innkeeper becomes the fifth image-former. Giving full vent to his prejudices, he falsely accuses Andri of the Senora's murder, although he knows perfectly well that Andri is innocent. He was compelled to do so because of one fact: Andri was a Jew:

Wenn ich es mit eignen Augen gesehen hab! Hier an dieser Stelle. Erwiesen? Er fragt, ob das erwiesen sei. Wer sonst soll diesen Stein geworfen haben?⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Andorra, p. 226.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 214.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 292.

Last to add his name to the evergrowing list of image-formers in this crisis is the doctor. In his profession he is supposed to minister to all, regardless of sex, creed, or race. That he gives only lip-service to his medical creed is shown by his attitude toward Andri. At first unaware of his patient's tainted background, he treats him with kindness and genuine interest. When, however, he learns that Andri is Jewish, his attitude becomes one of indifference and contempt. In his bigoted manner, he has molded all Jews in general and Andri in particular to such an extent that they are guilty of excessive ambition. Since Andri is also a Jew, he too, must possess this quality.

Ich kenne den Jud. Wo man hinkommt, da hockt er schon, der alles besser weiss, und du, ein schlechter Andorraner, kannst einpacken. So ist es doch. Das Schlimmste am Jud ist sein Ehrgeiz --Sie sind nicht zu ändern.⁵⁰

From our analysis of the image-builders in Andorra, we see that this sin is committed flagrantly and varies in manner and degree. Despite this, one predominant idea prevails: Andri, be he of Jewish ancestry or not, dwelled in a society which based its existence on a hypocritical, self-righteous ethical system. This provided ample opportunities for the image-building perpetrators. This

⁵⁰
Andorra, pp. 231-232.

sin, grossly committed, reduced life to one of utter negation.

Restriction of freedom, an essential element in the image-building process, is the key word in this drama. Andri, surrounded by the image-forming Andorrian society, is well aware of his non-existent personal liberty and, naturally he resents it and expresses his desire for ultimate freedom:

Ich schleiche nicht länger herum wie ein
bettelnder Hund. Ich hasse. Ich weiche nicht
mehr. Ich lache. Je gemeiner sie sind wider
mich, um so wohler fühle ich mich in meinem Hass.
Und um so sichrer. Hass macht Pläne. Ich freue
mich jetzt von Tag zu Tag, weil ich einen Plan
habe, und niemand weiss davon, und wenn ich
verschüchtert gehe, so tu ich nur so. Hass macht
listig. Hass macht stolz. Eines Tages werde ich's
ihnen zeigen. Hass macht geduldig. Und hart.
Ich hasse ihr Land.⁵¹

This yearning for liberation from the bonds of slavery in Andorra's prison is significant, for it indicates that deep within Andri, despite his false self, a spark of hope still glows. Unfortunately this desire for escape was not powerful enough to endure. The image-makers intensified their activities and ultimately achieved their goal: creation of a perfect Jewish mask for Andri. Compelled to be a Jew for such a length of time, it was impossible for

⁵¹Andorra, p. 242.

him to accept the truth of his actual ancestry. This led to his denial of the ultimate truth when later it was presented to him by the priest, his father, and Barblin. The true Andri no longer existed, only a shell of a former being. Andri analyses himself thus:

Und es ist so, Hochwürden: Ich bin anders. Man hat mir gesagt, wie meinesgleichen sich bewege, nämlich so und so, und ich bin vor den Spiegel getreten fast jeden Abend. Sie haben recht: Ich bewege mich so und so. Ich kann nicht anders. Und ich habe geachtet darauf, ob's wahr ist, dass ich alleweil denke ans Geld, wenn die Andorraner mich beobachten und denken, jetzt denke ich ans Geld, und sie haben abermals recht: Ich denke alleweil ans Geld. Es ist so. Und ich habe kein Gemüt, ich hab's versucht, aber vergeblich: Ich habe kein Gemüt, sondern Angst.⁵²

Amidst the darkness and evil of Andorra, there shone a bright light. This light was love: Max Frisch's solution to the identity problem, even in this society. This redeeming element finds its expression in the love between Andri and Barblin. In their relationship, both accepted one another at face value and did not attempt to mold the other. This was the highest expression of love and the practice of that love was conspicuously absent in the land of Andorra. The dire need for this redemptive element in the sinful world of this society cannot be underestimated for:

Es gibt keine wirkliche Erkenntnis ohne die Liebe, die darauf verzichtet, zu begreifen, und die sich bei dem anderen gerade an das hält, was er an Undefinierbaren besitzt.⁵³

The presence of love is not sufficient to subdue the image-builders. They have entrenched themselves so deeply in Andorrian society that opposition is useless. Andri falls victim to their sin and thereby not only loses his authentic identity, but also his life. Once again society's prison has taken its toll.

Third and final among the dramas constituting society's prison is Biedermann und die Brandstifter. Basically, this drama concerns Gottlieb Biedermann, the average well-to-do citizen. He is a successful businessman who credits his success to his trusting attitude. In actuality, however, he has a bad conscience, but refuses to acknowledge it. This fact is dramatically evidenced by the appearance of Schmitz, Eisenring, and PhD: arsonists disguised as roomers. Despite his definite awareness of the danger associated with his acceptance of the lodgers for the night, he accepts them and credits his action to his good nature. As events progress, Biedermann inwardly recognizes the impending danger but refuses to outwardly acknowledge it. Because of this refusal, Biedermann has formed an image. He molded

⁵³ Henri Flard, "Der Dramatiker Max Frisch und sein Werk für das Theater der Gegenwart," Universitas, XIX, 912.

these men to his way of thinking in that he made innocent roomers of them--entirely contrary to their very nature.

