

THE WOMAN IN THE WORKS  
OF FRIEDRICH HEBBEL : A REEVALUATION

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## ABSTRACT

### THE WOMAN IN THE WORKS OF FRIEDRICH HEBBEL: A REEVALUATION

By Ilze Kriščiokaitis

The primary concern of this thesis has been the reappraisal of the female figures in the works of Friedrich Hebbel and to ascertain whether they possess a dimension which is of contemporary interest and can be designated as modern.

First of all pertinent biographical detail is cited with the emphasis given to the women who most affected the author. Hebbel's relationship to his family, Amalie Schoppe, Elise Lensing and Christine Enghaus is evaluated.

In the process of defining the image of the woman a chapter is devoted to excerpts from Hebbel's diaries. The image is traced through selected poetry and prose and further delineated through the major dramas. The dramas from Judith to Gyges und sein Ring are chronologically arranged and clearly reflect the close relationship between the life and work of the author.

In his art one sees Hebbel's attempts to emancipate himself by the emancipation of the woman. This is not a social emancipation, nor an emancipation as practiced today where the woman assumes the characteristics of the man, but

an emancipation which would terminate a general state of unawareness and lead toward a new emotional, intellectual and social consciousness on the part of woman. Hebbel pleads for an attitude towards sex similar to the concept of New Morality, a new morality based on the awareness of the individuals. Hebbel seems to sense the era of nebulous boundaries and advocates a more frank and penetrating outlook toward sex. He is unable, yet, to recognize "sex as a good thing" as can Wedekind, since the idiom of his time and his own rigid morality do not permit this, but he comes quite close. A good example is his fresh and frankly erotic prose work, Ein Abend in Strassburg. To Hebbel, it is imperative that the woman recognize her sensuality as a potent motivating force and only then can she be a positive factor in her relationship to the man. Judith clearly illustrates the devastating effects of the indecisiveness and unawareness of woman. The author touches upon a "modern" need yet unanswered.

Through some aspects of his female figures, motivated by the polarity of his own existence, Hebbel is cognizant that sex, marriage and woman's role in society have not yet been resolved by man. It is his awareness of the isolation in marriage which is similar to a position taken by a contemporary author, Max Frisch.

Hebbel's occasional, but frank appraisal of sex, his pleas for awareness in the woman, his sceptical attitude



toward marriage are all modern aspects of his work. Among Hebbel's female figures Judith, in the drama by the same name, is his most modern creation. As an individualistic woman, who contains within herself irreconcilable, incomprehensible motives, she is striving to find her place in a complex society.

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Part I

BIOGRAPHICAL AND AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL MATERIAL

## INTRODUCTION

Hebbel scholarship has experienced a recent rejuvenation stimulated partly by the centennial of his death. Reborn interest in his works tempts one to discard some of the categorical, dogmatic platitudes and reevaluate a given point of interest in light of contemporary relevance. Personal predilection and the inability to locate a pertinent and exhaustive source of information have focused my attention on the woman in Hebbel's life and works.

Upon investigation of a collection of his works it becomes quite apparent that the author devoted much of his literary and intellectual energies to her image. A glance at an index of Hebbel's dramas will easily glean such names as Judith, Mariamne, Agnes Bernauer, Maria Magdalena, Julia, and Genoveva. These names not only function as perfunctory titles, but provide the psychological, intellectual and dramatic focus of each given work. Hebbel's perpetual fascination with the female figure easily arouses interest in the reader. This is particularly true in this era when society once more is attempting to explore and define the role of the female.

This thesis reevaluates the image of the woman in the life of Friedrich Hebbel, shows how it is represented in his literary legacy, and ascertains the relevance of biographical

and autobiographical material to literary incarnation. It may be something of an oversimplification to suggest that all of Hebbel's female figures comply to one mold, nevertheless an attempt is made to compile a composite picture.

The subject also is reevaluated from the contemporary vantage point to see if there is anything in the works of Hebbel, apropos the character of the woman, which today may be considered modern.



## Chapter I

### HEBBEL'S LIFE AS A BACKGROUND FOR HIS WORK

#### A. Introductory remarks

Six of the completed dramas of Hebbel have the name of a woman in the title--Judith, Genoveva, Maria Magdalena, Julia, Herodes and Mariamne and Agnes Bernauer. Another Gyges und sein Ring, is almost deceptive in its title, since it easily conjures up the subtitle of Rhodope in the reader's mind. This simple scanning of an index will clearly indicate that the female figure holds a prominent position in the dramas of Hebbel.

The sources of these exponents of femininity seem more incidental than intended.<sup>1</sup> It is as though his speculations have recalled a wayward echo which suddenly stabilized some reverberating thought.<sup>2</sup> Hebbel has not chosen the names of women he loved, nor has he endowed his heroines with ordinary, nondescript ones which gain stature and brilliance due to the character with which they are identified. The source material he focused on seems to have been dormant information, until it served as a catalyst for his thoughts. What then caused Hebbel to focus on this particular object? Was he the champion of emancipation or was he in subconscious search of himself through the "du"?

I should like to note that Hebbel's preoccupation with the female is neither a novel nor an original one: he merely

is unusually intent upon it.<sup>3</sup> That man is tragically and hopelessly alone is a well established and tested truism. In order to cope with this realization Hebbel attempts to find a tangible image of the self in the woman. Psychological predisposition makes it essential for Hebbel to seek the solution through the reality of another being.

Hebbel's mind seems to seek a profound premise for his existence, a more individualistic and perceptive reality. Can it be found in the intimacy of an alter-self? It is here that the woman finds her way into his art. If one may consider three ways to approach the problem and meaning of existence-religion, philosophy and art, then it could be said that Hebbel's way is through his art.<sup>4</sup> He created from the core of his very being and from his innermost experiences.<sup>5</sup>

In few authors do personality and art blend as thoroughly as in the case of Hebbel.<sup>6</sup> The external circumstances of Hebbel's life and his compulsion for self analysis<sup>7</sup> combine to create a preoccupation with the self in him. As a result, it becomes difficult to separate his intellect from his personality, which in turn merges with his art. He perceived the circumstances of his life in a manner which fostered unusual and excessive self reliance and introspection.<sup>8</sup> As Martini aptly states, "Sein Ich war sein einziger Besitz."<sup>9</sup> His compulsion for self analysis merges with his intellect which renders his art subjective. It is as though he wished to realize his own existence through his intellect, which

becomes the greatest force in his art. Hebbel's art is neither intuitive interpretation of reality nor an objective formulation of an intellectual ideal. It seems rather a combination of psychological necessity and intellectual objectivity.

Through his art Hebbel tries to delineate a concept which would render living a more congenial process. He searches for an insight into human relations and thus into himself, insight which is not surpassed by many poets of his time.<sup>10</sup> Hebbel's search for the "du" has to be understood in view of the fact that he experienced a profound incompleteness and duality of the self and existence.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, this is seen as an intrinsic condition in the coupling of the man and the woman. Hebbel seems to sense an order of positives and negatives in nature, but he is unable to comprehend the reality of fusion. The coupling seems highly unsatisfactory.

The woman becomes an integral part of the whole concept of duality and it is as though he demands a solution of her, a solution which, of course, she is as unable to provide as he himself is. Here lies the path toward the idealization of the woman. Because of this desire to idealise her and have her become all that which is incomplete in him, she is put in a position where her inferiority predominates. He would wish to incorporate in her all that he seeks. In this light the woman would become the transmitter of higher intellectual

values, almost an ideal figure as in the case of Goethe.<sup>12</sup> As Hebbel writes in his diary, "Wer nicht in dem Weib das Ideal sieht, wo soll der es überhaupt sehen da das Weib doch offenbar in seiner Blüte die idealste Erscheinung der Natur ist."<sup>13</sup>

The basic hostility between the sexes, however, is so fundamental<sup>14</sup> that a more amicable state is almost inconceivable. Thus, in man's attempt to extricate himself from his torturous dichotomy, it becomes convenient to endow the woman with idealistic properties, to create a vessel for his hopes. However, the female is an ordinary sensual being. He is faced with an individual who is just as inadequate as he himself and moreover her nature is alien<sup>15</sup> to him, sometimes hostile. The relationship between the male and the female becomes a great unending process of searching for equilibrium and its inherent hostility provides the cornerstone of Hebbel's art.<sup>16</sup>

Hebbel searches for communication and for his own identity. By placing the problem on a sexual plane, he has chosen a ground of communication which is delicate, even daring for his time, a time when the sensuality of the woman is hardly recognized as an overt fact.<sup>19</sup> Here Hebbel seems to be trapped by the idiom of his day; by the boundaries of yet unspoken concepts. Hebbel wants to bridge the vast expanse of manmade barriers to sexual freedom<sup>18</sup> by spiriting them away, by leaving them anonymous. He senses the infinite

variations that may be achieved in this relationship and pursues them through his art.

Hebbel emphasises the psychological instead of the philosophical factors and in doing so he has struck chords which are more pertinent and comprehensive today than they were in his time. The psychological aspect has today found its vocabulary. It is the psychological factors, not environment and external influences which are so important in the works of Hebbel.<sup>19</sup>

In the process of interpreting Hebbel's art much emphasis has been placed on the philosophical content of his work. Hebbel is not a philosopher. He is more of the intuitive speculator than the logician who operates with precisely defined terminology. This is how Oskar Walzel sees the author. "Philosophische Schrifften, die er lies, philosophische Vorlesungen, die er hörte, wecken eher Abneigung. Dennoch saugt er sich was an philosophischen Gedanken in der Luft liegt."<sup>20</sup> Philosophical thought served as a catalyst for formulating his own emotional, psychological and intellectual thought processes. His philosophical thought is an integral force of his life and art.<sup>21</sup> Possibly, it stems from his need to escape loneliness through his intellect.<sup>22</sup>

It is the dichotomy of existence which makes his philosophical ventures pertinent to the problem at hand. Each concept, be it the man versus the woman, or the general versus the particular, has its polar mate. The character of

the woman becomes a link in the bridge to span the vastness which separates man from his natural pair. Forever present is the hostility between the sexes and the polarity of sex and morality. It becomes man's duty to suppress his sensual desires.<sup>23</sup>

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## B. State of scholarship

The revival of interest in Hebbel scholarship has been prompted by the possibility that the classification of his work may have been too rigid. He has been assigned the role of the Hegelian exponent of the individual versus the world order. A profuse list of dualities would be easily obtainable from Hebbel's work and the process to resolve and the inability to do so may merit another exhaustive investigation. The scope of perplexities embodied in his work defies neat and clear evaluation. Is his work based only on the concept that man has to fit into a grander order of things and his resistance to do so will be catastrophic?

Contemporary thought is concerned with the individual himself, not just his relation to the whole. Recent scholarship is making an effort to look behind the scenes of the great process between the sexes in the works of Hebbel.

What philosophers influenced Hebbel's thought, is it possible that the basic tragedy of his works point toward nihilism and not optimism, does the morality of his time hide a greater psychological depth than is recognized, is he possibly ironic, is his language more than a dramatic tool, is there unearthed wealth in the biographical material? These would be only a few of the questions which are interesting



from a contemporary view point.

There is great lack of recent comprehensive biographical material.<sup>24</sup> Besides the standard works of about fifty years vintage there is an assortment of lesser ones, which may be considered as abridged versions of the more highly regarded biographies.<sup>25</sup> Possibly one other work, that by Walzel, offers greater depth.<sup>26</sup> Unfortunately, there is no recent comprehensive biography.<sup>27</sup>

Only one sprawling, outdated bibliography is in existence.<sup>28</sup> As far as current bibliographical material is concerned, no complete work has been written. There are three recent, scholarly articles which offer substantial but incomplete bibliographies.<sup>29</sup>

Six works, to be discussed in this section, deal specifically and only with the subject treated in this thesis, the woman in the life and works of Hebbel.<sup>30</sup>

One of these six, a thesis written by Clara Newport and published by the University of Wisconsin, gives biographical material divided chronologically into the significant periods of his life. The work and the biographical material are closely meshed. Clara Newport states that there is a great similarity between Hebbel's theories and the woman characters which he created. Each detail of a character can be accounted for by Hebbel. She concludes by saying that it was the women in his life which caused him to alter his views and as the woman herself changed, so his model changed.

She further states that the pure and beautiful virgin of Hebbel's early works was borrowed from literature. Later his heroines were modeled on the image of the devoted Elise. This expands to include the fact that the woman must suffer in her love. Eventually Hebbel's women claim the right to individuality. At first love is idealized, then it becomes sexual, at which point it awakens cynicism in Hebbel, and eventually it matures into a noble, pure form, as for instance, friendship. The image expands in scope to include motherhood as the woman's supreme contribution and eventually Hebbel learns to respect her individuality and strength.

As indicated in the title, the work of Frau Brachvogel stresses the fact that Hebbel's characters are modern. Her thesis is that Hebbel is modern because he is the first author to deal in depth with the problems of the woman in marriage. (Classical drama, with the exception of Medea, took the woman up to the wedding.) Women are beset by their own unique problems. She goes on to mention great authors (Goethe) who were married to insignificant women and points out that Hebbel was the first to marry an equal and thus came his inspiration for dramas of women who were married. Hebbel was not a feminist, he was inspired by his marriage.

Frau Mitscherlich's book is an ecstatic adulation of Hebbel. No other race but the Germans have had such a prophet as Hebbel. Modern life demands a full-blooded woman and Hebbel has created her. Judith is so real, so true. As the

author says: "Wie weiblich, und wie echt Hebbel." Similar emotional outbursts dispose of about six of Hebbel's dramas.

Janssen's book presents the biographies of the women in Hebbel's life--his mother, Elise, Christine and Amalie Schoppe. Hebbel himself emerges as the genius born of insignificant parents. The father meant nothing to the boy and the mother was merely kind and devoted. Furthermore, Hebbel never developed an attachment to home or homeland. Thus, his pride, sensuality and genius are explained by the fact that he was the son of an intellectually significant man, Pastor Volckman. (The mother had been his maid.) Amalie Schoppe is praised as an author, and Janssen explains the difficulties between her and Hebbel as having been caused by unkind friends. Elise emerges as a woman of excellent education who was pure and good in spite of the fact that Hebbel took cruel advantage of her. There is much detail about the family life of Christine and Hebbel. Christine is characterized as intelligent and even shrewd.

Frieda Knecht deals with love and marriage in Hebbel's life and his dramas. She presents pertinent material from the diaries. She suggests that Hebbel may have wished for a double standard of morality, one for the man, one for the woman. His egotistical sensuality loved the youth and beauty of Emma Schröder and Josephe Schwarz; yet, his strong ethical inclination forced him to dissolve the affairs. Hebbel may have been so lonely because he was such a great personality.

In this work Elise's goodness and Hebbel's egotism emerge. The marriage to Christine was often a battle because of their strong personalities. Hebbel was not an emancipator of the flesh. For him the woman was above all, a mother. She could be an equal partner to the man, but never like the man. It was his strong ethical sense which elevated the woman to a position to be honored. The tragedy lies in the essential and basic differences between the sexes.

The thesis of Elise Dosenheimer's work is that the basic tragedy of Hebbel's works is a dual one. It is not the boundless greatness of an individual, but the whole process of living as it unfolds among the sexes. The duality of things is at the basis of Friedrich Hebbel and his art; this is also carried over into the realm of the erotic. The man and the woman are by nature enemies; she is destined to remain on a lower plane and endure in a narrow circle of activity. Her tragic guilt lies in the attempt to escape this circle. Hebbel wishes to endow her with ethical values, so that she may become an agent of harmony to the man. Man's sin against the woman is his "Masslosigkeit."

Hebbel's dramas are inspired by experiences in marriage, but his art as a whole is based on idea, not experience. His lovers are not destroyed with each other, but because of each other. Hebbel is not the first to deal with this process between the sexes, but he does so consistently. He is not an artist devoted to sex psychology, but is motivated by the

tragedy of the total duality.

To reiterate, there is an apparent revitalization of Hebbel scholarship, relevant questions have been raised, but the emphasis still remains on the void to be filled. There is need for a biography, a bibliography, source material and monographs on specific subjects.<sup>31</sup> One is faced with an ambiguity--much of the comprehensive scholarly work on Hebbel, due to the nature of the work, deals with the woman in the life and works of Hebbel. Yet, there are few works which deal solely with this subject, none recent.<sup>32</sup> Regardless of the viewpoint taken or the subject of investigation, the female figure can not be divorced from the discourse at hand. She is an integral component of Hebbeliana. Conversely, no definitive, contemporary work on this subject exists. Of the about half a dozen available works none have been published since 1925 and they range from highly regarded<sup>33</sup> to ludicrous.<sup>34</sup> If Hebbel's literary stature and the pertinence of his work are to be maintained, reevaluation of certain aspects from a contemporary viewpoint is in order.