The sole and prime image-former in this work is Biedermann. Here, Frisch has fashioned a man who is, basically, desirous of maintaining the status quo. He reads in the newspaper and hears over the radio reports concerning a rash of fires in the community. In addition, these conflagrations were traced to professional arsonists who sought and gained admittance to the homes of their unwitting victims. Hence, a warning against acceptance of strangers was sounded. Fully cognizant of this, Biedermann chooses to disregard it upon the arrival of his unexpected "guests". As the guests become more open with their host by brazenly indicating their proposed intentions, both by word and deed, Biedermann considers the entire matter a practical joke and outwardly shrugs off the entire incident. To his guests he says:

Ich halte Sie ja nicht für Brandstifter, meine Herren, das ist nicht wahr, Sie tun mir Unrecht, ich halte Sie nicht für--Brandstifter.⁵⁴

Inwardly, however, he is deeply concerned because his true self recognizes the potential danger. To alleviate his misgivings, he commits a sin. He begins to mold and in the end, his venture is highly successful. Schmitz, Eisenring,

⁵⁴ Max Frisch, Biedermann und die Brandstifter (Frankfurt, 1962), p. 152.

and the PhD have become for Biedermann three innocent roomers with a warped sense of humor. In his failure to accept them for what they were--arsonists--he destroys their true personalities and hands them masks to represent their false identities. These they wear and the subsequent catastrophic events occur unhindered.

With Biedermann's position in this drama, Frisch offers his readers a sober glimpse into the prison of society, represented by the protagonist. The society here reflected is one based upon a sense of false security. This false base is the direct result of constant image-forming on the part of society to avoid reality. In this light, then, Frisch focuses attention upon the moral shortcoming this precipitates: the lack of veracity in modern life.⁵⁵ This condition is caused by "stupidity, psychological blindness, and moral cowardice,"⁵⁶ The severity of this situation is not to be treated lightly, for it serves to highlight the depths to which man's actions toward one another can lead. His refusal to accept life's situations and other individuals, compels him to create masks. In the end, he too, in a sense, has been overcome, for he suffers

⁵⁵ Huguette L. and Max Bach, "The Moral Problem of Political Responsibility: Brecht, Frisch, Sartre," Books Abroad, XXXVII, (1963), 382.

⁵⁶ Ziolkowski, 140.

the same fate as Biedermann and his wife of whom Eduard Stäuble states: "Den Biedermanns ist die Identität zwischen Wort und Welt verloren gegangen. Damit haben sie auch ihren Charakter bestattet."⁵⁷

At the very root of Biedermann's image-forming activities within the confinements of society's prison lies a certain amount of frustration. It is Biedermann's frustration at the distrust prevalent in society. This he found repulsive and thus he sought to change it. Consequently, this led to his image-forming. To this end, Frisch arms Biedermann with a critical outlook of society:

Wenn man jedermann für einen Brandstifter hält,
wo führt das hin? Man muss auch ein bisschen
Vertrauen haben, Babette, ein bisschen Vertrauen.⁵⁸

Into this complex sociological affair it would seem only logical that, as in other dramas, Frisch would offer a redeeming element. In this instance Frisch fails to do so. That his action may be properly understood, one need only remind oneself of the subtitle of this work: "a didactic play without a moral." The appropriateness of these words is best revealed in the epilogue of the drama, where we find Biedermann and his wife Babette in hell. At first unaware of their location, the couple, on the basis of their self-righteousness, imagine themselves in heaven and

⁵⁷ Stäuble, p. 80.

⁵⁸ Biedermann, p. 104.

resume creating images: "Zum letzten Mal: Das kann nur der Himmel sein. Was sonst! Das muss der Himmel sein. Was hat unsereiner denn getan?"⁵⁹ The play ends on a negative note because the forces of society's prison have been effective in containing Biedermann. Love and Emigration, the only possible redeeming elements, are absent, for in this situation they cannot overcome evil. Man will continue to form images and destroy his neighbor and ultimately himself. The moral Frisch seeks to teach --namely that veracity is necessary--is rejected and the crimes committed earlier by Biedermann recur. The forces of Hades decide to strike because there is no need for them, because man contains the seed of damnation within himself. The arsonists, actually devils, are free again. In the wake of this fiasco, one hears only the mourn of the choir:

Bürger der Vaterstadt, seht
 Unsere Ohnmacht:
 Wächter der Vaterstadt einst,
 Sorgsam im Löschen geschult,
 Trefflichergerüstete, ach,
 Sind wir verdammt,
 Ewig das Feuer der Hölle zu schauen,
 Freundlichgesinnte dem schmorenden Bürger,
 Machtlos.⁶⁰

As we advance in our investigation of the identity question in the dramas of Max Frisch, we have now completed

⁵⁹ Max Frisch, Nachspiel zu Biedermann und die Brandstifter (Frankfurt, 1962), p. 324.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 359.

scrutinizing those works which embrace the sociological prison. Within this framework, the image-building sin was limited to those relationships between individual members of society as a whole. This encompassed portrayal of personal liberty restriction and advancement of the problem's solution. As in the marital prison discussed earlier, the presence of redeeming elements, albeit in embryonic form, were not effective in overcoming the image. In the end, the individuals still found themselves in captivity. Significantly it once again serves to highlight the severity of this crime in the social realm and bring men to the final realization that he is a member of "ein Bürgertum, dessen Existenz in der Gegenwart, gefährdeter denn je ist."⁶¹

61

Bänzinger, p. 119.

CHAPTER III

THE PRISON OF THE STATE

According to the prison concept, whereby the totality of Frisch's works can be best understood, we now focus our attention upon the third and final prison, the state, because of the peculiar image formed. When speaking of this prison, particular emphasis will be placed upon those actions of individuals which are a direct result of the political state in which they live, for here further opportunities are provided for the commission of the image sin.

Significantly, by his analysis of the state, Frisch crosses the barriers of international political identity and reveals the element basic to the misunderstanding and ill-will prevalent among nations today. By his probe of the state, Frisch has exposed it as one dominated by leaders who give lip-service to understanding and world cooperation but who, in effect, profess blind allegiance to the prime espionage device: image-building. By their preconceived attitudes of their opponents and their molding of them into pernicious foes, the hope of any and all rapprochement among nations is dimmed. Further, this nefarious attitude on the part of governmental heads bears serious consequences, for their peoples, too, adopt this false concept toward foreign peoples and consequently

degenerate into image-building themselves. Concomitant with this are the distinct ideologies advanced by each political camp to enforce its position. Due to the severity of this situation, Frisch positions himself over and against the modern state. Although Swiss by birth, he is so in name only. He professes allegiance to no political ideology or state. He disassociates, for only in this manner can he in his role as dramatist, best cope with the threat to freedom posed by the state. He assumes the mission of warning mankind of the deadly snare set by the often over-powerful centralized government. For him, the actuality of a political state cannot exist with the continued perpetration of the image sin. Only when this source of strife is eliminated, will the individual engaged in freedom's struggle, see the realization of his goal. If this is not achieved, bondage remains in effect. This, then, is the crisis basic to the realm of Frisch's state and for the artistic embodiment of this, in which he engages in a "Bejahung des Einzelnen gegenüber den tödlichen Fronten der herrschenden Ideologien,"⁶² we now turn our attention.

First of the dramas treating the state's prison is Nun singen sie wieder in which Frisch treats the image sin

⁶²Rolf Geissler, Zur Interpretation des modernen Dramas: Brecht--Dürrenmatt--Frisch (Frankfurt, 1960), p. 104.

in problematic fashion. He focuses our attention upon events which occurred during the Second World War. We first view Herbert and Karl, soldiers who murder a group of twenty-one innocent men, women, and children. Our attention is next focused upon a group of air force officers, Eduard, the lieutenant, the radio operator, and the captain, prior to their bombing mission over Germany. In this entire atmosphere of war and hate, we suddenly find ourselves removed from the land of the living to the world of the dead, where both factions confront one another for the first time. It is at this moment that the masks fall from the faces of the characters and their true image-building sins are exposed.

With the penning of this drama, Frisch seeks to show "die Unmöglichkeit, Krieg zu führen, und gut zu bleiben. Auf beiden Seiten tötet jedermann, berauscht man sich an guten Gründen, sieht man den Satanismus der Gegner, aber niemals der eigenen Leute."⁶³ Further, by his depiction of a typical war scene, he sought to portray the characters as average individuals who, because of their national political identification, are compelled to assume a vindictive attitude toward other nations. To shatter the hypocrisy of this entire situation, Frisch unites the

⁶³
Plard, 906.

opposing elements: the mass-murderers and the flyers. He does so, however, in a unique manner, for they encounter one another in the realm of death. Here for the first time they see one another in a true light and become aware of their image-building, the crime which resulted in untold useless shedding of blood. In the end, there is a discernible degree of rapprochement among the former foes. During the course of this acquaintance in the realm of death, the arena for the main action of the drama, the image sin is mentioned. These specific instances, coupled with those preceding this particular drama segment, now demand our attention.

First on the list of molders in this drama appears the radio operator. In this narrative he has developed such an intensive hate for Germany, that anything of German origin, be it even music, is vile and evil to him:

Abstellen! sage ich. Abstellen. Diese Art von Musik verdaue ich nicht--Weil es deutsche Musik ist? Ich finde das Schöne zum Kotzen.⁶⁴

Second on this list is the school teacher. In the formative years of the Third Reich, the teacher himself did not believe the Nazi ideology, but out of cowardice, forced himself to accept it and, because of his position, imparted this false philosophy to his students and thereby

⁶⁴

Max Frisch, Nun singen sie wieder (Frankfurt, 1962), p. 101.

molded them.

Kann sein, dass ich selber nicht wusste, wie wahr es ist, was ich ein Leben lang lehrte; dass ich selber nicht ganz daran glaubte, was ich sagte.⁶⁵

That his molding has been successful, is testified to by Herbert, a former pupil, who now confronts him and notifies him of his impending death. Herbert does so with only disdain in his heart toward the teacher, for it becomes painfully apparent that all the humanism of the teacher's profession was not sufficient to provide him with the necessary courage and conviction to combat this dilemma. He chose life by dispensing with moral principles and therein lies his treason.

Ihre Hinrichtung ist eine vollkommene. Wir erschossen nicht Sie allein, sondern Ihre Worte, Ihr Denken, alles, was Sie als Geist bezeichnen, Ihre Träume, Ihre Ziele, Ihre Anschauung der Welt, die, wie Sie sehen, eine Lüge war.⁶⁶

Third among the image-builders is Herbert. The mask he wears is so form-fitting that he will never regain his true identity. His aversion for the enemy, even in the realm of death, is still strong within his heart as he declares:

Ich werde töten, bis der Geist aus seinem Denkmal tritt, wenn es ihn gibt, und bis der Geist mich selber bezwingt. Man wird uns fluchen, ja, die ganze Welt wird uns fluchen, Jahrhunderte lang.