## C. Biographical facts

### 1. Family

Friedrich Hebbel was the child of poor and uneducated parents. They had, at one time, owned an unpretentious home-  
stead, but an unfortunate financial venture on the father's  
part reduced the family to absolute poverty. No longer did  
even the very poor look up to the poor Hebbel family. The  
parents and the household exhibited no distinguishing char-  
acteristics. Conspicuous character traits, talents, tradi-  
tions or unique events were not apparent in the lives of  
Hebbel's parents. The household seems to have been destitute  
spiritually and economically. Hebbel's own accounts of his  
childhood and parents are tinted by retrospective vision and  
what seems to be his personal attempt to set his house in  
order. As he himself writes,

"Wer sein Leben darstelle, der solle, wie Goethe, nur  
das Liebliche, Schöne, das Bewichtigende und Ausgleichende  
hervorheben, das man auch in den dunkelsten Verhältnisse  
auffinden lässt, hervorheben und das übrige aus sich  
beruhen lassen."<sup>35</sup>

The family lived a hand-to-mouth existence, with both  
parents working intermittently. The father was an embittered  
man. He does not emerge as a strong, manly figure who ex-  
perienced much hardship in his life; he did not function as  
the patriarchal head of the household, but merely as the

ineffectual breadwinner. More benevolently, he has been described as earnest.<sup>36</sup> As a grown man, Hebbel remarked that it was poverty that made his father the way he was. This may well be an astute observation, but does economic poverty presuppose spiritual poverty?

Hebbel's father seems to have found little pleasure in the natural association with his children and was unable to give of himself to his children. Hate toward his "wolves" seems to have been the predominant emotion.<sup>37</sup> Hebbel's inheritance from his father was poverty, not much more.<sup>38</sup>

The definitive biographies of Hebbel do not dwell on the question of who his real father was. Klaus Friedrich Hebbel is Friedrich's natural and legal father. Sadger and Janssen, however, suggest that the mother, during the course of her duties as the housekeeper to Pastor Vockmann, became involved with the latter and that he fathered her son, Friedrich. Sadger pictures Vockmann as a talented and sensuous individual, which in turn explains Friedrich's otherwise inexplicable talent. This information derives from rather erratic and obscure scholarship. This, however, does not eradicate its existence. Klaus Hebbel is said to have possessed an extremely quick and violent temper, which eventually was also discerned in the son.<sup>39</sup>

Hebbel's mother was an insignificant woman who showed a natural attachment and devotion to her children.<sup>40</sup> The mother is credited with the fact that in spite of their

poverty the children seldom suffered real hunger. She even managed to save the best scraps of food for her sons and protected them from their father. But she, too, was plagued by the same poverty which was so detrimental to his father. This woman, no more than her husband, was able to free her spirit from this condition. The household was held together by a common hunger and the sensual bond between the parents. It is a small wonder that Hebbel did not profess a deep attachment to his parental homestead nor to the land where he was born.<sup>41</sup>

## 2. Childhood and Youth

Hebbel's childhood must have been the lonely existence of an exceptional child. Insidious poverty, uneducated parents, equally destitute peers constituted the immediate world about him. His intellectual endowment may not have been apparent to others, but he surely was aware of what was an inherent part of his makeup. His sensitivity and intellect developed in spite of an environment hostile to them. He possessed an extremely vivid imagination, which manifested itself in fantastic dreams and easily animated inanimate objects.<sup>42</sup> He was not a loquacious child and spent much time alone.<sup>43</sup> He even avoided school and played by himself.<sup>44</sup>

Hebbel started school at the early age of four and was taught by an old maid teacher whose ultimate treasure was the secret of writing. Even in this little school success



was measured by the thickness of the father's wallet. Friedrich was not an unusually precocious child. He did, nevertheless, show some artistic talent and exhibited early aesthetic tendencies, he could not abide ugly people.<sup>45</sup> He did, at an early age, exhibit a passionate and melodramatic nature<sup>46</sup> and devoured romantic and passionate literature<sup>47</sup> with the fervor of any intelligent child. In his early childhood, Friedrich was withdrawn, peculiar, proud, not particularly brilliant and reasonably genial child. Only luck saved him from becoming a bricklayer's apprentice. Even though he was intelligent, society did not intend for a boy like Friedrich Hebbel to reach too high. Paul Bornstein expressed this view,

"War er doch armer Leute Kind! Die Würde und Bedeutung eines Menschen mass man eben zu seiner Zeit fast noch mehr nach dem Geldbeutel als jetzt. Das er nach seiner Konfirmation Schreibelehrling wurde, war dem gewöhnlichen Manne nur ein Beweis dafür dass der Mauersohn zu 'hoch hinaus' wollte."<sup>48</sup>

After Fräulein Susanne's school Hebbel continued his education under the teacher Dethlefsen. Here Hebbel excelled in his studies and gave credence to the fact that he was more capable than other children. Dethlefsen favored his bright pupil and encouraged him to borrow his own books. Hebbel had learned so well that upon his father's death he came to the attention of the parish overseer Mohr who engaged him as an errand boy and scribe, and eventually as secretary.

Mohr was not inclined to encourage the boy's intellectual

development, since he too was a poor man's child who had been hired for minimal reward to do a job. Gratitude was to be expected from the boy, not further help from Mohr. Hebbel, himself, remembered the years at Mohr's house with bitterness. However, in view of contemporary social conditions they may not have been so completely bad.<sup>49</sup> Hebbel was probably not subjugated to exceptional injustice. Considering his characteristic pride it is doubtful that he would have remained, had he been truly mistreated.<sup>50</sup>

One must wonder at the boy's vehement resentment of his situation. Or is it the vehemence of the grown man who finds it convenient to blame his privation on a grander order than himself? From the vantage point of his socio-economic condition he exhibits monumental effrontery in his assumption that the world should have offered him something better. The feeling of depravity is a relative one, it is unlikely that others in his situation were in better circumstances. He had not yet formalized the belief that it was poverty which thwarted his path and it is likely that he spent an ordinary youth, with the resentment appearing in maturity.

The resentment of his impoverished state became more acute as he found himself in a world where the opposite end of the social spectrum was represented. He encountered this as he left home to become a student.<sup>51</sup> His great pride suffered immensely and his poverty began to haunt him. He was unable to solve this problem by practical means and even

less capable to coexist with it. He became preoccupied with it and remained supersensitive to it for the rest of his life.<sup>52</sup> The poverty of his youth cast a shadow of gloom on his courage and vitality, yet, he claimed it to be his responsibility.<sup>53</sup> Poverty almost became a facade for him.<sup>54</sup>

From his homeland, Dithmarschen, Hebbel carried the legacy of poverty and pride. It also taught him introspection, suffering and to fight for his existence.<sup>56</sup> Undoubtedly, the geographic, social, economic and historical conditions of his people influenced Hebbel's personality and his work.<sup>56</sup> The people of Dithmarschen were Nordic peasants who had to eke out their living with unbending will in presence of the unyielding and depressing elements.

The pleasures of these people must have been simple and few, even the climactic conditions were not designed to inspire overt joviality. The devastating fight for survival and the bleak area must have suppressed a man's fiercest passions and forced him to turn inward. Dithmarschen also left its indelible mark on Hebbel and the characteristics of the proud introvert are evident in his personality as well as in his work. The heroic and stern qualities of the Dithmarsch peasantry live on in his works.<sup>57</sup> However, Dithmarschen represented imprisonment to Hebbel<sup>58</sup> and in retrospect he himself feels only bitterness towards it, as he writes in his diaries. "Dass ich in Dithmarschen geistig schon so hoch stand...und dennoch gesellschaftlich so

niedrig gestellt ward, ist das grösste Unglück meines Lebens."<sup>59</sup>

### 3. Influential Friends

What was Friedrich Hebbel like and what kind of relationships had his childhood and youth prepared him for? One learns from exposure and contact with the world. In Hebbel's case both had been limited. The image of the woman that he took with him is one of passive, inconsequential suffering. There are not traces of forcefulness, energy, insight or individuality in the dominant female figures of the first twenty years of his life. Also apparent is the lack of meaningful relationships with other males during this period. Devotion, emulation and friendship toward the father were non-existent in the son. Nor was there a father substitute figure to whom Hebbel had been attracted. Mohr came into Hebbel's life when he already had built the walls of adolescence around himself and was himself an inaccessible personality. Dethlefsen was the incarnation of the devoted teacher figure, but the relationship, though amiable, lacked depth and intimacy. There was a brother, Johann, but this is a mere biological fact and not an emotional brotherhood. The young Hebbel had formed no strong and lasting friendships with another man. The female figure of his childhood is little more than a passive, devoted slave and the male is a rather negative intangible one. Blind, egotistical pride

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which plagued him for the rest of his life must have been conceived here.<sup>60</sup> The young Hebbel was lacking in educational background, means, social graces, experience and possessed a willful, proud, arrogant and dour personality. He was also both intelligent and sensitive. He had missed much, and the male relationships he formed during his lifetime were not free from unusual stress.

Hebbel met Emil Rousseau in Heidelberg while both were students there and the two men became friends. This friendship almost exhibited the torments and passions of a love affair. He wanted to possess and dominate Rousseau who in turn was attracted to the stronger personality. He was willing to suffer Hebbel's passionate and vacillating moods,<sup>61</sup> since he also embodied intellectual depth for which Rousseau's sensitive nature yearned. The stronger, arrogant man wanted a devoted and faithful adherent, not a relationship in which he would have to give of himself. It was a passionate and precarious association, built on mutual sensitivity and diametric needs. One of the first shattering experiences of Hebbel's life was the death of Rousseau.<sup>62</sup> As he writes to Elise, he never realized a new friendship like this one!

"Erst jetzt is die Welt mir öde....O, Elise, das war der beste Mensch, den die Erde je getragen hat.... Er war mir alles, was ein Mensch in dem höchsten, würdigsten Verhältnis dem andern sein kann."<sup>63</sup>

The other outstanding male relationship of Hebbel's life was his association with Emil Kuh, who was his friend, admirer

and eventually biographer. It is a graphic illustration of the insurmountable difficulties which Hebbel's personality brought to these friendships. In his association with Kuh, Hebbel allowed for no other alliances. In this case, it was Kuh's attachment to a woman. Hebbel would not abide a dual alliance. He was unable to tolerate the self of another and there could be but one deity.<sup>64</sup> As Hebbel himself says, friendship demanded subjugation<sup>65</sup> and as he writes in his diaries, "Du hast ein Feind. Was heisst das? Du hast einen Menschen vor dir, den du entweder zu deinem Freund oder zu deinem Knecht machen sollst."<sup>66</sup>

Hebbel's friendships were erratic and short lived. Yet, Hebbel was motivated by a need to form intimate and lasting friendships.<sup>67</sup> How does a man attain compatability with a woman if he is unable to do so with a male? Does he regard the woman as a sexual object or does he relegate her to the realms of ethereal idealism by ignoring the existence of her sexuality? Even in the realm of the erotic he suffered from incompatability, the gift of intimate communication was never his.<sup>68</sup>

Hebbel was a sensual person, but this clashed with the attitudes of his childhood. The ethical values in the Hebbel family were reaped from the Bible through which a vengeful God became a real part of the child's existence. The Bible was the most important book in the household and Jehova's stern commandments rang in the ears of the children.<sup>69</sup> God's

law was to love one another and to be severely punished for transgressions. Hebbel was taught of the "pure" love between men and women and one which is quickly converted into sin.<sup>70</sup> On this basis, a purely sensual relationship was doomed to failure for Hebbel.

#### 4. Amalie Schoppe

Among the women figures outside of the immediate family who influenced Hebbel, Amalie Schoppe occupies the initial position. She was a curious mother-woman figure that Hebbel encountered upon leaving Dithmarschen. Amalie Schoppe was an author and published a woman's magazine at the time when she met Hebbel. Hebbel's personality and economic status had prepared him for this encounter. Amalie Schoppe was ready to arrange a subsidy for the poor, young student and Hebbel felt obliged to accept this expediency. Hebbel lacked the noble manliness<sup>71</sup> which would have enabled him to accept assistance graciously, yet, his personality paved the way for a situation in which he was ready to have some one else carry the burden of his daily needs. The relationship was strained due to differences in temperament and Hebbel's inimical personality traits.<sup>72</sup>

In spite of her grandiose intent Amalie Schoppe exerted a limited influence on Hebbel.<sup>73</sup> The affinity of this middle aged woman for Hebbel lay in her pretensions to being an author of note. She did, however, admit that he might not have judged her so. She felt herself to be the spiritual



mother of Hebbel, since she was the one to recognize and salvage this talent from anonymity. As her writing, her praise for Hebbel was prolific, as she saw in his Judith the equal of Faust with Shakespearean overtones. She gave Hebbel an education by providing for Latin instruction and even a friend--Janinsky.<sup>74</sup>

Amalie Schoppe was intelligent, energetic and upon her father's death had been forced to make her own living. Motivated by need for security, she eventually entered into a bad marriage.<sup>75</sup> After her husband's death her literary penchant enabled her to make a living. She had the respect of those who knew her<sup>76</sup> and engaged in what today would be called charity work. There is a touch of the do-gooder in her and sporadic illusions of grandeur.

Unable to achieve greatness through her own efforts, she seemed to want to invest herself in helping others realize their ambitions. Her desire to help the young and promising Hebbel was genuine, but it was tainted by hero worship of the middle aged woman writer for the young man of literary aspirations. The relationship was marred by overtones of manipulation. Hebbel was virgin ground to be cultivated by proper education, indoctrination and friends. Had she succeeded, he would have become a brilliant son-friend-protege to replace her aspirations for her own children, who had not developed the way the mother had intended. Her manipulations proved innocuous. Only Hebbel's pride was hurt, since he

had been placed in the role of the humble recipient and quickly balked at her overtures. The alliance was neither amiable nor lasting.

### 5. Elise Lensing

Through Amalie Schoppe Hebbel met Elise Lensing, who at this time was nine years older than Hebbel, but unlike Hebbel possessed social graces, education and adequate resources. Her chronological age put her at the precarious interval where the female changes from "ein junges Mädchen" to "ein Fräulein." Her single state incurred speculation, the common suspicion cast upon the able bodied single female. Elise was a respected, but nebulous figure, whose past was said to have included a lover.<sup>77</sup>

Hebbel's affairs were not in a state which allowed for impetuous, thwarting alliances, yet, Elise provided a haven for his perturbed existence at a very low immediate cost. Elise had received an adequate education and was considered a lady. She frequented the lending library, attended the theatre and was well versed in the social graces of the time.<sup>78</sup> To Hebbel, who was fully lacking in social amenities and was ill at ease in company,<sup>79</sup> she must have represented refinement. The true depth of her education is questionable. The claim that she read Rousseau in the original French,<sup>80</sup> is doubtful. Nowhere in her letters does she dwell on her facility with this language and she tends to

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misspell the French words that she does use. The style, content and even the spelling obviously exhibit the fact that she was literate, but not much more. The extent of her education is now irrelevant, to Hebbel she was an educated and well mannered lady. It seems absurd to conjecture that Hebbel was attracted to Elise because of her brilliant intellect. It was the stability of her adequate education and manner, combined with an unobtrusively bright mind, which attracted Hebbel. Elise had money, not much money, but enough to live independently and to impress the financially embarrassed Hebbel. The money had been an inheritance from her father.<sup>81</sup> The combination of all these external factors presented a highly desirable picture to the young Hebbel who even indulged his pretensions slightly and is known to have referred to her as "von Lensing." Insignificant as this divergence from the truth is, it gives an indication of what he yearned for and valued.

Elise was known for her compassion for the poor and her charitable works.<sup>82</sup> The initial altruistic motivations toward Hebbel soon assumed a different aura. Elise's uneventful, lonely life gained a new meaning; she was needed, she could give not only her help and care, but her whole being. She fell in love and devoted her life to Hebbel. But she was in no position to bargain; she had lost a woman's greatest asset, her youth, not her need to be loved and to love. Consequently, I do not intend to exalt her sacrifice nor

suggest that she is a figure women should always be proud of.<sup>83</sup> She possessed a sensual nature,<sup>84</sup> which demanded satisfaction and was not devoid of pleasure. Unfortunate and unconventional as the relationship was, she had entered into one of life's most meaningful experiences with Hebbel, she was involved with another person.

Elise's greatest handicap in life seems to have been poor health, which in turn rendered her supersensitive. This is how Wilhelm Rutz depicts her. "Elise war offenbar eine jener Naturen, denen seelische Zartheit, Empfindsamkeit und Reizbarkeit auf der Grundlage eines zarten Körpers zur Quelle vieler Leiden wird."<sup>85</sup> She was given to melancholia and cried easily.<sup>86</sup> She was emotional and impressionable and even dreamed dreams inspired by Hebbel. Elise was too submissive.

At this time Hebbel's predicament would have been equally difficult had he loved Elise, but he did not. Instead, he attempted to idealize her. Possibly this was his way to justify himself and to gratify his ego. He would have belittled himself, had he dismissed Elise as an indiscreet indulgence, rather, she became all that is good in humanity, even if only by Hebbel's demand itself. Again, to quote Rutz, "Elise ist das Weib in dem Hebbel seine Idee der Menschheit verkörpert sieht, sehen will, das er seinem Ideal gewaltsam verhöhnt wenn es ihm nicht von selbst gleichkommt."<sup>87</sup> Hebbel willed to Elise all the admirable qualities that he yearned for.