⁶⁵ Nun singen sie wieder, p. 141.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 141.

Wir aber sind es, die den wirklichen Geist ans
Licht gezwungen, wir allein.⁶⁷

Eduard, as representative of the living in this drama, assumes the fourth position among the image-builders. In this production he, along with Jenny and Thomas, eventually discover the common grave of his fallen flier comrades and vow vengeance against the perpetrators of the deed. Here again, hate forms an image.

Kameraden, die Stunde eurer stummen Anklage ist da!
Das alles, es muss und es wird seine Rache finden.
Du hattest recht! Es gibt keinen Frieden mit dem
Satan.⁶⁸

The tragedy of this image-forming vengeance on the part of Eduard is that the dead do not demand it. They have seen the folly of their ways in that throughout their lives they sought the genuine life, but it was not to be found. Only is their death of significance if the living realize the futility of war as a result of image-building. If not, their deaths are useless for the living remain only to engage in constant image-forming and thereby give vent to their full hate. In so doing, a life of non-being is assured.

In Nun singen sie wieder, in which "das moralische Problem der politischen Verantwortung"⁶⁹ finds expression

⁶⁷

Nun singen sie wieder, p. 143.

⁶⁸

Ibid., p. 146.

⁶⁹

Bänzinger, p. 60.

in dramatic form, there is present one conspicuous attempt to gain freedom and that is expressed by Karl. Karl, so disillusioned by the war in which he is actively engaged, reaches the point of total psychological breakdown following his participation in the wholesale slaughter of the twenty-one hostages. In desperation he deserts his regiment and returns home to his father and wife Maria. Discovering the total misery of the conflict on the home front, unable to locate his wife, and receiving no encouragement from his father, he regains control of his senses long enough to declare:

Nichts befreit uns vor der Verantwortung, nichts, sie ist uns gegeben, jedem von uns, jedem die seine; man kann nicht seine Verantwortung einem andern geben, damit er sie verwalte. Man kann die Last der persönlichen Freiheit nicht abtreten-- und eben das haben wir versucht, und eben das ist unsere Schuld.⁷⁰

Further existence within the prison formed by the political state to which he swore allegiance was impossible. He must disassociate and remove himself from its influence. This he achieved by suicide. His image and mask were no more.

Despite the tone of negativity on which this drama ends, Frisch injects love as the only solution to the false image of this world. This love is expressed and embodied

⁷⁰ Nun singen sie wieder, p. 113.

by both Benjamin and Maria, once enemies, but now united in death. That love could emerge between them in spite of the surrounding evil, is testimony to the redemptive value of love in overcoming the image sin.

Die Liebe ist schön, Benjamin, die Liebe vor allem.
Sie allein weiss, dass sie umsonst ist, und sie
allein verzweifelt nicht.⁷¹

Only through love can the world in which we live take on meaning and substance. In this work the ultimate effect of love can be applied to the political realm for here, too, it is sorely needed. In this light, we call to mind the words of the captain concerning the universal need for love, for in it is the force necessary to shatter the power of the image-builders wherever they may be:

Ich habe das Gefühl von einer ganz anderen Welt,
Väterchen, die es gibt...eine Heimat, die uns
nicht trennt! Wer sie nicht überall hat, der hat
sie nirgends. Nicht alles ist eins! das meine
ich nicht. Man kann den anderen kein Bruder sein,
wenn man sich selber aufgibt...Ich habe das
Gefühl von einer Heimat, die man hätte entdecken
sollen, eine Heimat, die rings um die Erde geht.⁷²

Although love's redemptive element is greatly advanced within Nun singen sie wieder, in the final analysis it must be admitted that it is not effective in overcoming the excessive image-building. Admittedly the dead realize the folly of their crimes but the living remain adamant in their

⁷¹ Nun singen sie wieder, p. 148.

⁷² Ibid., pp. 130-131.

sins. Herein lies the tragedy of this drama. The prison of the state has examined its captives and rejected their appeals for release.

Frisch continues further his discussion of the state as a prison in a second drama, Als der Krieg zu Ende war. Battle-scarred Berlin after the termination of World War II forms the background for this play. We are initially introduced to the German couple Agnes and Horst and learn also that Russian officers have occupied the house in which the couple is hiding. As events proceed, Agnes is discovered and ordered to appear before the head Russian officer Stephan. This she undertakes in order to save herself and her husband Horst, who has recently returned after being officially reported as missing. As her daily visits with Stephan run their course, their frequency and also intimacy increase. The result of this association is the development of a genuine love between them. This relationship is the most significant event of the drama in that it is the pivotal point and triggering device for all subsequent action.

As in all other dramas discussed earlier, acquaintance with the image-formers is mandatory for a true understanding of the play. First to attract our attention is Agnes. As previously mentioned, the visits to Stephan which she

undertook, increased because a definite feeling of mutual admiration developed between the two. Because Agnes loved Stephan, she deceived her husband into believing she despised the daily visits, but must continue them for they were the only means to preserve them both. By so doing, she formed an image of Horst. She molded him to such an extent that he believed her lies. Further, "Horst war gerettet, solange er glaubte, und was immer sie redete: er glaubte, damit er gerettet war."⁷³ His authentic personality was destroyed and he thereby fell victim to this sin. That he wears his new mask well, is testified by his words:

Was soll das, Agnes..Komm...Steh auf, komm...
Lass uns vernünftig sein...Wenn du jetzt nicht
gehst--Das ich dir glaube, Agnes, das ist doch
klar--sonst sind wir verloren, beide...Hörst du?⁷⁴

Frisch carries further the repercussions of this image sin by placing it into the framework of the state. He illustrates how the image device is utilized among nations and peoples when one nation prejudices another to such an extent that the prejudged wears a mask in this preconceived image. Additional elucidation of this point, Frisch makes in his concluding remarks to this work as we read:

Das Gebot, man solle sich kein Bildnis machen von
Gott, verliert wohl seinen Sinn nicht, wenn wir
Gott begreifen als das Lebendige in jedem Menschen,

73

Max Frisch, Als der Krieg zu Ende war (Frankfurt, 1962), p. 285.

74

Ibid.; p. 286.

dass Unfassbare, das Unnembare, das wir als solches nur ertragen, wo wir lieben; sonst machen wir uns immer ein Bildnis; nicht bereit, nicht willig und nicht fähig, einem einzelnen Gesicht gegenüberzustehen, stempeln wir ganze Völker ab und können ihnen nichts anderes zugestehen als die Fratze unseres Vorurteils, das immer eine Versündigung bedeutet wird.⁷⁵

Concrete realization of these views are seen in the animosity existing between the two nations represented in the dramatic work now before us. Here we see reflected the bitter animosity between the vanquished Germans and the victorious Russians. Because of the ideological differences separating the two nations during the Second World War, promulgated by the respective governments, the citizens took the initiative and molded their enemies into demons. Even after the cessation of actual hostilities, the image-formers were still active. This is evidenced in the final moments of the drama when Agnes, Stephan, and Horst finally confront one another. At this moment it is revealed that Horst played an active role in massacre of Jews in Warsaw. Upon this disclosure, Stephan, who had found a great deal of affinity between Agnes and himself, dissolved the relationship and deserted the couple. This particular sin of image-forming, rooted here in the realm of the state, has again been flagrantly committed. The total desperation

⁷⁵ Max Frisch, Nachwort zu Als der Krieg zu Ende war (Frankfurt, 1962), p. 398.

of this situation is aptly illustrated by Agnes' words:

Ich weiss, dass Sie über manches anders denken.
Vielleicht auch anders empfinden--und im Stillen
über mich lächeln. Ich kann nicht denken, ich
weiss! Aber ich empfinde es doch, dass es so nicht
weitergeht--Herrgott! mit all diesen Redensarten,
die keinen Shuss wert sind, gar nichts, dieser
ganze Irrsinn mit den Völkern: als wären wir
nicht all aus Fleisch und Blut, Menschen aus
Fleisch und Blut, Sie und ich.⁷⁶

Perusal of this work by Frisch reveals that he did not concern himself primarily with the individual's liberty restriction and subsequent escape attempt, but rather with the image-formers and especially with means to counteract their destructive activities. Love is once again the one single effective redemptive element. In fact, of all his dramas, this one dramatizes most tellingly the universal effect of love in shattering images.

Strangely enough, this love is championed by Agnes and Stephan. As the two encounter one another, there exists between them a linguistic void, for neither can speak or understand the language of the other. Herein lies the beauty of the situation. Since there is no possible language communication between the two, the ability to form an image through linguistic means does not exist. Of great significance at this point are Frisch's own comments on

⁷⁶Als der Krieg zu Ende war, p. 270.

this situation as recorded in his Tagebuch:

Überwindung des Vorurteils: die einzig mögliche Überwindung in der Liebe, die sich kein Bildnis macht. In diesem besonderen Fall: erleichtert durch das Fehlen einer Sprache. Es wäre kaum möglich gewesen, wenn sie sich sprachlich hätten begegnen können und müssen. Sprache als Gefäss des Vorurteils! Sie, die uns verbinden könnte, ist zum Gegenteil geworden, zur tödlichen Trennung durch Vorurteil. Sprache und Lüge! Das ungeheure Paradoxon, dass man sich ohne Sprache nähert. 77

Although neither can understand the other, there is a genuine mutual attraction which is based solely upon love. This love between Agnes and Stephan is true, for no image is formed. For Frisch, then, this love becomes the only solution to the problem of identity. In essence, once again, love which forms an image is false. That love, however, which forms no image, is genuine and indeed love.

Evidence of this great love is given by Agnes:

Ich sage dir, was ich nie einem Menschen habe sagen können: du hörst es, Stephan, und es bleibt doch alles ein Geheimnis... Siehst du, auch ich weiss nicht, wer du bist. Nur dass wir einander lieben. Und dann bist du einfach da: Du bist alles, was ich mir denken kann... Womit habe ich das verdient!... Und dann, weisst du, dass nie ein Lüge zwischen uns ist. 78

For those critics who would eventually frown upon the means

⁷⁷ Tagebuch, p. 220

⁷⁸ Als der Krieg zu Ende war, p. 292.

by which love conquers in this drama, Frisch maintained the following:

Im Vordergrund, und hoffentlich wird dieser polare Zusammenhang deutlich genug, steht eine Liebe, die auch wenn man sie als Ehebruch bezeichnen mag, das Gegenteil jener Versündigung darstellt und insofern heilig ist, als sie das Bildnis überwindet.⁷⁹

Once again, as in every drama analyzed in our discussion, the presence of the redemptive element is not strong enough to ultimately overcome the network of image-builders. Despite its partial victory, expressed by the love between Stephan and Agnes, the drama terminates negatively, for love has been replaced with an image. Identities are once again destroyed in the prison of the state.