She was not all that he believed her to be. At moments Hebbel praised Elise as the noblest of all women.<sup>88</sup> He loved to think of her and love her as a Madonna. The Madonna, however, is self effacing and demands nothing. An ambiguity in this relationship is apparent here, he preferred to think of her as the holy Madonna with no sensual or emotional demands, yet it is this very passive slavery of Elise which repelled him and he did feel a sexual attraction. In his love for "Beppi" he celebrated the beauty of her primitive, earthy and charming nature, which he could not see in Elise. "Beppi" lived in a world of religion, love and dream.<sup>90</sup> Hebbel attempted to divest Elise of all sensuality and thought of their relationship as a glorious friendship.<sup>91</sup> His overtures to prove the genuine depth of this intimate friendship are rather crude and devoid of understanding. He wrote candid letters to Elise of his passion for other women and deluded himself into thinking that his relationship with Elise was different from the ordinary ones between man and woman. They loved each other like brother and sister. Hebbel thinks of "ein freundliches menschliches Verhältniss."<sup>92</sup> It was his desire to extricate himself from this involvement which caused him to see it as a mere friendship. The sensual element introduces the unbearable polarity. He was unable to satisfy his sexual desires and simultaneously adjust them to his moral codes.<sup>93</sup> Were Elise truly a self effacing Madonna, he could adore her at will and dismiss her at will, all

the time maintaining her unmarried image. Elise was not. And soon Hebbel found himself bound to a benefactor to whom he felt indebted and at the same time wished to escape.<sup>94</sup>

Elise was unable to help in this escape, she had made an inexorable commitment. She had for six years supported Hebbel and even aided the members of his family.<sup>95</sup> Subsequently, she found herself with child and exhausted finances. She had, of her own volition, become Hebbel's virtual slave and encountered financial and emotional bankruptcy.

Enigmatic as Hebbel's image of Elise might have been,<sup>96</sup> Elise's attitude toward Hebbel was much clearer. Elise had given love and shelter, but Hebbel wished to make his spiritual home elsewhere<sup>97</sup> and was unable to legitimize their sensual relationship. Elise's obvious demand was marriage.

Hebbel's objection to marriage was both simple and intricate. He did not love her and did not have the resources to maintain a family, he was emotionally and socially uprooted; in short, marriage was the thing he needed least. Yet, he had accepted this woman's commitment and was still unable to decline it. He did, however, decline the responsibility. His reasons, in view of his personality and even general consensus, were valid. He believed himself to be a unique individual, a genius, not an ordinary man to be bound by marriage.

Hebbel also lacked the funds for marriage and the lack of money was one of the perpetual problems of his life.

Curiously, he allowed this to become such a constraining handicap. He could have easily been employed, but he declined all avenues of expediency. Hebbel's pride borders on stupidity with masochistic overtones. Lack of money caused him to starve and freeze, which often lead to incapacitating illness and periods of unproductivity. Moreover, he found satisfaction in comparing himself to other famous men in similar circumstances.<sup>98</sup>

To Hebbel, the prospect of marriage aroused ambivalent feelings in him. His nature demanded that he both follow the demands of his genius and accommodate his need for a woman in his life. This ambivalence was compounded by the realization that the woman proposed as his marriage partner was a woman that he did not love. The whole relationship assumed the proportions of a perpetual see-saw, each perturbation upset the balance and, yet, he could not get off. At one point Elise suggested that he need not marry her, which Hebbel countered by a resolute intention to do just that.<sup>99</sup> Hebbel suggested marriage as a contradictory measure to appease Elise's incessant imploring and to comfort her in time of crisis, such as the death of his son, Max. The mother of his child was his only concern and he was ready to sacrifice himself for her.<sup>100</sup> Undoubtedly, his genuine pity for the mother was intensified by guilt over the neglect of his son.<sup>101</sup> He felt for Elise and not with her.<sup>102</sup> In a moment of despair he was willing to sacrifice himself, yet, soon



came the realization that the primary duty was to himself and wrote, "Es gibt Fälle, wo Pflichterfüllen sündigen heisst."<sup>103</sup>

To perform the duty and marry would be to sacrifice his innermost drives and to shackle his art, as Hebbel himself states, "Schüttle alles ab, was dich in deiner Entwicklung hemmt, wenn's auch ein Mensch wäre, der dich liebt, denn was dich vernichtet, kann keinen andern fördern."<sup>104</sup>

The schism between wish and deed attained its greatest depth here. If the man is so devoted to the pursuit of his unhampered development and to his art, is he not already thwarted by a devastating, not socially sanctioned relationship with another person? He condemns himself to excruciating emotional torments, which can be no less shackling than marriage. Hebbel claimed he was too involved in creative work to experience a real love affair. He did, however, spend himself on something less than real. Can one sire two children and wage an indefatigable psychological war for his identity with a woman and be free? He had to violate standards of bourgeois morality and human rights in order to save his art.<sup>105</sup> If he violated accepted morality and another human being, he also violated his most precious possession--his individual freedom. His struggle with Elise was a futile one, the conflict was within himself. Hunger, insecurity and sex shackled Hebbel to Elise. It was not his great passion for art which thwarted his great passion for Elise, his sexuality and morality were incompatible. His sexuality had incurred a debt which his morality could not expiate and this

very conflict became an integral part of his being. This consciousness of guilt even constituted one of the principal themes of his dramatic work.<sup>106</sup>

Elise Lensing had compromised herself socially and emotionally. She was getting old, poor and had born two illegitimate children. With the death of Max the final estrangement of Hebbel and Elise<sup>107</sup> set in and she was left alone.

Elise's character exhibits a curious anomaly of passivity and extreme egotism. Circumstances had reduced her to a shadow of events and she was incapable of adding dignity to this horrible reality. Yet, she had the persistent audacity to make vain demands; her ego could not be appeased and she clamored for the theoretical right. Deprived of this, she haunted it for the rest of her life.

Having buried the children and the expectancy of marriage, Elise transferred her search for belonging to the new Hebbel family and Christine's illegitimate son, Carl. She became a vicarious member of the family. Carl gave purpose to her existence and provided a link to Hebbel.

Elise's correspondence with Christine is, in a sense, a sum total of her life. Her dedication is evident in her care for Carl. On the whole, her letters are laced with resentment and indictment of Hebbel. Elise explicitly complains that Hebbel's letters indicate only ill moods and worries that his child may have inherited this tendency.<sup>108</sup> All of which tends to make her ill for days.<sup>109</sup> Resentment and

self-pity are evident throughout her letters. Life is one great iniquity, "denn die welche es am mehresten bedürfen bekommen es am wenigsten."<sup>110</sup> The best people suffer the most. Apparently egotism and self-pity cohabit very easily.

The ultimate picture of Elise that emerges is one of a defeated, elderly woman who has attempted to forge her identity through her devotion to others. Hers was an ordinary existence plagued by extreme suffering and bound to the trivialities man is doomed to when forced to eke out his existence step by step. Her adequate education and intelligence did not, however, provide an astute and critical insight of the self. Ill health and devastating circumstances plunged her into egotistical self-pity and resentment, culminating in neurotic morbidity. Elise was unable to see that self-sacrifice is a grand and lethal illusion, which is duly transformed into alienation.

## 6. Christine Enghaus

"Wo sich zwei Menschen umarmen, da bilden sie einen Kreis,"<sup>111</sup> this is Hebbel's affirmation of marriage after his union with Christine. The statement was made by the same man who spent years pontificating that marriage was not designed for the genius.

Hebbel's "Wanderjahre" culminated and expired with his meeting of Christine Enghaus. Hebbel, at this time, was thirty-three years old and Christine was twenty-nine. She

was an experienced actress and was accustomed to supporting herself. Indicative of her stamina and individuality is the fact that without imposing social background or education she had managed to attain a measure of success and affluence. She also had an illegitimate son, Carl.

Christine was attractive, had a natural penchant for her profession and was an excellent mimic.<sup>112</sup> The public liked her and after she became a "drawing card" in Hamburg she was invited to Vienna.<sup>113</sup> Success came with the ability to identify with the character she portrayed, even though she was hampered by weak diction and older actors who monopolized the better roles. Christine was devoted to her art, respected it. Her demoniac projection predisposed her for the roles in Hebbel's dramas, which she had aspired to portray previous to their meeting.

"Schwarze Augen schauten in blaue hinein, wie blitzende Sterne in einen blauen See, und der reine Grund der Seelen liess sich erblicken."<sup>114</sup> This is an overromanticized version of the rational meeting of Hebbel and Christine. These two experienced people had encountered stark reality long before they met each other. They had learned to survive and suspect. They were two iconoclasts of idyllic love, improbable candidates for passionate transport. Poverty, insecurity, ill health and emotional entanglements had etched their imprint on the artist's face. Pity, instead of passion, was one of the emotions which drove Christine to the

melancholy Hebbel.<sup>115</sup> Christine understood his work and offered him an economic base, which set him free to do what he wanted to do most.<sup>116</sup>

Hebbel, on the other hand, at the age of thirty-three, was still uprooted and had formed no inseparable ties with any location or individual during his wanderings. Having found no harmony or peace in his relationship with Elise or his male friends, Hebbel was still on his quest to belong. His memories of love and companionship were tinged with guilt, and he sought a relationship which would offer him emotional comfort and security.

Having failed to retain the idealized image of Elise, he attempted to emancipate himself by emancipating Elise and thus stabilizing the equilibrium of moral responsibility. In spite of this, he still retained his original conception that the woman belongs in the narrowest circle.<sup>117</sup> True emancipation, Hebbel would have regarded as the crime of his century.<sup>118</sup> The emancipation of the woman would deprive man of the humanizing factor in life. Even though emancipation would have served Hebbel's purpose, he still wished to seek the idealized "du" in the female and was reluctant to abdicate this prerogative by demoting her to an equal. There exists a clash between the desire to have the woman as an emancipated equal and to retain her image as an ideal. Hebbel was unable to emancipate Elise and thus set himself free, nor could he maintain his image of her.

The woman Hebbel had known had been passive and alien to his personality.<sup>119</sup> In Christine Hebbel met a woman whom he considered to be an individual, i.e., he did not have to take sole responsibility of her life, nor would he have to adore a Madonna. Christine could become a partner in living.

It is curious that the man who protested being confined to matrimony so eloquently and on such profound grounds, now found a haven in the arrangement. The pursuit of his art and freedom were the very essence of his life, if one is to take the following statement at face value which he made in his diaries.

"Es ist meine Überzeugung und wird es in alle Ewigkeit bleiben, dass der ganze Mensch derjenige Kraft in ihm angehört, die die bedeutendste ist, denn aus ihr allein entspringt sein eigenes Glück und zugleich aller Nutzen, den die Welt vor ihm ziehen kann. Diese Kraft ist in mir die poetische."<sup>120</sup>

With Christine, this poetic urge was easily compatible with marriage and on the whole a less tempestuous outlook on marriage became possible. "The trend toward a more conservative interpretation of life can be attributed to the fact that Hebbel's marriage with Christine Enghausen had relieved him of his concern for Elise Lensing, and the problem of emancipation, for which his relation to her had been responsible."<sup>121</sup>

Hebbel was unable to combine marriage and art until he met Christine. The urgency and singlemindedness of his artistic inclination are suspect. Why was it even essential to use the argument of his creativity against the prospect

of marriage? Were he so convinced of his desires, he was free to pursue his course. He expressed the desire to be the artist who frees himself from all that is conventional. It was the conventional, however, which attracted him sufficiently to constitute a valid struggle. The artist wanted to pursue his Muse, yet found himself bound by conventional morality and even conventional desires. Egotistical pride superseded artistic dedication. Hebbel struggled with guilt inspired by injured morality, while his artistic egotism prohibited him from compromising himself. Not, compromising his art, but compromising his image of what his manner of living should be. He was not strong and free enough to pursue his art irrelevant of external trivia. He could not marry Elise, not because he did not love her, but because life with Elise offered no conventional or emotional security. Christine did offer love and security,<sup>122</sup> which saved him from utter despair. It is the security which she offered that enabled Hebbel to sever the ties with Elise.

With his marriage to Christine Hebbel entered a new sphere of creativity.<sup>123</sup> The tragic aspect of marriage lies in the inherent loneliness and isolation of man, not in the institution itself. With his marriage Hebbel seemed to accept this. Elise Dosenheimer sees in this the attempt to overcome the basic duality.

"Er hat dieses Symbol so gestaltet, wie er es seiner Weltanschauung her sehen und gestalten musste: als das ewige Problem, die Einsamkeit des Individuums, die

Zweiheit des Geschlechtes zu überwinden, eine in sich metaphysische gegebene Dissonanz in seiner ebensometaphysischer geforderten Harmonie aufzuheben."<sup>124</sup>

Marriage must always be a struggle not only against loneliness, but against the basic animosity and strangeness of the sexes.<sup>125</sup>

The marriage of Christine and Friedrich Hebbel may be considered one of the best marriages,<sup>126</sup> if not the only instance in the history of German literature when two equals shared each other's lives.<sup>127</sup> Christine freed Hebbel from routine and daily worries for the last sixteen years of his life. Hebbel mellowed and Christine's horizons were expanded. It was her life with Hebbel which taught her to understand the works of the greater intellect and to find her own style.<sup>128</sup> The intellectual superiority of Hebbel provided the cornerstone of the relationship.

The marriage was not without difficulties. Hebbel's personality made him a dictatorial and moody husband. His ill health and hypochondria detracted from domestic felicity. It is also a curiously sad fact that Hebbel felt the need to take not only hunger and illness, but incidental trivia too seriously. In certain personal matters he seemed to possess no sense of humor.<sup>129</sup> His impoverished background had also taught him exaggerated frugality which bordered on miserliness and contrasted with Christine's laxer attitude toward money.<sup>130</sup> His tightness with money reflected an even deeper inability to give. His life had taught him to take and not



to give.<sup>131</sup> Christine's tolerance of her husband's inadequacy is admirable and possibly the basis for Hebbel's eventual idealization of his wife. With Christine his home became his whole world,<sup>132</sup> whereas before he insisted on travel in order to make the world his home. In his diaries he writes, "Wie rührt mich jeder Blick in die weibliche Natur."<sup>133</sup>

On the whole, the Hebbel household is said to have been a happy, contented picture of homelife, which exuded a north German simplicity and was presided over by the father figure.<sup>134</sup>

The marriage is a testimonial to the fact that Hebbel's personality demanded instead of rejected marriage. Hebbel responded very favorably to an ordered, stable and affectionate household. He took great pride in his wife and in his role as the father of the house and it was he who needed the security and affection of marriage. Hebbel, after the marriage, became a very conventional and pedantic husband who needed the family and thrived on the relationship.

## Chapter II

### HEBBEL'S DIARIES

Before turning to the woman in Hebbel's art, I would like to include some of the relevant material from his diaries, which proves to be a rich source. It is not a source filled with intimate revelations; rather, an often cautious and reflective attempt to relate to the world and events around him.<sup>135</sup> There is a preponderance of autobiographical material dealing with the woman in his life and with the female in general. References to intimate relationships have been filtered through self possessed rationalization. Only on rare occasions do his diaries reveal severe emotional stress.<sup>136</sup> The meticulously kept, extensive diaries present the chronicle of the man's life in a rational, calculated manner. Fleeting glimpses of the naked man are to be seen in the well mannered entries; the brutality of complete honesty with oneself is lacking in this effort at self analysis. Yet, they give us some inkling of Hebbel's life and personality. Easy and frank social intercourse was never mastered by Hebbel, causing him to retreat within himself for maximum security. The frigid exterior repelled possible harm to the vulnerable interior. This makes itself apparent in the autobiographical material.

Hebbel's observations are valid since they offer factual

information, but one also senses that the diaries present his personality in a manner in which he would have liked to have been seen by others and even by himself. As also seen by Oskar Walzel, he is never completely frank.

"Soviel er über sich sein Sinnen und sein Formen zu Papier gebracht hat, lässt er doch zuweilen im entscheidenden Augenblick seinen Beobachter in Stich und hüllt sich, wo die wichtigsten Geheimnisse seines Lebens in Betracht kommen, in rätselvolles Schweigen."<sup>137</sup>

Life and work tend to merge in the diaries, providing a generous exposure of the woman therein.

"Das Weib und der Mann in ihrem Verhältnis zu einander; jenes diesen vernichtend."<sup>138</sup> Indicative of Hebbel's thought on the man vis à vis the woman is the juxtaposition of the ideal versus reality. Hebbel's idealism is apparent in his assumption that there exists or should exist a grand and comprehensive idea which presumes an ultimately pure and perfect relationship between the male and the female, but the individuals themselves are responsible for its destruction. It is as though the relationship exists in the regions of a yet dormant awareness. If it is the nature of man that he is unable to maintain this pure state, what is natural about its existence? It is man's nature to destroy it. Man can strive toward an ideal, but he is incapable of living it.