In the third drama which depicts the state as a prison, Die Chinesische Mauer, the problem of identity is more pronounced than in any other work. The end purpose of this dramatic effort by Frisch, which he labels a farce, is to reveal that the entire world, "die auf Schablonen verhext ist,"⁸⁰ is guilty of the sin of image-building. By this he shows dramatically that this world is one threatened by the rising waters of annihilation.

This drama, essentially, deals with the erection of the Great Wall of China in the present day. To give weight to this farce, Frisch characterizes the builders of the wall as individuals refusing to accept the fact that they

⁷⁹Nachwort, p. 398.

⁸⁰Tagebuch, p. 220

are living in 1966. Further, Frisch permits the appearance of former prominent historical personages whom he labels "Masken". This is appropriate because the masks they wear represent their former historical roles, their present roles, and serve to point out that they are not true individuals in the drama.

Vital to our understanding of this work are the image-formers themselves. To this end, let us now examine the most outstanding personages of this drama with particular attention focused upon their molding activities.

Foremost among the image-formers is Hwang Ti, the emperor of China. There are two aspects to his image activities. First, he inwardly yearns for the simple life. This is his true identity. However, because of the demands of his office as emperor, he discards his true personality and dons the mask of his false identity, thereby declaring to the world that he is the Great Emperor of China who desires the ultimate peace. In true fashion, he forms an image of the invincibility of his empire:

Die Welt ist unser, das aber heisst: es gibt auf dieser Welt nur noch eine einzige Ordnung, die wir nennen die Grosse Ordnung und die Wahre Ordnung und die Endgültige Ordnung.⁸¹

⁸¹Max Frisch, Die Chinesische Mauer (Frankfurt, 1962), p. 187

The second aspect of Hwang Ti's image-forming is built around his intention of apprehending Min Ko, "The Voice of the People",--the last remnant of opposition to his undisputed dictatorial rule--who urges revolt among the populace. In his relentless campaign to locate this traitor, a mute is apprehended. In his desire to eradicate all opposition, Hwang Ti is too blind to accept the fact that the mute is speechless. He molds him into Min Ko. This must be Hwang Ti's adversary. Hidden from him is the truth, because he refuses to accept it. For his selfish political end, he employs the means of image-forming. Blind devotion to his false cause drives him to pronounce the following sentence over the mute following a mock trial:

Foltert ihn! Das ist nicht wahr! Foltert ihn!
 Das ist gelogen wie alles, was er je gesagt hat.
 Foltert ihn.⁸²

The ludicrousness of this entire moment is heightened by the declaration of Heutige that he is "The Voice of the People". In so doing, he seeks to protect the innocent mute. Upon this disclosure, the emperor, who is still forming images, disregards it with the following words, thereby manifesting his complete break with justice and right: "Bravo... Bravo! Das nenne ich Poesie!"⁸³

82

Die Chinesische Mauer, p. 216.

83

Ibid., p. 234.

Second among the image-formers is Da Hing Yen, master of ceremonies, at the court of the emperor. So firm is his devotion to Hwang Ti that in his molding, he maintains that anyone whom he cannot understand is against him. Hate forms an image.

Wenn ich nicht weiss, wer einer ist, so heisst das:
Vor die mongolischen Hunde mit ihm! Wenn ich nicht
verstehe, was einer spricht, so heisst das: Vor
die mongolischen Hunde mit ihm.⁸⁴

Wu Tsiang, the prince, appears as a third image-former. He erroneously believes that because of his great military prowess, the world is his for the asking. Thus he expects the hand of Mee Lan in marriage in return for his service to the Chinese Empire. The fact that Mee Lan finds him repulsive, he refuses to accept. That his image-building makes him blind to reality, reveals itself in Me Lan's words:

Sie kommen sich betrogen vor, sobald man Ihnen
die blosse Wahrheit sagt. Das ist es. Die
blutigsten Schlachten zu schlagen, scheint es, ist
leichter für Sie, Held von Liautung, als irgendeine
alltägliche Wahrheit unter vier Augen zu tragen.⁸⁵

Fourth to associate with the image-formers is Heutige, who plays a dual role in the drama. First, he represents the voice of today and as such appears as the prophet of doom at the emperor's court. Second, he injects himself

⁸⁴ Die Chinesische Mauer, p. 172.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 209.

into the action of the work by playing the role of an intellectual. When considering his molding activities, it becomes apparent that his image embraces two distinct phases. In the first phase he refuses to defend the mute against the attacks of Hwang Ti and his servile court. He succumbs to the world of fear and cowardice. He rejects the truth, dons the mask of indifference and appeasement, and molds the mute into Min Ko. As if to counteract this action, he later performs a complete about-face and in the second phase of his image-building, purports that he himself is "The Voice of the People".

The role of Heutige in this work is indeed a tragic one because he, more than anyone else, possesses at his disposal the means whereby the future of civilization can be preserved. He who links two worlds, shrinks from the responsibility of mediator in this crisis, but chooses rather the avenue of the degenerate image-makers. In the final analysis we see that:

Der Intellektuelle am chinesischen Kaiserhof scheitert vollständig: er ist untüchtig und tolpelhaft, aber klarsichtig; er ist imstande, die Wahrheit auszusprechen, aber nicht fähig, sie ernst nehmen zu lassen, und am Ende dazu bestimmt, die Macht zu belustigen, gleich welchen Namen sie trägt. Er hat recht, er analysiert die Lage und zieht die Bilanz der Epoche, aber es gelingt ihm bestenfalls, sich lächerlich zu machen und den Beifall derer zu

erlangen, deren Nichts er demaskieren wollte.⁸⁶

The mother of the mute becomes the fifth person to form an image when, in the face of prejudiced opposition to the innocence of her son, she succumbs to their entreaties and maintains that her son really is Min Ko, as we see here:

O Wang, mein süßer Wang, mein unglücklicher
Wang, mein Sohn, warum hast du es deiner Mutter
nicht gesagt, mein stolzer Wang, dass du es bist.⁸⁷

As the remainder of the image-forming society, we now direct our attention to those great historical personages previously mentioned as "Masken". Of these, Napoleon is one who refuses to accept the fact that his glory and that of France are past. He still seeks to lead field campaigns. Another is Philipp II of Spain who still seeks to surpress the heretical Protestant sect. His hate is yet the cause of image-building. Next appears Columbus who maintains that the America he discovered is actually India. Finally, Pontius Pilate enters. He seeks exoneration from the guilt associated with Christ's crucifixion.

Within the framework of this drama the element of molding and the subsequent mask motif are well-developed. The mask itself plays a dual role. It is a visible symbol of man's self-deception. Second, the drama's title Die Chinesische Mauer is also of significance, for the wall,

⁸⁶ Plard, 908.

⁸⁷ Die Chinesische Mauer, p. 238.

itself a mask form, becomes symbolic of all false illusions fettering mankind in an age when the face to face encounter with reality is disparaged.⁸⁸

The phenomenon of the state as a prison is uniquely presented in Die Chinesische Mauer. In fact, of all dramas categorized under this specific heading, none surpass this one as the definitive, representative work in this area. With this dramatic piece Frisch paints the crisis taking place at the emperor's court and applies it to the world of today. With ever mounting detail and exactness he illustrates the total helplessness of the Chinese subjects languishing under the yoke of the political tyrant Hwang Ti. Due to the mask imposed upon them by their emperor, they in turn are incapable of distinguishing right from wrong. They live in a land where their leader, although fully aware of the impending catastrophic possibilities of total annihilation, seeks to erect a wall to hinder the advance of progress. In a decaying civilization, at whose very roots lie the pernicious image-formers, it becomes painfully apparent that "Die Sintflut ist herstellbar...Das heisst: Wir stehen vor der Wahl, ob es eine Menschheit geben soll oder nicht."⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Glaettli, 250.

⁸⁹ Die Chinesische Mauer, p. 160.

Yet in a world in which these signs of foreboding doom are unheeded and the gross sin of image-creation persists, there exists no hope for liberation. Under such circumstances mankind becomes imprisoned "in einem Raum, der nicht endlos ist, doch unbegrenzt; der Raum krümmt sich in selbst zurück."⁹⁰

Into this seemingly hopeless situation, Frisch injects love, his redemptive element. This love is that which develops between Mee Lan, the very embodiment of love and idealism,⁹¹ and Heutige. It is a love which transcends the evil and madness of their environment. In Mee Lan's words "Ich liebe dich. Ich habe dich erkannt und liebe dich. Ich, die Hochmütige, knie vor dir, dem Verhöhnnten, und liebe dich."⁹² this noble concept is expressed and inherent in it is the solution to the identity problem. Once again, however, Frisch closes his drama on a negative note because we realize the farce is about to begin once again. The image-building resumes. This is a symbol of the world: a nonentity of gross images.

Fourth among the dramas treating the state's prison is one already discussed under the prison of society but,

⁹⁰ Die Chinesische Mauer, p. 179.

⁹¹ Wellwarth, 36.

⁹² Die Chinesische Mauer, p. 245.

because of its dual role, merits our attention once again. This work is Andorra. The political realm of this drama Frisch advanced by initially picturing Andorra as the alleged citadel of freedom and tolerance for all. Because of this, the Andorrian folk entertained a smug conception of their supposed invulnerable position. They made an image of their society and neutrality. This conceited image-building sin, embodied by the doctor, revealed itself so :

Aber jedes Kind in der Welt weiss, dass Andorra ein Hort ist, ein Hort des Friedens und der Freiheit und der Menschenrechte.⁹³

In the end, the image-forming of the Andorrian folk was of no avail and proved detrimental for the Black Ones ignored the illusionary neutrality and overran the country. Ultimately the Andorrian populace was brought under subjection. The crisis of Andorra's political state could only be averted by that means advanced in all preceding situations: love. The love in this particular instance was that between Andri and Barblin and, as stated previously, it was not powerful enough to overcome the evil which stifled it on every front.

Fifth and final among the dramas treating the state's prison is one also already discussed earlier under the

⁹³
Andorra, p. 256.

prison of society but, because of its dual role, merits our attention once again. This work is Biedermann und die Brandstifter. As observed earlier, the lack of veracity in life was highlighted by Frisch in this dramatic work by his portrayal of Biedermann, the individual who refused to accept the fact that his guests were arsonists, but instead molded them into harmless practical jokers. Considered from this vantage point, a definite social evil is evident. Despite this, further analysis reveals that another underlying motive for this work lies in the political realm, for in the broadest sense this piece is a subtle but distinct allegory depicting the rise of a totalitarian government in a democratic country.