"Es ist ganz natürlich das jedes Geschlecht das Ideal der Menschheit in dem anderen erblickt, der Mann im Weib und das Weib im Mann."<sup>139</sup> The extraordinary persistence to equate the sensually and psychologically based relationship

between man and woman with an ideal is here further intensified. Hebbel yearns for an ideal state of existence, which he suggests may be found through the woman. If this is to be an emotional, physical, intellectual or social arrangement is not clear. Both sexes search for the ideal in the other. Man is destined to live with the awareness of his own imperfections and it is this awareness of his inadequacy which motivates him to search for perfection in the opposite sex.

The female quickly falls short of the norm through her inability to come to terms with her own image of what she wishes the male to be.

"Es ist merkwürdig, wie die Frauen, die am Mann doch nur eben das lieben, was ihrer Natur gerade entgegengesetzt ist, ihn doch so gerne zu dem machen wollen, was sie selbst sind; die sind Göttinen, die nur seine Sünde vergöttern und ihm die Sünden dennoch nie vergeben."<sup>140</sup>

Inadequacy and unawareness again dominate. The woman is attracted to the man because of his strength and vitality, yet, these are the very qualities which will subjugate her. This she fears, and fear, not love becomes the basis for the relationship. Moreover, if society puts the woman in a position where she is chastized for submitting to the male and absolves him of all responsibility, then no doubt her reaction is indeed one of revenge, to chastize her counterpart and to alleviate her loneliness by demoting the male to an equal level. On one hand, Hebbel assumes a pure alliance

between the sexes, where each can find the ideal in the other and conversely there prevails a perpetual animosity between the two.

"Liebe gleicht die natürliche Feindschaft aus zwischen Mann und Weib."<sup>141</sup> It seems that this simple statement is to be taken as just that and no more. Hebbel operates on two levels in his relationship with the woman. On one level he is motivated by a desire for a sexual partner but he resents this relationship if he cannot justify it in terms of "pure" love. (Such as with Elise.) On the other hand, if his morality is not offended, if there is love, he feels quite satisfied that the ideal had been attained. (As with Christine.)

Man also searches for his own identity through love--love of child, parent, friend, mate."Auch das ist eine wichtige Seite an der Liebe, dass der Liebende eine Versicherung des persönlichen Wertes erhält, dass er sich sagen darf; ich bin zu etwas da, ich bin kein leeres Nichts."<sup>142</sup> Hebbel's personality forced him to search for an emotional oasis, he searches for love so that he might see his own worth. Curiously, he does not recognize that others may be as desperate as he, and the women who clutched at him were fleeing the identical nothingness that he tries to escape.

The instant cure, of course, is possession, temporary or permanent. Hebbel's temperament may have preferred the former, but his moral predilection demanded the latter. In

such a case the love would have to be mutual and conform to current moral norms. Any deviation would be considered excessive and undesirable. Mutual seems to be the key word.

"Die Liebe ist durchaus egoistisch, und dies macht sich nur nicht darum fühlbar, weil hier meistens ein Egoismus mit dem andern zusammentrifft, dem, wenn der eine wie der andere auf den Besitz entbrannt ist, kann von Fessel keine Rede sein."<sup>143</sup>

"Die Weiber kennen keinen Gott als den Gott der Liebe und kein Sakrament als das Sakrament der Ehe."<sup>144</sup> Hebbel himself was a moral and conventional man. This accusation could just as well be directed against himself. He, too, had great difficulty to acknowledge the fact that he could find intimate associations outside the boundaries of love and marriage,

"Woher die Abneigung artistischer Naturen gegen die bürgerlichen Verhältnisse? Weil diese, wie zum Beispiel die Ehe, von allem schönen Menschlichen den Duft abstreifen, schon dadurch, weil sie es zwingen wollen, länger zu dauern als es in den meisten Fällen kann." <sup>145</sup>

Marriage is regarded as a state of confinement, desired by the insecure female and the ordinary man. The sensitive, perceptive man finds it unacceptable, because it curtails his search for the ideal. Personal independence and lack of moral restrictions may make the institution unacceptable to certain individuals who are able to escape the social confines of their society. Furthermore, Hebbel seems to commit the grave error of equating marriage with either heaven or hell. He fails to place it in ordinary reality. Personal

coincidence, not personal conviction causes him to either fear it like the eternal fires or to escape into its haven. The thought of, not marriage in general, but a particular marriage fills him with aversion,

"Meinen Ansichten über die Ehe wünsch ich keinen Beifall, am wenigsten unter dem weiblichen Geschlecht. Sie gehen überhaupt nicht auf die Ehe selbst, sondern auf mein Verhältnis zur Ehe. Mir wird alles unveränderliche zur Schranke und alle Schranke zur Beschränkung. Die Ehe ist eine bürgerliche, physische und in unendlich vielen Fällen auch geistige Notwendigkeit. Der Notwendigkeit ist die Menschheit untergeordnet, jede ist aber mit Regalien verknüpft. Das Individuum darf sich der Notwendigkeit entziehen, wenn es Kraft hat, den Freibrief durch Aufopferung zu lösen, darin liegt seine Freiheit. Ich kann alles, nur das nicht, was ich muss."<sup>146</sup>

Hebbel's keen understanding of man's loneliness and the awareness of the probability of this being the permanent state is surpassed only by his own greater desire to attain a measure of comfort in belonging and the demands of his own morality. The possibility for the attainment of a pure relationship and the ideal through the "du," become theoretical questions, as does the worthiness of marriage as an institution and the ultimate disillusionment with the "du." The reality of living to him was such that marriage became an essential, it provided a mold for his life which his constitution demanded. "Die Ehe gibt dem einzelnen Begrenzung und dadurch dem Ganzen Sicherheit."<sup>147</sup>

The woman is seen in the most flattering light in the role of the mother. The question of motherhood versus some other form of endeavor on the female's part is still

irrelevant in Hebbel's time. The woman possesses a unique and revered holiness in motherhood, a serene state alien to the male. "Eine Mutter, eine Schwangre, oder eine im Kreise ihrer Kinder; wo wäre im Leben des Mannes eine Situation, die dieser an Heiligkeit gliche."<sup>148</sup> The whole matter seems rarely self evident and endowed with great simplicity; this is the woman's domain where the male can easily decline responsibility. "Gutes Weib, gutes Geschlecht."<sup>149</sup>

Hebbel's analysis of the woman who has had a child and still must relate to the male is probably more particular than universal. "Das Weib sobald es ein Kind hat, liebt den Mann nur noch so, wie er selbst das Kind liebt."<sup>150</sup> Universal appeal is taxed by equating the woman's love for a man, the woman's love for her child. This applies to a particular moral value, the woman's role as the preserver of society and its structure. She guards her young at any price and her need for the male becomes secondary. This is pertinent to specific events in his own life. He felt he deserved Elise's wrath instead of her love due to his neglect of the children.

"Das Weib ist dem engsten Kreis gebannt; wenn die Blumenzwiebel ihr Glas zerspringt, geht sie aus."<sup>151</sup> This oft quoted theme sets the tone of Hebbel's attitude toward the female. Many reverberations of this theme resound throughout his life and work. It probably constitutes the dominant



and most tormenting "Leitmotiv," and shows how closely his thinking was linked to the mores of the nineteenth century. The woman is the one who has to bear and rear, her situation is quite clearly delineated. While she is devoted to the survival of her children, the male is free to pursue completely unrelated endeavors. He can exert his energies and abilities in directions which are alien to the female. The exact division of responsibility becomes a moral and ethical question. If society places the woman in a position where her sole responsibility and activity is the rearing of a child, the same society puts a formidable responsibility on the male by expecting him to be the forger of its ideas and ideals. If the woman is indeed confined to a narrow and absolute circle which she may escape only through her own destruction, she can in no way join the male in the world of ideas. By delegating the woman to a circle of isolated and confined activity, both become isolated. It is as though Hebbel laments the restrictions of his society which have been placed on the female, thusly, condemning him too to isolation.

The two may never meet on an artificially constructed path which is contrary to their nature, only absolute awareness and comprehension of their inner selves can hope to accomplish this.

"Das Weibes Natur is Beschränkung, Grenze, darum muss sie ins Unbegrenzte streben; des Mannes Natur ist das Unbegrenzte, darum muss er sich zu begrenzen suchen.

Innerstes Vermögen und innerste Fessel sind immer eins; was die Uhr zur Uhr macht, halt sich zugleich ab, etwas andere, als Uhr zu sein."<sup>152</sup>

The woman does not emerge as an individual, but as a form of life which can only thrive by attaching itself to the male. "Das echte Weib ist seinem eigenen Gefühl nach, nichts für sich, es ist nur etwas in seinem Verhältnis zu Mann, Kind oder Geliebten."<sup>153</sup> The woman is in no position to render an original, individualistic contribution; she can only express herself in relation to another person. Her sole motivation for action is to escape the subjugation by the male.<sup>154</sup>

The fact that the woman is confined to a narrow sphere of activity simultaneously renders her more prone to petty maliciousness. "Warum ist das unbedeutendste Weib immer schneller mit einer Intrige usw, als der geistreichste Mann? Weil in ihrer Natur ist, was in uns Talent sein muss."<sup>155</sup> By nature her visionary level is set so low that any trivia provides diversion and useless activity.

"Männer sind auf Vorzüge bei ihres gleichen nicht so neidisch wie die Weiber. Jene rechnen sich alles zu, was ihrem Geschlecht angehört; Jeder hat Amerika mit entdeckt und den Faust mitgemacht. Diese glauben sich immer um soviel verkürzt, als eine Mitschwester mehr besitzt."<sup>156</sup>

The male then is capable of vicarious grandeur, while the female can only count the possessions in the next household. Her life is not constituted of idealistic visions and productive activity, it is a life devoted to things and the

most prosaic of man's needs. Hebbel even goes so far as to suggest a basic tie between the devil himself and the woman, whereas none exists between the devil's grandmother and the male.<sup>157</sup> One tends to dismiss this as a fatuous idea born of a bad moment.

Hebbel shows some cruelty and lack of understanding toward the woman through his insistence that her sphere is a narrow one and by simultaneously demanding that she accept responsibility for life's consequences to a greater extent than the man. If the man is able to remain aloof, he is free from all responsibility. If, however, his own needs demand involvement, why should the woman not expect to share the burden?

"Ein edles Mädchen: sowie sie sieht, dass ihr Geliebter sich von ihr entfernt, in demselben Grade, um ihm Schmerz und Vorwürfe zu ersparen, entfernt sich von ihm, und als ihm das Herz bricht, sagt sie, ohne das er ihr Opfer ahnt; wir taugen nicht für einander, widersteht seinen Bitten, scheint alle Schuld zu tragen und macht uns frei."<sup>158</sup>

Indeed, Hebbel admires the self sacrifice of the woman who can love and demand nothing in return, even more, deny her own love and need in order to free the man from his guilt.

"Darum sündigt ein Weib, das Liebe gibt, ohne Liebe zu empfangen; die Strafe trifft nicht nur sie allein."<sup>159</sup>

Is Hebbel's cruelty born of guilt rooted in the highest idealism? Is he yearning for a world in which man's consciousness would be liberated from a man made ethic, which would allow the male and the female to meet on a ground of intimacy and

compatibility, a ground where neither society nor morality would demand adherence to its laws. Man would then liberate his subconscious self and experience moments of high intensity in his life, moments shared by a partner similarly liberated. If man's attempt to attain communication are foiled by barriers which bind his real self, here then lies Hebbel's bitterness against the woman. To her nothing remains, but "Durch Dulden Tun: Idee des Weibes."<sup>160</sup>

The woman has become paralyzed by her inability to exert herself. "Man muss dem Weib keine Rechte, nur Privilegien, einräumen. Sie wollen diese auch lieber, als jene."<sup>161</sup> Were she only able to look toward to the future and not be tied to the past.<sup>162</sup> If she were able to forge her own rights and not be subjugated to her menial privileges then her new freedom may pave the way to a better society. "Zuweilen mein' ich, eine reine weibliche Natur könne mich retten."<sup>163</sup>

"Das Weib muss nach der Herrschaft über den Mann streben, weil sie fühlt, dass die Natur sie bestimmt hat, ihm unterwürfig zu sein, und weil sie nun in jedem einzelnen Fall prüfen muss, ob das Individuum, dem sie vis-à-vis befindet, imstande ist, das ihm seinem Geschlecht noch zustande Rechte auszuüben. Sie strebt also nach einem Ziel, das sie unglücklich macht, wenn sie es erreicht."<sup>164</sup>

The ambivalence of Hebbel's attitudes toward the woman is reinforced; he yearns for a woman who understands herself and her needs so that she too can be free to pursue her ideal which would eventually merge with that of the male. Conversely, he can not allow her to obtain absolute freedom, her

freedom has to relate to that of the man. Thus, he is not striving for a twentieth century type of emancipation, where the woman acquires her freedom by assuming the properties of the male, which is to make them equal, i.e., the concern is not with social emancipation of the woman, but an emancipation of her awareness.

"Das Weib und die Sittlichkeit stehen in einem Verhältnis zueinander, wie heutzutage leider die Weiber und die Unsittlichkeit. Ubrigens sind sie zu entschuldigen. Die Gesellschaft hat sie emanzipiert, statt, dass nun der Mann die emanzipieren sollte. Darin steckt die Wurzel alles Übels. Für das Weib gehört der beschränkteste, der engste, Kreis, Für sie gerinnt das Weltall in einen Tropfen zusammen. Sie ist die Wünschelrute, die dem Mann die Schätze der Erde anzeigt. Sie allein könnte den Himmel entbehren, wenn's keinen gäbe, denn für sie ist er nur Tradition, kein Weib hätt' ihn erfinden. Dass jede sich hineinseht, kommt daher...weil sie sein wollen, wo wir sind. Weh denen, die das Weib, diese Marketenderin des Augenblicks, zur Sonnenuhr machten, durch die die Ewigkeit ihre Stunden anzeigt." 165

The woman is to be the anchor of life. Her sentiments are rooted in her bloodstream around which her world gravitates. Her function is to provide the man with a tangible world which provides him with a take off point for the discovery of the world. To have society liberate her from this task would be to rob the man of an essential part of his existence, her liberation has to come through the man himself, not through society.<sup>166</sup> "Gleichgewicht wohl, aber nicht Gleichheit."<sup>167</sup>

Part II

THE WOMAN IN THE WORKS OF HEBBEL

## Chapter I

### LYRICS

Hebbel's forte was his dramatic art. His poetry and short prose creations do not constitute an impressive part of his literary output. Neither of these categories has been considered in this paper from any other aspect, but its relevant content expressed within. Some of the poems chosen relate to a specific woman; others deal with this theme in general. The poems are arranged in chronological order, here.

"Auf ein altes Mädchen" was written while Hebbel was still in Dithmarschen, in 1835 and already shows his pessimistic outlook. In the first stanza of the poem, Hebbel sees the girl who has lost her youth, whose only longing is for death, who now stands as an unapproachable and cold monument to her life. But as ghosts may wander by night, her heart, upon occasion, shakes its frigid crust and its old emotions arise in their former glory. For a brief moment she shines in her youthful splendor. Then, once more, the coldness repels.

Mir aber wird es trüb zumute,  
Mir sagt ein unbekannter Schmerz,  
Dass tief in dir verschlossen ruht,  
Was Gott bestimmt hat für mein Herz,  
Und wills dann hin zu dir mich ziehn,  
Ach, mit allmächtiger Gewalt,

So muss ich stumm und blutend fliehen,  
Denn du bist wieder tot und kalt.168

In this last stanza one finds Hebbel's ever present torment, the isolation of man. For a brief moment he sees a passion and depth of feeling in the woman which beckons to him, inviting his heart to join in a glory destined for him by Godhimself. The glimmer of the promise is painfully brief and he retreats as though deaf and dumb in the face of cold and empty reality. Only brief moments of illumination pierce the nothingness.

The word "old" in the title has little chronological value, it serves to evoke an image, a barren, cold and lifeless image. It is an image of life forever lost; she may exhibit occasional intensity, but her heart can not sustain it and hope is quickly shattered.

The theme of man's vain search for an ideal and transporting love also reverberates in "Liebesgeheimnis." The poet says that you may call love a dream, but he calls it a painful awakening. When awake, man is bound to the pettiness and weakness of reality. A pilgrim sleeps under a tree and dreams an invigorating dream, only to awaken and quickly close his eyes again, in order to dream again.

Du nennst die Liebe ein entzückend Träumen,  
Ich nenne sie ein schmerzliches Erwachen;  
Wir fühlen uns in öden Schlummers Räumen  
Gekettet an unwürdig-nichtige Sachen,  
Wir schauern, es ergreift uns, ohne Säumen  
Frei für das hohe Leben uns zu machen,  
Allein, wir Armen sind gar fest gebunden,  
Bald ist der Mut, das Sehnen auch, entschwunden.169



The second stanza of the poem reinforces the theme expressed in the first through a rather redundant analogy of a weary pilgrim who rests in the shade of the tree and finds the rejuvenating breeze and brilliant stars to be nothing but a dream.

Love may be labeled an enchanting dream, but in reality it is but a cruel awakening, an awakening of the senses, which temporarily have become aware of a more brilliant existence. In his oversensitized state the keen senses liberate the man from worthless and empty pursuits. And, yet, it is as though man is indeed afraid to abandon the security of his misery and eventually even closes his eyes to the threatening vision.

This poem was written in München only a year after "Auf ein altes Mädchen" and again shows the pessimism of the young poet. He has even become disenchanted by the idea of love and has no more courage or imagination to encourage it.

In "Tändelei," the poet looks into the eyes of his love and sees the beautiful reflection of himself. The reflection disappears with a beautiful and pearly tear. He sees the reflection appear and fade even more beautifully than it came.

Ich schaute dir ins Auge schnell;  
Du blicktest gar zu mild,  
Und lieblich sah ich, klar und hell,  
Darin mein eignes Bild.

This deceptively lighthearted first stanza introduces the poem, which ends with,

So dir im Auge, wundersam  
 Sah ich mich selbst entstehn,  
 Und, als die stille Träne kam;  
 Noch schöner mich vergehn.170

"Tändelei" is one of the few poems which begins in a gay and light mood. The lover sees his reflection in the girl's eye "hell und klar," which blends into a magical multi colored rainbow. As the girl's eye grows misty, her tear falls "perlenklar und rein" into the pool of light. As the tear falls so does the reflection and the beautiful moment is forever gone. In this poem can be seen one of the motives common to Hebbel, the search for the "du." Man yearns to relate to another and in the eyes of the lover longs to see his own identity. He can not hope to measure and understand himself in a void. As in the majority of Hebbel's lyrics the yearning is a vain one and a pessimistic aura of loneliness remains.

This poem was written in Heidelberg a year after he had met Elise. It may reflect Hebbel's affair with her. His loneliness had been met with tenderness and devotion, but this, too, quickly passed.

The perpetual nuances of the bright reflections which fade into darkness are once more found in "Einziges Geschiedensein."

Schlummernd im schwellenden Grün  
 Liegst du, wo Lüfte dich fächeln!  
 Mädchen, was spiegelt dies Lächeln,  
 Spiegelt dies zarte Erglühn?

Ach, wie beschleicht es mit Schmerz  
 Kalt mir den innersten Frieden!  
 Gänzlich, wie nie noch, geschieden  
 Fühlt sich von deinem mein Herz.

Was, wie ein göttlicher Hauch,  
 Jetzt dich durchzittert, das Leben,  
 Eh du erwachst, wirds erschweben,  
 Nimmer erfreut es mich auch. 171

Light and laughter play over the image of the woman and fill the onlooker with fear and pain; he knows not its meaning or how to approach and capture it. This breath of God only makes itself felt in moments when the woman is asleep, i.e., when she is oblivious of her assumed pose, when she allows her inner, sheltered self to escape. As soon as she awakens, she quickly withdraws. The life within her is unknown to herself and it can never charm another.

"Einziges Geschiedensein" is characteristic of Hebbel's outlook on love. In his love life he never seems to find what he searches for. Bepi Schwarz was such a breath of life, but she too fades away. And a woman like Elise probably conveyed to Hebbel that she was not even aware that there was in her "ein göttlicher Hauch."

"An Hedwig" is written to a girl who here is compared to spring. It was spring and you were light and gay as spring itself which filled me with its charm. But then came the day of parting. Seldom did I think of you, only in my gentle moods. When the day of my death comes, I shall see you once again. As you were my angel of life, you will be my angel of death. At the start and the end of the day, man likes to

lift his eyes to the heavens.

Es war ein schöner Frühlingszeit,  
Als ich dich fand bei Spiel und Scherz,  
Da drängte all die Lieblichkeit  
Sich blind, wie nie noch an mein Herz.

Nach manchem Tag kam dann der Tag,  
Der uns, vielleicht auf ewig schied;  
Ich trug es, wie mans tragen mag,  
Wenn man den Frühling scheiden sieht.<sup>172</sup>

The dominant image here, is spring and the mood suggests awakening, love and youth. Hebbel dwells on the similarity between the young, fresh girl and the fragrant entrancing season in which they meet. There is the joy in each other, in being with each other with no forboding intrusions. Its gaiety is finally dispersed when the inevitable parting or the shattering of the beautiful moment occurs. The memory, like the memory of spring will always remain.

This poem, like the previous one, was written in München, in 1837. It may have been inspired by an actress<sup>173</sup> and is one of Hebbel's lightest and most impersonal lyrics. It celebrates nothing but the moment.

"An Elise," written in 1840, is one of the poems in which Hebbel attempts to idealize Elise. He sees Elise in her dream as she is given a harp by an angel. She, however, is reluctant to play it and only with encouragement does she consent and on the wings of the beautiful music, she humbly enters heaven.

Und ihre Töne lösten  
Dein innerlichstes Sein;  
Die Himmelstore sprangen  
Schon auf, dich zu empfangen,  
Da hieltest du in Demut ein.<sup>174</sup>

Hebbel's relationship to Elise was always overshadowed by his guilt feelings toward her. It seems that an easy and convenient way to ease this may have been to believe that there was some special quality in Elise which not even he could recognize, but which would ultimately bring her a deserved reward for her suffering. "An Elise" is part of the process to idealize her.

In "Das Heiligste," Hebbel speaks of a love which is pure and innocent and not based on passion. As this new "I" bursts forth, liberated by the experience of pure love, can man hope to decipher the secrets of nature. In this love, the best of latent qualities in men and women will mix. This union is blessed by God himself. Love is innocence, not passion.

Nein, keusch in Liebe, die die Unschuld spiegelt,  
Und schamhaft zitternd, während sie sich tranken;

The emphasis is on the words "keusch" and "schamhaft." The lovers meet each other very modestly while trying to suppress sensual desires which are shameful. Only then, can the lovers hope to attain a finer plateau of existence, hope to be united in a beautiful and edifying love.

Und aus dem Schöpfungsborn, im Ich entsiegelt,  
Springt eine Welle, die die Sterne lenken.

Thus, free from earthy desires and needs the man becomes part of a greater destiny and comprehends an existence forbidden to him without this ethereal experience. In their common bond the lovers become much more aware of the whole

than they otherwise could.

Was in dem Geist des Mannes, ungestaltet,  
Und in der Brust des Weibes, kaum empfunden,  
Als Schönstes dämmerte, das muss sich mischen;

This experience allows man to formulate his finest spiritual sensibilities and awakens an awareness in the woman, which would otherwise remain dormant. This love, and friendship helps man formulate what he already senses in himself by being a man. In the woman, however, it is this experience which causes her to realize concepts which she would otherwise not be aware of. The man is more eager to attain this refined love-friendship state which would lead to a new God inspired humanity. The man leads and the woman follows him. Love expands his intrinsic awareness, whereas in the woman it opens a life never before perceived. It is a relationship which is destined to elevate and refine. The sensual becomes subservient to the spiritual.

Gott aber tut, die eben sich entfaltet,  
Die lichten Bilder seiner jüngsten Stunden  
Hinzu, die unverkörpernten und frischen.<sup>175</sup>

This poem, written in 1842 in Hamburg seems to reflect Hebbel's attitude towards his affair with Elise and possibly the other women that he knew up to this time. To him, they all seemed intellectually inferior, it was he, the man, who was searching for a love affair which would be both spiritual and sensual, but the women he encountered persistently failed him in this respect.

The roles of the man and the woman are defined in "Mann

und Weib," written in 1837, it is a poem which again portrays the woman as an uninspired being and embodies the same theme as, "Für das Weib gehört der beschränkteste, der engste, Kreis."

Dem Weibe ist ein schönes Los beschieden,  
Was sie auch hat, sie hat es ganz und immer,  
Sie greut sich an des fernsten Sternes Schimmer,  
Allein sie schliesst sich ab in klarem Frieden.

Der Mann wird nie so sehr von Glück gemieden,  
Als er es meidet, denn er fast es nimmer,  
Gleichgültig, wird es besser, wird es schlimmer,  
Er hört nicht auf, das Dasein umzuschmieden.

Ihr ist es wie ein zugeworfner Faden,  
Sie hält sich dran, und schaudert vor den Wogen,  
Die unten dräun, und trinkt des Himmels Lüfte.

Er widersteht nicht, sich im Meer zu baden,  
Und forscht, vom hellen Leben abgezogen,  
Ob Gott sich nicht verbirgt im Schoss der Gräfte.<sup>176</sup>

The woman is the creature whose destiny is clearly delineated before her eyes, she gladly accepts it and feels happy and secure in this knowledge. She can experience great joy in the unattainable and beautiful, but she is not tormented by the need to abandon her lot. The man, on the other hand, has the compulsion to explore the unknown, to yearn for what he does not understand and has not experienced. The woman clutches her routine security as though it were her life, ignoring the abyss below and taking strength in the knowledge of heaven above. The woman herself would never disturb this order. The man, on the other hand, finds no peace in security.

This seems to be Hebbel's accusation against women like

Elise and Amalie Schoppe, who, somehow, have cheated him and have brought nothing to his life, but their narrow worlds. Later, he himself finds comfort in security and conformity, as can be seen in his marriage to Christine.

The culmination of love is found in the realization of dream and death, not in reality, as expressed in "Ich und Du."

Wir träumten von einander  
Und sind davon erwacht,  
Wir leben, um uns zu lieben,  
Und sinden zurück in die Nacht.

Du trätst aus meinem Traume,  
Aus deinem trat ich hervor,  
Wir sterben, wenn sich eines  
In andern ganz verlor.

Auf einer Lilie zittern  
Zwei Tropfen, rein und rund,  
Zerfliessen in eins und rollen  
Hinab in des Kelches Grund.177

The beautiful dream of loving one another is intruded upon by reality which causes the dream to retreat. This dream has no place in the regions of life, it exists in the twilight of death, which promises a state where no unbearable reality will disturb its existence. The last stanza, not through content, but the tone almost strikes a note of optimism. The imagery is rarely rich and beautiful, opulent drops of dew which rest on the lush green of the leaf roll into one as a rich and fertilizing fluid and drop on the goblet earth. Love is not yet a component of reality, but the possibility of its realization conjures up images full of life and promise.



"Ich und Du" and "Gebet" were both written in the year 1843. "Gebet" is another angelic vision of Elise. The poet begs fortune to let just a drop of happiness fall to the earth and encourage someone who so deserves it.

Ach! sie weint den süßeren Dank,  
 Als die anderen alle,  
 Die du glücklich und reich gemacht;  
 Lass ihn fallen, den Tropfen!178

Hebbel had by this time left Elise, her first child had died and he felt there was nothing he could do but say a prayer that a drop of happiness would fall.

"An Christine Enghausen" was written in Vienna in 1846, the year of their marriage. Hebbel here speaks directly to his wife. You are the one who awakens the nebulous figures in the writer's mind and you are the one who transforms them into reality. No matter what the external world thinks, we will always have each other. Only where this perfect circle of two exists, can one hope to find true happiness.

One drastic deviation from the somber and depressing mood found in the love lyrics is Hebbel's praise of Christine. Here the pendulum has swung to the other extreme, not only has the lovers' quest been answered, but reality corresponds to what reality was conceived to be. Christine is the wife of a poet and thus her greatest gift to him is to be able to stimulate his fantasy.

Du tränkst das Dichters dämmernde Gestalten,  
 Die ängstlich zwischen Sein und Nichtsein schweben,  
 Mit deinem Blut, und gibst den Schatten Leben,  
 In denen ungeborne Seelen walten.179

It is Christine who has become his great inspiration,

whose very being gives meaning and life to his work. He even goes a step further to suggest that now that they have found each other they need little else.

Doch dieses Deutschland wird uns schwer erwärmen,  
Darum lass uns eins das andre belohnen.<sup>180</sup>

As if to say, we have found our sphere of perfect unity and others may only intrude upon it.

The last stanza of the poem is in praise of the joy of living which can be found when man and woman can live in harmony and is a clear reflection of the newly found happiness in his marriage. Here lies the confirmation of the attainability of the "du" and affirmation of marriage as the greatest joy man can know.<sup>181</sup>

Wo treu und fest sich Mann und Weib umarmen,  
Da ist ein Kreis, da ist der Kreis geschlossen,  
In dem die höchsten Menschenfreuden wohnen.<sup>182</sup>

The unifying theme of these lyrics is man's search for the "du" in perfect and lasting love. Moments of illuminating intensity occur when the promise is seen in the woman. These moments are painfully rare and elusive.

Hebbel's associations with Beppi Schwarz, Emma Schröder, Elise and even Amalie Schoppe had offered him occasional friendship and love. But none culminated in a rewarding relationship which in turn seems to motivate Hebbel to blame the woman for this disappointment.

The woman is aware of her earth bound destiny and finds security in it and does not torment herself with longings for the unattainable. She is trapped in what to her is a

secure pattern and she does not dare enter regions of a new awareness. The man wishes to see his reflection in the eyes of another being. The whole process, however, is doomed to failure until the woman can break the circle of her confinement.

On the whole, Hebbel's lyrics exude pessimism and depression. Moreover, they lack originality and insight. He attempts to deal with a very general condition of man from a very narrow point of view.<sup>183</sup> It is as though his sensitive intellect perceives the fact of loneliness, disappointment, illusion, impermanence and death as polarities to hope, beauty, love and life, but is incapable of transforming self evident fact into poetic mold, with the result that he manages to achieve mere effect.<sup>184</sup> The tone of the lyrics changes greatly when he finds a specific and immediate antidote to his desolate mood, as he finds perfection in Christine and an ideal marriage.

Hebbel's lyrics are unsophisticated and constitute a minor part of his work, nevertheless, they are a component of his literary legacy<sup>185</sup> and express the everpresent tragic ambivalence of his artistic creations.

## Chapter II

### PROSE

Some of Hebbel's prose works exhibit such incredulous naiveté of theme and form that the reader almost becomes weary and suspects a façade which conceals a kernel too intricate for the casual glance. Dreams and accidents are profusely scattered throughout the narratives which, on occasion, are punctuated by humor and an inclination toward the psychological.

In Die Räuberbraut, Emilie rebukes the love of her childhood friend, the young forester, Gustav. He is so overcome by misery that he follows her to the woods, where he intends to have them both die together. At this moment, Emilie is saved by the young Victorin. During the following night, Victorin and Emilie depart for his hideout. Gustav has, meanwhile, joined a band of outlaws and sworn loyalty to his leader, Victorin. Eventually, Gustav saves Victorin's life and because of this is released from his oath of loyalty. He immediately kills Victorin. He once more forces himself on Emilie who jumps out of the window. Gustav follows.

The characters seem to grope in a world of semi-consciousness. Even though the setting and plot of a robber world is reminiscent of Schiller, one has the uncomfortable feeling of walking through a primeval forest. Were it not for the fact that Hebbel was only nineteen at the time, one

would indeed suspect being witness to a dance staged by semi-conscious, suggesting a score of pseudo-psychological implications.

The tale is built around Emilie who is led to destruction by the passionate desire of two men for her.<sup>186</sup> Emilie is pressured by the young forester<sup>187</sup> to yield to him, but she breathlessly declines. "Emiliens engelmilde Stimme"<sup>188</sup> begs him to relent in his demands; she may offer him friendship, but as for love, "Ich kann nicht."<sup>189</sup> Her vehement, "kann nicht" sets the tone of mystery. It is impossible to conceive of Emily as a character of rigid resolve. Consequently, there must be a greater fountain of inspiration lurking in the background. The forester immediately sets to resolve the problem by murder, but succeeds only in inducing an even greater state of unconsciousness. "Sie sank mit einem Angstgeschrei am Boden."<sup>190</sup> The rescuer appears.

"Da erwachte Emilie aus der Ohnmacht, worin sie bisher gelegen, aber nur, um mit einem wiederholten Schrei in eine neue zu fallen, als ihr Blick auch die beiden Männer fiel."

Even when awake, she is obviously not. Her first question of where am I, has a self evident answer. For a girl who has just survived attempted murder and been rescued by a lover, she could at the very minimum experience fright and gratitude, but the sleeping beauty has only been kissed, not awakened by the prince.

The rebuked forester plunges into criminal activity, where he is accepted as a man of great experience at the hands of a woman. "Ein Weib, sagt der Alte, war es, welches der

Menschheit ihr Paradies raubte."<sup>192</sup> An incongruous, pompous utterance in view of the fact that the woman here is a mere lily-like sleepwalker. Through intricate maneuvers of accident and mystery the forester beheads the true love, and resumes the pursuit which he had given up. Emilie, is still true to her lover and "mit übermenschlicher Kraft der Unschuld stiesst sie ihn zurück."<sup>193</sup> Both fly through a convenient window to all-merciful death.

The violent passions of the forester have brought about the death of three people. The object of the passion, who abandons home in the middle of the night to follow a man she has just met, emerges as a saint inspired by super human strength due to her innocence. In fact, she is disturbed by little else but pure passion, like the forester. Emilie represents the sighing, fainting, semiconscious female, who is, however, motivated by her sensuality. Emile reflects the women of Hebbel's youth and this image of her remains with him throughout his life and work.

A female of similar mold plays a more incidental role in a tale of greater depth, Matteo. The first part of the story concerns itself with the beautiful and well liked boy, Matteo, who becomes ill and is left disfigured. No one wishes to have him around or to give him a job. Then he saves the life of a man threatened by his wife's lover, whom he kills. The couple's child is almost killed and a reconciliation ensues. Matteo is kept in the house where his

ugliness is a virtue.

A woman is confronted with her husband's knowledge of an adulterous escapade. In the ensuing rage their child is almost killed which startles the woman out of her cold insolence. The child lives.

"Als die ängstliche aufhorchende Frau dieses Wort vernahm, rutschte sie auf ihren Knien, herbei, nahm den Fuss ihres Mannes und setzte sich ihn stillschweigend auf den Nacken. In ihrem Innern auf ersten Mal von einem Gedanken zerspaltet, der sie, wie in blutrotem Licht, von fern die ungeheure Verwirrung erkennen liess, die ein Weib, das die eheliche Schranken leichtsinnig überspringt, in alle menschliche Verhältnisse hinein bringt."194

Here the woman, through lack of awareness, not desire has strayed from the path prescribed for her. Her behavior can not be attributed to her, since she has not yet awakened to her true role. The grotesque incident of her lover's murder and the attempted murder of her child in an instant show her the right path and transform her into a meek, subservient and obedient wife. She has undergone no great transformation, but the external events indicate that a new mode of living may certainly be more permanent. She has not come to terms with herself, "wie im blutroten Licht," she recognizes a mysterious code which the woman is destined to follow. She remains just a cog in a machinery which is as incomprehensible to her as is her own self. The repentant posture is one completely subservient to her husband who regains not a partner, but a servile shadow. This woman is much like Elise, she allows events to manipulate her while she can neither

understand nor alter them.

The two prose selections, Die Räuberbraut and Matteo have an air of absurdity about them which almost makes them palatable to the contemporary reader. The determination with which the simple minded forester takes after Emilie and death is much more comic than it is tragic. So is the ending when both voluntarily dispatch themselves through the nearest window. It is the world of Dürrenmatt, the incoherent world where grand tragedy has become impossible. Grotesque elements are also added in Matteo's disfigured face and the child who is thrown and almost killed in a quarrel between his parents. This, too, ends on the absurd note that all that is necessary to keep peace in the house is a boy with an ugly and scarred face.

Herr Haidvogel und seine Familie is a story of a poor family who is about to starve and freeze to death because the man will not work. He is proud, gay, lazy, the big operator. The situation is saved by a windfall inheritance. In this story, a most incompatible couple lead a desolate existence where the woman emerges at her worst. On the surface the husband is an unworthy slob who is guilty of gross negligence toward his family, which is near freezing and starving. His mate is the solid, devoted, and nagging variety. The indictment of the man's lack of responsibility and loose moral fiber become his glorification, while the woman inadvertently



represents that which is detrimental to man and society.

"Nun, warum lässt ihr die Köpfe so hängen? Lustig, wie ich bin!"<sup>195</sup> With this incongruous greeting comes Herr Haidvogel to his desolate family hearth, the fire of which has just gone out with forebodings of doom. When the wife reminds him of this fact, he merrily attacks their one and only chair to kindle the fire. He announces the death of his wife's ex-suitor with an, "Ihn hat heute mittag der Teufel geholt."<sup>196</sup> The drop-out husband and father emerges as the lovable bufoon, who chooses to make his life a dream instead of a nightmare. His schemes of striking the pot of gold evaporate, but he does manage to strike a basket of feastly food, which the grand sweep of his proud hand almost manages to turn down. In the meantime, the wife stands by with grim determination to make things even worse than they are. She is more immediately concerned with shelter and food for her brood, but this does not cause her to exhibit any more energy or common sense than her husband, it merely serves to orient her entire existence around the potatoes which she does not even have. She pays lip service to the need to slave in order to feed and clothe the family, yet she is only a passive force which at best tends to deteriorate instead of benefit the whole lot.

Her gravest sin is that she, as opposed to her husband, who provides no wood for the fire, dispenses no human warmth. Her mind and heart reside with the potatoes. The amusing

accounts of her husband's escapades evoke a fearful, "Ich zittre!,"<sup>197</sup> as she pulls the children closer to her bosom to shield them from imminent doom. "Gott! Gott!"--seufzte die Frau....Was wird aus den armen Kindern!"<sup>198</sup> It is as though she evokes God, not in her true concern over her children, but to prove herself in better company than her husband.

Her husband receives the last blow when she prepares to strike out on her own.

"Nichts kannst du--versetztedie Frau....Nichts ohne mich, ohne meine Einwilligung kommt kein Pfennig in deine Hände, und ich werde dafür sorgen, dass das Jammerleben das jetzt zu Ende ist, nicht wieder anfangen kann."<sup>199</sup>

In her last litany against her husband she still shows no inkling of the fact that even though her husband is an irresponsible loafer, his indefatigable hangman's humor is the only ray of sunshine in her life. Moreover, there is no indication that her resolve is more than any of her husband's boasts. It seems to be more of an attempt to balance the bankrupt book of morality, according to its dictates she has to emerge on the side of the assets. Her single statement does not, however, annul her previously exhibited spiritual bankruptcy. She does maintain her right to place the blame at the man's feet and to keep her bleak and morose outlook on life.

Hebbel's mother had been much like Herr Haidvogel's wife, who had no more to offer than her devotion to gathering

the last crumbs and to shelter her children from starvation and the cold.

Ein Abend in Strassburg is a short selection from what was to be a more extensive log of travels. It is also a rare excursion into the purely erotic. The traveler finds himself in Strassburg hungry, cold and above all lonely. He meets a girl, makes love to her and leaves.

"Ich glaubte, mich eines kalten, finstern Grabes, worin ich schon auf langeweiligen Hobelspanen gelegen, recht gut zu erinnern;...."<sup>200</sup> Someone may come, "Bursch, der Jüngste Tag ist noch nicht angebrochen, und dich hat keiner gerufen."<sup>201</sup> The traveler's loneliness and dejection are so elemental, there is no comfort or consolation for the man, lest it be in the nearness of another human body, nothing but the warmth and tenderness of another person can convince him that he too still lives, has to live. It is irrelevant that a girl who can relieve this desperate loneliness and fright knows nothing of him or his feeling. But she looks at him, "mit den grossen, flammenden Augen, voll von Glut und Gefühl.... Diese Augen schienen mir die Wunder-Quellen alles Lebens."<sup>202</sup> The eyes full of passion dispel the horrors and remind him of the surging life and desire within himself. And he finds that the purely sensuous desire which brings the man and woman to each other offers more than just a moment of warmth, it is as though a deeper bond has been formed, the strangers

have become friends while knowing nothing of each other, but their need to be held by someone. In this knowledge is found an intimacy so deep that it touches the very depth of each being. The knowledge of this common condition makes it possible for one to live again. No words are needed, except, "Küsse mich noch einmal."<sup>203</sup>

The mood of Ein Abend in Strassburg is plainly erotic, it does not remain a subterranean moving force, it is frankly and openly dealt with. There is fire in the eyes of the woman which reminds man of the source of life within himself. More significantly, eroticism is dealt with as a positive and rejuvenating element in a man's life. It is sensuous desire for another which is an immediate antidote to man's frightful isolation and this realization itself transcends the initial impulse and enhances the sensual pleasure. The erotic element has indeed been dealt with frankly and delicately, but the woman remains nameless and faceless, which is the very reason why this approach is possible for Hebbel. She is conjured up by the poet's feverish imagination, she exists in the regions of the mind or in a realm of his life which in no way relates to the rest of the pattern which he attempts to follow. This woman has no name, she belongs nowhere, nor has she any other existence outside the world of erotica. She could not accompany him in the light of day while he goes through the motions of his "life." She is life to him for a moment, but as a person participating in a prescribed pattern

of behavior she does not exist. She remains an erotic vision, divorced from reality.

Ein Abend in Strassburg is one of the most vivid and warm treatments of sex in a man's life in the works of the author who dealt with the great "Prozess" between the sexes. It seems that it should be considered as one of Hebbel's most modern works because the subject receives an honest appraisal uncluttered by non essential, external trivia. The desire that binds man and woman is the very basis of existence, it is the desire for life itself, the wish to experience life and to give life.

Hebbel's most obviously erotic prose work seems to be one of his best which is also true in respect to Gerhart Hauptmann's "Der Ketzer von Soana," in which a frustrated priest absolutely revels in pagan practices. Hauptmann celebrates the victory of Dionysos, as does Hebbel in Ein Abend in Strassburg. Hebbel is not as detailed and explicit as Hauptmann, but sex is dealt with in such a manner that the story remains fresh and moving today.

The whole episode may possibly be considered as an antidote to the intricately involved affair with Elise. Other elements, such as the desire for security, were part of the relationship with her. Above all, a generous measure of guilt was added. It never was, as it never could have been, a purely sensual bond. It is as though Hebbel here has captured a dream wish. This is what I wanted when I was cold

and lonely, this is how beautiful an experience with Elise could have been. Elise's dependence, the children, her demands and the guilt should never have complicated the simplicity of the basic situation. It is Ein Abend in Strassburg that he yearns for, no more.

Anna presents a young and beautiful girl who is employed as a maid. Her beauty and temperament single her out and draw unkind attention from others. When she is unjustly punished for a minor mistake, she becomes irrational. Her lover comes and wishes to take her to a dance, but she has to remain and spin. He shows no sympathy and abandons her. A lamp falls and sets the house on fire and Anna is unable to control herself or the fire.

A gay, little song opens the chronicle of the maid, Anna. Anna is "frisch und blühend,"<sup>204</sup> as she spends her life in servility to a meek and miserable master. She lacks the posture of her station in life and exhibits traits which are bound to shatter her circle of existence. Anna is full of exuberance and the joy of the young, but the vehemence with which she exhibits these traits in her position in life indicate that she is driven by a greater force than the relevant events around her. There are obvious cracks in the shell of prescribed behavior. The servant girl reacts too violently to criticism that she incurs an even greater wrong and her punishment plunges her into "gänzlicher Verwirrung."<sup>205</sup>

Anna possesses the pride and passion of the young. She dismisses interference with, "Ich weiss schon Bescheid."<sup>206</sup>

As Anna accepts the punishment for a minor misdemeanor, she remains "gelassen, weil im Innersten zerschlagen."<sup>207</sup> This is the first real indication of the intensity of Anna's deviation from expected behavior; the maid is not overtly distraught, she retains external composure, while internally she experiences utter despair. After a night spent at spinning flax, she emerges with "wild ums Gesicht herunterhängenden Locken."<sup>208</sup> Even attempts at outer composure have been abandoned, events and Anna's mind drive her into destruction. At the outbreak of a fire, there is nothing left of her rational self, but an "Ach! Ach!"<sup>209</sup> From this moment on she is unable to cope with herself and the world and slips into the most convenient of escapes--sleep. She never awakens, merely participates in a final sleepwalking episode. "Anna, mit der Tollkühnheit der Verzweiflung, weinend, schreiend, sich in die Brust zerschlagend, dann wieder lachend, stürzte sich in jede Gefahr, rettete, löschte, und war aller anderen zugleich Gegenstand des Erstaunens, der Bewunderung und unheimliches Rätsel."<sup>210</sup> With the final surge of energy she dives into the holocaust and dissipates herself in the flames.

Anna represents one of the most complex women characters in Hebbel's prose. Her beauty, youth, exuberance and pride are incompatible to her situation in life and thus would

provide ample conflict. This, however, is not the true basis of the conflict. The clash is within Anna herself, she has tapped a source which she is incapable of harnessing. She has been awakened to a greater awareness of herself and her desires, but she can not cope with this new consciousness, she is incapable of relating it to her environment. Anna wants to be free to do, dance and love, but the prospect is so heady that it releases a chaos of emotion. The innocuous little verse which is on Anna's lips already sets the stage for the events to come.

Himmel blau und mild die Luft,  
 Blumen voll von Tau und Duft,  
 Und am Abend Tanz und Spiel,  
 Das ist mehr, als allzuviel.<sup>211</sup>

Anna is the irrational woman who shatters the circle of her existence by the discovery of the well of a new consciousness within herself, which engulfs her in its fury. She has become the divining rod for a new life, a force so great that it absorbs and destroys the rod. The woman has not yet found herself, she has sprung her boundaries. Her society provides no point of reference for this outburst. Her own psychological constitution is unprepared to deal with it.

Anna is the woman which the women in Hebbel's life were not. She is beautiful and full of life; she can not serve and spin and suffer in peace. There is an intensity and vitality in Anna which was characteristic only of the women of Hebbel's imagination. The women like Elise, Amalie, Bepi and



his mother were drab and passive. There seems to be a dream figure in Hebbel which would exhibit the warmth of the woman in Ein Abend in Strassburg, the intensity of an Anna, combined with the easy charm of Agnes. In short, an antidote to reality.

In the prose, the female emerges as a servile person who wanders through events in a state of semi-consciousness. She assumes a role doled out to her by her environment and remains a passive participant. Her sensuality is a motivating force, but she is not prepared to recognize this nor to deal with it. She has no identity of her own and can make no contribution to the whole.

### Chapter III

#### DRAMA

Friedrich Hebbel's dramas are much more highly regarded than are his prose and poetry. It is in his dramas that Hebbel most vividly projects his intellectual and emotional image of the female character, and where incompatibility, isolation, love and guilt receive their fullest treatment.

One prominent drama, Die Niebelungen, has not been included because this drama encompasses aspects of Hebbel's art which are not pertinent to the subject treated here. Hebbel has reworked the mythological and folk material with emphasis on the extraordinary individual and the interim period between two great periods of history. The heroines of this trilogy are not insignificant, but the emphasis for this whole work lies elsewhere.

The dramas that are discussed in this thesis are arranged in chronological order.

#### A. Judith

Possibly inspired by the daring and exploratory spirit of the young man and by his own predicament with Elise Lensing, Judith emerges as one of Hebbel's most modern dramas. It is such not only within the framework of his time and thought, but also in reference to contemporary society.

In Judith the grandeur of Holofernes' does not emerge from his actions as the drama unfolds, it is, rather, a

fait accompli which is reiterated throughout. This analysis shall proceed on exactly the same basis. Holofernes is "der erste und letzte Mann der Erde."<sup>212</sup> He is the embodiment of what the female conceives the ideal and complete male to be. The monumental greatness and identity of Holofernes rest on the fact that he is a man.

Hebbel felt trapped in a situation with Elise that he could neither tolerate nor terminate. The elements which entered into it were neither his own making nor could they be clearly understood or rejected by him. Possibly the answer could have been sought for in a totally new frame of reference. If a new identity and awareness could be assigned to Elise, then the man would not have to be the mere "violator." It is interesting to note that the man's greatness exists mainly in the eyes of the woman and this is his downfall. It is through his "sin" against the woman that his destruction is implemented. Holofernes is only described as being a great and ruthless warrior in the drama, and while the development of Holofernes is in no way shown, he attains his ultimate greatness in the eyes of Judith. It is she who slays him for this. Hebbel's own guilt and suffering exist only as long as he views himself vis-à-vis Elise. He becomes "masslos" in relation to her and is "slain."

Moreover, it is not simply a matter of the "bad" being punished by the "good," evil being slain by innocence. Holofernes has been slain for the wrong motives. It is as though Hebbel, in Judith, tries to understand the individual, mainly the woman, in this instance, and to determine the true

motivations for her acts and their consequences. It is an attempt to illuminate the possibilities of an Elise in respect to himself. Hebbel is not a Holofernes any more than Elise is Judith, but the drama is an opus born of these two individuals. To quote Hebbel, "Das Leben ist nie etwas, es ist nur die Gelegenheit zu einem etwas."<sup>213</sup>

In order to relate to Holofernes, Judith has to forge her own identity through the recognition of her own sex, her individuality has to be built around this. Viewed from one level, Judith is on God's errand, but she remains only human.<sup>214</sup> This very fact makes it essential for Judith to come to terms with her sexuality in order to emerge as a complete being. If the drama is indeed "nur Geschlechtertragödie,"<sup>215</sup> as Martini states, who is Judith, the female protagonist of this tragedy?

"Was sagst du zu diesem Traum?"<sup>216</sup> This innocent question put to Mirza by Judith is the first and characteristic utterance by the heroine. She lives in a world of dreams and their interpretation is an integral part of her make-up. From the very beginning, Judith is psychologically introverted, she turns to the subconscious instead of the conscious world. As she relates her dream, the uncertainty is intensified, an urgent groping for an intangible awareness is evident in her words. "Ich ging und ging und mir wars ganz eilig, und doch wusste ich nicht, wohin michs trieb."<sup>217</sup> She is deaf to Mirza; it is the voice of her dreams that Judith wants to hear. With frightful urgency the dream expands and she can touch the sun and feel an abyss under her feet, while she

herself is almost dizzy with pride. She loses control and plunging into despair calls on God to help her. She is fascinated by the dream, because it dares and invites her to expand her consciousness. Even sleep itself provides a path toward the same goal. "Wenn der Mensch im Schlaf liegt, aufgelöst, nicht mehr zusammengehalten durch das Bewusstsein seiner selbst...."<sup>218</sup>

There is another level of awareness which she yearns to attain. Her's is the knowledge that there is a greater power and consciousness. This is not a blind and dogmatic belief in God, it is knowing that there are horizons yet unattained. Her belief is knowing.<sup>219</sup> For the woman the path to a new level of awareness is through her own sensuality and her inner being. Her own identity has to be recognized and forged, before it can merge with another. In his diaries Hebbel writes,

"Ich habe jetzt die Judith zwischen Weib und Jungfrau in die Mitte gestellt und ihre Tat so allerdings motiviert; erfragt sich nur, ob Judith nicht hiedurch ihre symbolische Bedeutung verliert, ob sie nicht zur blossen Exegese eines dünklen Menschencharakters herabsinkt."<sup>220</sup>

This indeed is a very pertinent question. Except, one would have to quarrel with Hebbel's own language. Is he being quite honest here by being so cautious that the symbolic meaning of Judith may deteriorate "zur blossen Exegese." It is the word "bloss" that seems unnecessary and overly cautious. Judith may offer an insight into the darkened depth of human character. Man has to recognize the chaos existing beneath his feet, in order to yearn for the light

above. The word "bloss" is hardly applicable.

According to Gerd Kleinschmidt, Judith "handelt aus dem Unbewussten."<sup>221</sup> She reacts to events in a manner which is not even comprehensible to herself. When Mirza presses her to listen while she talks about Ephraim, Judith claims disinterest, "weil michs vor Männer schaudert."<sup>222</sup> Why so? She has had a unique experience with her husband Monasses which has left her a widow-virgin. Reluctantly she had given herself into marriage only to find that her husband remains impotent. "Mir wards unheimlich; komm, komm! rief ich, und schämte mich gar nicht, dass ichs tat."<sup>223</sup> Judith here exhibits overt sexual desire which is rebuked, an extremely serious transgression against the woman, even if she openly recognized this fact for what it is. Judith and Monasses proceed to comply with the social demands of marriage, but "etwas Dunkles, Unbekanntes"<sup>224</sup> is between them. So there is. In Judith's mind there persists the unspoken thought, Monasses did not find her sexually desirable.

"Ein Weib ist ein Nichts; nur durch den Mann kann sie etwas werden, die kann Mutter durch ihn werden."<sup>225</sup> This is how Judith sees the place of a woman. Motherhood is a self evident fact; is one to believe that Judith regrets only not having conceived a child? As Mirza reminds her, she could choose a new husband from the best of men. But Judith responds "Du hast mich nicht verstanden. Meine Schönheit ist die Tollkirsche, ihr Genuss bringt Wahnsinn und Tod."<sup>226</sup> Her

beauty drives her to the threshold of madness, it teaches her to expect passionate desire from a man, a passion which she desires, but is unable to formulate to herself or another.

Her subconscious desire is ever present. "Ich mögt ihn sehen! (Für sich) Was sagt ich da!"<sup>227</sup> This is her reaction to the name of Holofernes, the man who has come to destroy her land and people. He is also the greatest of all men and to be desired by such a man, as she was not by Monasses, is more than she can allow her consciousness to acknowledge. When Ephraim suggests that Holofernes would come only because of her, Judith may with clear consciousness voice the delectable thought: "Mögt es so sein! Dann brauch ich ja nur zu ihm hinaus zu gehen, und Stadt und Land wäre gerettet."<sup>228</sup> Judith is excited and tantalized by the thought that this man, this one and only Holofernes would come for her alone, driven by mad desire.

Love to her is not companionship, friendship and motherhood; it is the passion that burns in her. Ephraim's declarations of love repel and annoy her and she exclaims, "Kann Liebe Pflicht sein? Muss ich diesem meine Hand reichen, damit er seinen Dolch fallen lässt. Fast glaub ichs!"<sup>229</sup> Ephraim does not excite her as a man. Judith even suggests to him that if he has courage to kill a man like Holofernes, he may earn the right to hope for her favor.. He would then grow in stature and it would be ecstasy to seduce such a man who would be attractive to all women on account of his power

and valor. She dares Ephraim to take her with these words:

"Ich, die du liebst, ich, die ich dich über dich selbst erhöhen wollte, um dich wieder zu lieben zu können, ich leg ihn dir in die Seele, und er ist dir nichts als eine Last, die dich nur tiefer in den Staub drückt?"<sup>230</sup>

If Ephraim would only lift his sword! Judith presses her point by saying to Mirza:

"Jedes Weib hat ein Recht, von jedem Mann zu verlangen, dass er ein Held sei. Ist dir nicht, wenn du einen siehst als sähest du, was du sein mögtest, sein solltest."<sup>231</sup>

Is this merely the eternal fallacy for the woman to believe that she sees greatness in a man.<sup>232</sup> Not so. It is the woman's desire to justify her passion. Even though Judith will not recognize the true motivating force within herself, she senses that her desire would again be belittled were he not worthy of her.

On the whole, Hebbel's treatment of sex in this drama introduces one of its "modern" aspects. Even though not explicitly stated, it is one of the significant factors in Judith as in some other works. It is not of importance that the subject is dealt with, but how it is dealt with. Sex is not idealized into the realm of pure love nor is it simply treated as one of the baser aspects of a woman. Hebbel acknowledges this drive in the woman which she has not yet been able to reconcile to her psychological and social framework. If the woman has another identity besides that of the mother and the propagator of ethical values in society, how then



does her sensuality affect her and how does it relate to the whole?

What Hebbel lacks most in his attitude toward sex is a sense of humor. There is too much of the struggle between the spirit and the flesh in Hebbel, as there is in Strindberg. Hebbel, like Frank Wedekind, knows that questions of sexual freedom can only be discussed in view of social conditions and situations,<sup>238</sup> but he can not resolve his basic conflict and can not even conceive of doing it with humor. To Wedekind, sex and the battle between the sexes is a good thing,<sup>234</sup> to Hebbel, yes, but Hebbel can recognize sex as a purely good thing in a very contemporary manner, but it loses its bite as he adjusts it to assorted other factors. Lulu, in Wedekind's Erdegeist is an aware and amoral woman who finds pleasure in her sex and the fact that it gives pleasure to others. She knows that she is desirable and wants to be such. "Wie gefall' ich Ihnen?" and "Ich bin mir meiner vollkommen bewusst!"<sup>235</sup> are characteristic utterances for Lulu. This is something the sensual heroines of Hebbel, like Judith and Maria Magdalena, could never have said. They can not flaunt their sensuality in the brash manner of a Lulu, because Hebbel's most daring visions of the woman are strained through his morality and idealism. Judith, too, knows that she is desirable, but she can not live with this fact in peace. Lulu is the emancipated woman, Judith is not; neither is socially emancipated. Hebbel has, however,

recognized and dealt with an exciting problem.

Since Judith can find no man who is willing to kill Holofernes and thus become his equal in her eyes, she feels free to accept it as her duty to face Holofernes herself. Her mission becomes a holy cause. Her subconscious demands this action and by placing it in the hands of God provides it with a psychological anchor.<sup>236</sup> She exists in an emotional whirlpool with only moments of rational insight.<sup>237</sup> Judith is a dissatisfied woman who seeks self assertion on an erotic basis,<sup>238</sup> but is not willing to define herself clearly. She puts herself in the hands of God to clarify her own position and escape from one unsuccessful encounter with a man into the hands of God. In Hebbel's own words: "Judith ist der schwindelnde Gipfelpunkt des Judentums, jenes Volkes, welches mit der Gottheit selbst in persönlicher Beziehung zu stehen glaubt."<sup>239</sup> On this level, her encounter with Holofernes enters another realm; she has to perform a noble deed and recognizes that "Der weg zu meinem Tod geht durch die Sünde."<sup>240</sup> But for this she can be thankful since this is what makes her deed possible and she says, "Was ich sonst für Fluch hielt, erscheint mir nun wie Segen."<sup>241</sup> Her beauty will become the means to annihilate her sworn enemy. Judith seeks a chance to test the power of her beauty, the power of her sensuality. She has failed with Monasses. Ephraim will not give his life for her, the supreme test will come with The Man. In her subconscious, the atmosphere is electrified with eroticism: "Gott, lass ihn Greuel begehren unter meinen

Augen, blütige Greuel, aber schütze mich, dass ich nichts Gutes von ihm sehe."<sup>242</sup> Judith is helpless in the face of anything good,<sup>243</sup> it is her greatest fear that she would have to admire Holofernes, since this would force her to admit her passion, which in turn would spring the boundaries of her being, and most importantly force her to recognize that she is not only on God's errand, but a very human one.

The indecisiveness toward her deed is another characteristic of her "modernism." She abdicates any responsibility of her actions and places herself in the hands of God. Her failure lies not in her ultimate loss of initiative and resistance, but in her failure to recognize the irreconcilability of the various inherent possibilities.

As Judith prepares to leave for her encounter with Holofernes, she hears accounts of his brutality toward women: "Hab Dank, Holofernes! Nur an diese brauch ich zu denken, und ich werde Mut haben, wie ein Mann."<sup>244</sup> Fortified by this knowledge she is spared her greatest fear. If Holofernes confronts her as nothing but a cowardly murderer, she has to face him as nothing but an enemy. She is to fulfill God's will to free her people from his murderous hand. Judith does not have to fear her unspoken desire which may force her to present her own life to him. Indeed she will have courage like a man, because she will not have to fear the desire of a woman. When Judith comes face to face with Holofernes and throughout the initial encounter retains her

composure and effects her role so successfully that even Mirza is deceived by her, she dissolves in tears: "Freuden-tränen darüber, dass ich dich tauschte. Ich schaudere von der Kraft der Lüge in meinem Munde."<sup>245</sup> Judith cries because of the incomprehensible tension in her soul which she does not understand.<sup>246</sup> She has deceived Holofernes, Mirza and herself, but she is unable, even to herself, to explain the true nature of this tension.

The events of the subsequent encounter further aid Judith in her deception of herself. Holofernes lives up to the vilest possible image one would have of him, on a moment's notice, without any reason, he has beheaded a man. Judith evokes God to remind herself of the purpose and meaning of this encounter: "Mein Haar straubt sich, aber, doch dank ich dir, Gott, dass du mir den Entsetzlichen auch in dieser Gestalt zeigst.... Den Mörder kann ich leichter morden."<sup>247</sup>

Hebbel writes in his diary, "In der Judith zeichne ich die Tat eines Weibes, also den ärgsten Kontrast, dies Wollen und Nichtkönnen, die<sup>s</sup> Tun, was doch kein Handeln ist."<sup>248</sup> Judith finds herself on a mission which renders her helpless not only because of the polarity of wanting and being incapable of doing, but because she is not truly aware of what it is that she wants. It is not lack of courage or determination that makes Judith cry, "O warum bin ich ein Weib!,"<sup>249</sup> after Holofernes has kissed her, not because his kiss stirs a world in her which lies in the blackness of her subconscious.

No woman is capable of great action. How can she be, until she comes to understand the complexity of her being.

The drama's very modern aspect lies in this fact that the individual emerges as a multi-faceted entity. In Judith merge hate and love; passion and innocence; awareness and unawareness; greatness and pettiness. In Judith are incorporated the various possibilities which will not always manifest themselves in a prescribed manner. A given set of circumstances may provoke assorted reactions and behavior. An individual can not be contained in a mold and often his actions and reactions can not be predicted nor expected to conform to a norm. Hebbel has suggested in Judith that even though she is not aware of them, she is a vessel of infinite possibilities. It is his awareness that these complexities often remain incomprehensible and unreconciled in the individual that gives a modern hue to Judith. She already senses that there is an awareness which still eludes her, but she can not proceed to her goal with determination either, because she has already been lured. It is as though her reactions are a composite of flickering impulses, which are actually emitted by a source that man seems to respond to, but does not yet understand.

When Holofernes finally makes his intent of immediate seduction clear, Judith's reaction indicates the depth of her torment: "Wie ist mir auf einmal so leicht. Nun darf ich es tun."<sup>250</sup> If she were on God's errand then there would

be no question of permission, hers is the deed, the responsibility lies somewhere else. But Judith hesitates and expects Holofernes' actions to permit her to carry out her intention. She is afraid to come too close to Holofernes' being, lest she has to bare her inner self and discover in herself a desire for Holofernes as a man and not a wish to destroy him: "Gott meiner Väter, schütze mich vor mich selbst, dass ich nicht verehren muss, was ich verabscheue. Er ist ein Mann....Ich muss ihn morden, wenn ich nicht von ihm knien soll."<sup>251</sup>

Judith's tragedy lies in the fact that she is unable to kill Holofernes and liberate her people irrelevant of her desire for him. Her tragedy is not that she kills Holofernes for the wrong motives, but that she kills him for no motive. She is unable to recognize her wish to seduce Holofernes into blind passion and prove herself a woman while giving way to her own passion. "Lerne das Weib achten! Es steht vor dir, um dich zu ermorden! Und es sagt dir das."<sup>252</sup> This is Judith's last desperate plea for help and greatest deception. Her crass confession may terminate her predicament, but it is much more that she wants. She demands that Holofernes take notice of her in a manner which she must know is meaningless to him. The utter stupidity masks the depth of her unspoken, incomprehensible wish. Moreover, she herself does not know what it is she wants. And even if she were able to formulate her wish, her psychology, society and morality can

not accommodate this. If Holofernes would only see in her a person and a being who sexually mesmerizes him, if he only would take note and understand that this is what she wants most. Were Judith able to recognize this in herself and to communicate; were Holofernes able to understand, they might attain a meaningful awareness together. Unable to do this, Judith sinks from greatness to pettiness.

"Deine Wangen Glühen, als wollte das Blut herausspringen. Dein Auge blickt scheu.!"<sup>253</sup> Her physical being betrays her and provides her with a despicable reason for murder. Holofernes does not value the gift which she so desperately has tried to hide, as she points out to Mirza.

"Für ein Mädchen gibt es keinen grösseren Moment, als den, wo es aufhört, eins zu sein und jede Wallung des Bluts, die es vorher bekämpfte, jeder Seufzer, den es erstrickte, erhöht den Wert des Opfers, das es in jeder Moment zu bringen hat. Es bringt sein Alles-- ist es ein zu stolzes Verlangen, wenn es durch sein Alles Entzücken und Seligkeit einfössen will."<sup>254</sup>

Yet, to Holofernes she is but, "ein Ding."<sup>255</sup> This enables her to kill "den ersten und letzten Mann der Erde."<sup>256</sup> Her passion degenerates into the morbid<sup>257</sup> as she senses the emptiness of her deed. Judith hides herself in the standard overromanticized pseudo innocence so often assigned to the woman. She attempts to regain herself by glorifying and idealizing the woman's passion. Judith has completed her mission and liberated her people, but she has also degraded and imprisoned herself; she recedes into a darkness which she can never overcome.

Hebbel seems to make a plea for a society where an intelligent and tolerant attitude toward sex would prevail. If at least this one of man's instincts could receive rational appraisal, the tension, the guilt and destruction in the relationships between the male and the female could be eased. This does, of course, suggest a kind of utopia, since it presupposes great sensitivity and intelligence. It is suggestive of the concept of New Morality to be found in contemporary society.

The New Morality stands in opposition to orthodox Christianity, but within its framework. The concept of New Morality ranges from complete freedom and laissez-faire attitude in sexual relations<sup>258</sup> to a rational and tolerant outlook, which does not abide by the strict rules of the Christian ethic.<sup>259</sup> For the extremist of the New Morality, sex would be regarded as one of man's instincts which has to be completely liberated from any external rules of behavior. This would encompass pre-marital sex and sex outside the marriage. The most obvious question that arises here, of course, is--is it possible that man possesses other equally strong instincts which would violently clash with an unleashed sex instinct. This is not the place to exhaust this concept, but the pitfalls of the proposal seem innumerable. The more conservative and cautious wing of the New Moralists would plead the same cause, but with certain definite boundaries. This aspect of it is designated as



Situation ethics.<sup>260</sup> An individual's actions would be determined by a given situation and personalism.<sup>261</sup> In other words, human welfare and devotion to persons, not things, such as laws and principles, would prevail--a love vs. a law ethic.<sup>262</sup> One's behavior, including sexual behavior would be guided by evaluating whether this behavior might possibly hurt someone else or not, determined by personalism and the situation. The exponents of this aspect of New Morality would stress that situation ethics is not hedonism, one's behavior is determined by rules and not only by the pursuit of pleasure. To quote J. Fletcher, "Immorality occurs when things are loved and people are used."<sup>263</sup>

If taken at face value, the doctrine of New Morality would be synonymous with sexual license. One may even suggest that it may dissipate and subvert a given society.<sup>264</sup> In regard to more tempered situation ethics, the obvious question that arises is, does one relate only to an individual of one's choosing or to society as a whole?

Hebbel's ideas do not correspond to the formalized version of New Morality, since not only the individual and the situation are important, but their relationship to society. But this may only be a matter of emphasis, even though his primary concern is the individual. He seems to grope for a utopian version of morality. As in his life, and, for example, in Judith, the woman can not act, because even to herself her motives are not clear and she becomes a tool of

circumstances and vents her anguish on the male. If woman would understand herself better, she would be able to enter into a relationship based on each individual's freedom. This is a daring and idealistic and modern idea, a plea for the liberated individual, the liberated woman.

In Judith, Hebbel exhibits a mastery of character and situation and sees the drama as symbol of life. More importantly, Hebbel has dared to explore man's greatest handicap, his fear and his loneliness. In this "Geschlechtsdrama" is embodied not only the tragedy of a relationship, but of man as an individual. The path which leads through sensuality may be one avenue of approach to the tragic situation. Judith senses an awareness in the world of her dreams which remains alien to her, she can not find the key with which to unlock the world. She dares not do so. Her soul searching reflections are externally, not internally motivated.<sup>265</sup> She deceives herself of her motives as she confronts Holofernes. Unable to accommodate the demands of her sensuality, she turns to God for a realm of consciousness she knows exists, but which she can never attain while she is blindly introverted.

Judith's tragedy lies in her incompetence to break the circle of isolation. She emerges as neither woman, nor judge.<sup>266</sup> She has compromised herself, she can no longer be God's tool and, yet, she can not step into a new and better world. The chaos and pessimism of modern existence can not

be eased, until society learns to adjust its norms of morality to the natural determination of each being. Hebbel overcomes his nihilistic tendencies in Judith's yearning for God, a yearning for a higher level of consciousness. Her efforts are stymied by her ineffective groping, which is rooted in the demands of her morality, of Hebbel's morality, instead of a new morality.

#### B. Genoveva

The heroine of Genoveva is a passive Madonna to whom Hebbel has brought all his guilt and his passion.. Genoveva is the painful personification of his well-known utterance "Durch Dulden Tun: Idee des Weibes." Genoveva is the suffering victim who does not act. In relation to each other the characters are blind and alienated, they remain passive and unable to reach each other as their lives are being destroyed. At the end one is left with nothing but a feeling of resignation and sadness.<sup>267</sup> In Genoveva Hebbel has refined Elise's virtues, his own passion and guilt to exaggeration. Wolfgang Liepe sees it as a confession.

"Die Genoveva Tragödie ist die dichterische Beichte der Gewissensnöte, in die sich der Dichter durch die aufflammende Leidenschaft zu Emma Schröder verstickt sah. Erst durch dieses persönliche Erlebnis des Schuldigwerdens an Elise wurde der ihm schon in München vertraute Stoff reif zur Gestaltung."<sup>268</sup>

Siegfried and Genoveva are man and wife, yet they are strangers. Siegfried regards his wife as a beautiful, virtuous, loving and asexual being. She loves her husband, but

this love is to be her secret, her pure devotion. Siegfried has loved and admired Genoveva as a human being, but as a holy and remote one. Genoveva has carried all her sorrows and displeasures silently because she remembers the suffering of Christ and feels that:

Ich bin ein Weib. Ein Weib verhüllt den Schmerz,  
Denn er ist hässlich und befleckt die Welt.  
Ich bin ein Mensch. Nicht jammern darf ein Mensch,  
Seit am Kreuz der Heiland stumm verblich.<sup>269</sup>

This, too, is how she appears to Siegfried.

Hebbel himself wished to create a Madonna, like Genoveva, of Elise and thus remove her from his life. Moreover, he would have wished Elise to bear her sorrow in serenity and not render his own life ugly by exposing it. Elise does resign to her fate, but she can not suppress the resentment. Siegfried, too, wants to see Genoveva as pure and holy.

Ein holdes Wunder schienst du mir zu sein.<sup>270</sup>

The very fact that she shows emotion at his departure is a new and strange experience to him which forces him to recognize the fact how little he knows and understands her. In his great desire to admit his guilt Hebbel also accuses himself by inferring that he may never have understood Elise and Siegfried says to Genoveva:

Das fehlt dem Mann, noch wenn ihm nichts mehr fehlt,  
Das er das Weib nicht kennt, wie sie ist.<sup>271</sup>

Not only are the two strangers to one another, but Genoveva feels that she has betrayed herself and her husband by revealing her emotion at his departure:

Ich aber fühle mich so arm, so arm!  
 Als ein Geheimnis, kaum mir bekannt,  
 Durchs Leben tragen wollte ich mein Herz.<sup>272</sup>

Here the devoted and holy Genoveva easily transforms a fault into a virtue; her great love and longing for her husband were to remain a life long secret to be presented to him as a reward at the end of his lifetime. Siegfried's ultimate mistrust of her seems to have a good cause, as when he is informed of Genoveva's alleged infidelity, his reaction is obvious:

Was einem Weibe möglich ist, wer hat es erforscht.<sup>273</sup>  
 He is to have faith in her because she is a woman, a pure and devoted woman, not because this person is part of his very life and understanding.

The reader today can not really have sympathy with Genoveva and accuse only her husband. It seems that Hebbel did indeed wish to create an almost divine figure in relationship to whom the husband would emerge as the absolute villain, because he is incapable of understanding such a fine creature and consequently is the cause of her suffering. This is how Hebbel would see himself in respect to the holy Elise.

Golo who is entrusted with Genoveva as Siegfried leaves, is quickly lost in a blind passion for her, which seems to turn him into a monster.<sup>274</sup> Against the holiness of Genoveva, his passion is the evil counterpart. He is the personification of the evil possibilities inherent in man. His passion

is one aspect of human nature. He quickly establishes his character traits by maligning his master in order to endear himself to Genoveva:

Ja wohl, als Ihr vor Schmerz  
In Ohnmacht sankt, da eilt er schnell hinweg.<sup>275</sup>

He has already disclosed his predisposition to vile deeds as he describes his adventurous escapades:

Durch Fasten und durch Beten werd ich nie  
Die Himmeltür mir öffnen. Dazu fehlts  
An Gaben mir. Ich schickte aber gern  
Für jede Sünd, welch ich beging,  
Zur Hölle einen Mohren.<sup>276</sup>

Golo is evil almost beyond reason and belief, his passion drives him to cruelty, suicidal inclination, deceit, murder and generally irrational and incomprehensible behavior. There is no trace of gentleness in his love, it is pure flaming passion:

O Liebe, niemals hab ich dich erkannt,  
Doch jetzt erkenne ich dein heilig Recht!  
Du bists, die diese kalte spröde Welt  
Durchflammen, schmelzen und verzehren soll.<sup>277</sup>

Golo himself has to recognize that he is driven by a force which he can not understand nor control:

Wer spricht aus mir?  
Ich nicht! Schweig, böser Geist!<sup>278</sup>

His passion is burning with an intensity which has rendered everything meaningless and worthless. When Genoveva attempts to escape his embrace, he lashes out at all that is holy!

Und ob der Heiland selbst  
Sich stellen wollte zwischen dich und mich  
Zu seiner sieben Wunden gäb ich ihm  
Die achte.<sup>279</sup>

In a vile maneuver to deceive Genoveva into his arms, Golo murders Drago without the slightest hesitation, murder has become negligible:

Ein Mord! Was ist ein Mord? Was ist ein Mensch?  
Ein Nichts! So ist denn ein Mord ein Nichts!"<sup>280</sup>

Consequently, the destruction of Genoveva and himself are logical results of the irrevocable tempo. After the murder of Drago, the course of events has become quite clear.

Passion had driven Hebbel to Emma Schröder and thus inflicted a horrible blow to Elise. He, too, had committed a kind of murder, he, too, had regarded another person, Elise, as nothing by not being faithful to her and ignoring her feelings. Passion had also driven Hebbel into the most devastating experience of his life, his ten years with Elise, and through Golo Hebbel almost seems to experience an orgy of passion, he drives the irrational force to its limit.

Throughout the tumultuous events, Genoveva remains the holy Madonna. She dutifully suffers the wounds inflicted her by the cruel male, withdrawing into the shrine of the self. As described by Tristan:

Ein echtes deutsches Weib! Vor jedem Blick  
Aus eines Mannes Aug wird sie aufs neu  
Zum Jungfrau, und verschliesst sich in sich selbst.<sup>281</sup>

When forced by circumstances to contemplate wielding the sword, even this she would do to defend the selfless, violated image, the image of her sex:

So weih ich denn als Weib,  
Gedenkend meines eigenen Geschlechts,  
Das, schwach und waffenlos, in seinem Feind,  
Zugleich den Freund und den Beschützer sieht.<sup>282</sup>

When Golo's schemes fail to deliver her into his arms and Genoveva's stranger-husband is easily tricked into doubting her, she turns the other cheek and goes to her death:

Wenn mein Gemahl zurück kehrt, sagt ihm das,  
Das ich, wie hart er auch mit mir verfuhr,  
Ihm alles doch, bevor ich starb, vergab.<sup>283</sup>

When Siegfried returns to find his wife slain, he is overcome by a sense of resignation and futility. This beautiful and strange woman now is slain and so much remains that was never understood:

Ich strafe niemals einen Menschen mehr,  
Seit ich ins Innere der Natur geschaut.  
Auch sie, wenn sie noch lebte, stürbe nicht.<sup>284</sup>

The significance of Genoveva lies in its confessional aspect. The characteristics overlap but they are easily distinguishable. In Genoveva Hebbel has incorporated the most idealistic characteristics of the woman. She is beautiful, innocent and saintlike in her love. She is also the passive victim who suffers at the hands of the man and thus also embodies the moral question of the worth of the individual. Genoveva is the idealized image of Elise and the glorification of Hebbel's mother.<sup>285</sup> Moreover, through the eyes of the passionate Hebbel she becomes the beautiful, desirable woman who arouses the lust of men as Hebbel experienced in his desire for Emma Schröder. In Hebbel's own words the characterizations of Elise and Genoveva have much in common. They do, but this is only one aspect of Elise. (As another could be seen in "Maria Magdalena.") Hebbel writes of Elise:



"Nie, nie habe ich ihresgleichen gesehen. Sie hat einen Adel des Herzens, der allen Adel des Geistes übertrifft. Auch keine Spur von Egoismus. Ach, wenn ich sie oft quälte, sie satanisch im Tiefsten verletzte--immer sprangen nur schönere Funken aus ihrer Seele hervor, so dass ich mitten im leidenschaftlichen Frevel von ihrem Lächeln, ihren Tränen oft plötzlich erstarrte, als ob ich einen Engel gezeißelt hätte, der sich nur dadurch rächen mag, dass er seine herrliche Natur zeigt."286

Not being able to reconcile himself to the true relationship with Elise, Hebbel endows her with saintly qualities and creates of her a being to be revered, not loved. This very fact brings about the tragic alienation of the man and the woman and places the man in a position of the violator of an individual's dignity and places an awesome burden of guilt on him. Genoveva is neither lover nor friend to Siegfried, her saintliness forces him to admit his inability to understand her and leaves him with nothing but empty resignation, this is all that the passive "du" can offer. The idealization demotes the man through its persistent goodness, and as in the case of Hebbel, places him under a burden of guilt. Genoveva is an attempt to rationalize the situation of Hebbel vis-a-vis Elise, as Hebbel himself writes, it was this that motivated him to write the drama.

"Ich hatte ohne sie die Genoveva nicht schreiben können. Ich bin ihr alles, meinen äussern und meinen innern Menschen, meine Existenz in der Welt und in der Kunst, schuldig geworden."287

The feeling of guilt has not only inspired a holy character like Genoveva, but causes Hebbel to make statements such as this one, which in relation to his other utterances

is an exaggeration. It may, in a sense, embody what really was true. His art was indeed germinated by his relationship with Elise.

The very nature of Hebbel demanded more than a saintly uncommunicative person, he recognized the passion in himself and saw it as a manifestation of the base instincts of man when placed in relation to a figure like Genoveva. The demonic passion of man is seen as the chaotic force devastating the pure innocent person of Genoveva, just as he saw himself in relation to Elise:

"O, es ist oft eine solche Verwirrung in meiner Natur, dass mein besseres Ich ängstlich und schüchtern zwischen diesen chaotischen Strömen von Blut und Leidenschaft, die durcheinanderstürzen, umherirrt, der Mund ist dann im Solde der damonischen Gewalten, die sich zum Herrn über mich gemacht haben, und ganz bis ins Innerste zurrückgedrängt, sitzt meine Seele."<sup>288</sup>

The drama ends with the disillusioned Siegfried witnessing the destruction of his wife and Golo. The attempt to mellow the outcome by means of the "Nachspiel" only succeeds in intensifying the feeling of sadness and failure.

#### · C. Maria Magdalena

As Judith represents the quest of the individual to expand his consciousness in order to perceive its rightful part in the greater whole, so does the drama Maria Magdalena deal with the whole instead of the individual. The hypothesis seems to be that the idea of Morality may lead to a new plateau of awareness and not vice versa. The woman assumes

the role of the pathfinder who through her patient suffering may force man to refine his Idea of Morality. She is not on her way to individualistic refinement through which the whole may benefit, she is consumed by and becomes subservient to the Idea. She is Hebbel's idea: "Durch Dulden Tun: Idee des Weibes. Klara dramatisch."<sup>289</sup>

Klara's mother serves to supplement the image of the suffering female which is completed by Klara. The mother has literally given her life for her husband and children in accordance with the law of man and God and this is how she sees herself:

"Ich bin mir eben nichts Böses bewusst, ich bin auf Gottes Wegen gegangen, ich habe dich und deinem Bruder in der Furcht des Herrn aufgezogen und den sauern Schweiss eures Vaters zusammengehalten."<sup>290</sup>

To Klara's mother this represents the sum total of her life, she has served well a whole lifetime. This she conceives to be her purpose and she doggedly persists in her task. Her own desires and individuality are non-existent. She is a non-person. She is the exponent of the absolute and dogmatic prerequisites of God and morality. This woman is impassive and sanguine in her role, a role which itself is invalidated by the fallaciousness of the morality which it serves.

Her relationship to the male is pathetically shallow, since it conforms to an absolute norm and does not allow for personal deviation. She implores her daughter to love her future husband, but the advice is impersonal and stereotyped:

"So liebe ihn, wie er Gott liebt, nicht mehr, nicht weniger."<sup>291</sup>

The legacy of love and life that she leaves her daughter is a blindly pursued norm which completely precludes the demands of the individual being. The placid and servile being of the mother is able to generate little spiritual stimulation and as she herself states demands little from her husband. "Aufrichtigkeit ist die Tugend der Ehemänner."<sup>292</sup> It is quite irrelevant that the male may be a shallow, pompous fool as long as steady respectability is the most obvious characteristic; he is considered a prime husband.

Life is drab and suffering becomes a mask of distinction, external suffering, which attests to incessant toil, which in turn presupposes respectability. It almost becomes a woman's duty to look worn and drab at the end of her life, lest her appearance betray a frivolous existence. "Possessions and efficiency are chief virtues" of the times.<sup>293</sup> To her, it is mandatory that she look old at fifty: "Wars anders, so musst ich mich ja für dich und mich schämen!"<sup>294</sup> A woman is to have toiled well at her husband's side and raised compliant, respectable children, not to have given him pleasure through her body and spirit. This woman bears children, but is a barren creature. She serves her husband and God equally well; her life has been dictated by her husband and having fulfilled her duty to him she passively disengages from exuberant living and expects God to beckon to her, so that she can complete her final task. With a morbid obedience she yearns for the grave.

When her son confronts her with an alleged transgression of all the inviolable norms which he is to have adhered to, the mother responds with an intrepid "Jesus"<sup>295</sup> and dies.

This is the woman who provides the background for the more complex character of Klara. The mother is an ineffective, inconsequential human servant of a waning and faulty morality. She reflects the mate who even more blatantly flaunts his empty banner of an invalidated moral code. This woman's contribution to life has been petty and insignificant and its insignificance is further intensified by her blind adherence to a prescribed code. She has never allowed her sights to turn inward in order to examine the depth of her being which may clarify her vision toward the whole. The imposed darkness has put out the last spark of inner light.

This woman, more so than her daughter, can not be understood and regarded as an individual, she is but a type. She represents the wife and mother that Hebbel saw as a child and grew up with in Dithmarschen. She is the suffering, sensual and resigned lower class woman of Hebbel's childhood and youth.

Klara exists in a similarly stifling circle of awareness. The boundaries are not as rigid and well defined as those in the case of the mother. There is an incomprehensible force within Klara which thwarts her intentions and opens vistas before her, which she can not cope with. Klara does not consciously yearn to explore these unknown regions, she

is dragged along at a dizzying speed that defies resistance. This characteristic is reminiscent of Elise