Biedermann, who in his image-building refused to accept reality, "fällt auf das berühmte Dilemma des Liberalismus herein, den den Gebrauch der Gewalt ablehnt und auf Überzeugungskraft, Freundlichkeit und den Stimmzettel vertraut. Er ist konziliant, allzu konziliant."⁹⁴ Here Frisch vividly depicts the political crisis to which image-forming can lead. In the final analysis the drama urges men to end their image-creation in the political arena in order to prevent the threat of the infiltrating arsonists

⁹⁴
Plard, 910.

of totalitarianism.

Frisch has not included a redemptive element in this work. Love and emigration, the sole redemptive means, are absent, because in this situation they cannot overcome evil. The pursuit of that course which invites political ruin, proceeds unhindered. In the wake of this, one hears only the wail of the choir, for it heralds the advent of man's swift end:

Was nämlich jeder voraussieht
Lange genug,
Dennoch geschieht es am End:
Blödsinn,
Der nimmerzulöschende jetzt,
Schicksal genannt.⁹⁵

We have now brought to a conclusion a scrutiny of those works which embrace the state as a political prison. Here the image-building sin was limited to those relationships which emerged from the individual's political identification. Portrayed were the restriction of personal liberty and the advancement of the problem's solution. However, because of the embryonic form of the redemptive elements, they were not effective in overcoming the image. In the end the individuals once again found themselves in bondage. Significantly it serves to impress upon man the critical nature of this crime in the political realm and indicate

⁹⁵
Biedermann, p. 156.

70.

"was man abwerfen muss, um in entscheidenden Engagement
entscheiden sein zu können."⁹⁶

CONCLUSION

In our investigation of the nine dramatic works of Max Frisch, exclusive attention was devoted to the identity question. Through this one dominant unifying theme, the dramas of Frisch possess and represent an organic whole. Further, it became apparent that Santa Cruz, Don Juan oder Die Liebe zur Geometrie, Andorra, Als der Krieg zu Ende war, and Die Chinesische Mauer emerged as primary reflections of this identity phenomenon. In these works, unlike the others where the identity theme is not immediately apparent, the problem is presented at the very outset and developed throughout the work. In these dramas Frisch has also fashioned his characters in such a manner that they are personally aware of the identity crisis as it affects them. Their words and actions testify to this. Finally, the need for love and Emigration--those forces needed to counteract the effect of the image--and their ultimate rejection, are most vividly depicted in these dramas.

After considering the scope of Frisch's works, we realize now more clearly that he possesses the courage and conviction to single out distinct social evils peculiar to our time and successfully reflect on them in dramatic form. In so doing, he seeks to stir mankind, standing on the very precipice of annihilation, from its somnolent state of indifference. It is also of vital significance that in

every drama, love, his ultimate solution to the identity question, is never capable of establishing itself permanently in the world of images, for the hearts of those who must take the initiative in this struggle are hardened and cold.

To this end, mankind must once and for all cease its image-building. This accomplished, acceptance of loved ones, friends, society, and nations for what they are and not what they could be, can be realized. If, however, the world persists in maintaining its present negative course and rejecting a life of love, only the prospect of ruin and dissolution remains. This is the crisis of identity in the dramas of Max Frisch. This is the crisis of identity in the world of today and the depiction of this crisis is that factor which makes Frisch a prominent literary figure of our day. Following in the tradition of the great Swiss literary figures, he gives the world an educational, didactic message of humanitarian import. In this light, then, we close with the following, for it is the essence of Max Frisch's dramatic mission: "Am Ende erkennt man nur, was man liebt."⁹⁷

BIBLIOGRAPHY

WORKS BY MAX FRISCH

Als der Krieg zu Ende war. Frankfurt, 1962.

Andorra. Frankfurt, 1962.

Biedermann und die Brandstifter. Frankfurt, 1962.

Die Chinesische Mauer. Frankfurt, 1962.

Don Juan oder Die Liebe zur Geometrie. Frankfurt, 1962.

Graf "öderland. Frankfurt, 1962.

Die grosse Wut des Philipp Hotz. Frankfurt, 1962.

Nun singen sie wieder. Frankfurt, 1962.

Santa Cruz. Frankfurt, 1962.

Tagebuch 1946-1949. Frankfurt, 1960.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Bach, Huguette L. and Max. "The Problem of Political Responsibility: Brecht, Frisch, Sartre," Books Abroad, XXXVII, (1963), 378-384.

Bänzinger, Hans. Max Frisch und Friedrich Dürrenmatt. Bern, 1960.

Esslin, Martin. "Max Frisch," German Men of Letters, III, (1964), 307-320.

Frisch, Max. "Rede zur Verleihung des Georg-Büchner-Preises," Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung-Jahrbuch, (1958), 91-105.

Geissler, Rolf. Zur Interpretation des modernen Dramas: Brecht-Dürrenmatt-Frisch. Frankfurt, 1960.

Glaettli, Walter E. "Max Frisch, a New German Playwright," The German Quarterly, XXV, (November, 1952), 248-254.

Hägelstange, Rudolf. "Rede auf den Preisträger," Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung-Jahrbuch, (1958), 81-91.

"Morality Plays." London Times Literary Supplement, (January 11, 1963), 17-19.

Müller, Joachim. "Max Frisch und Friedrich Dürrenmatt als Dramatiker der Gegenwart," Universitas, XVII, 725-738.

Plard, Henri. "Der Dramatiker Max Frisch und sein Werk für das Theater der Gegenwart." Universitas, XIX, 905-914.

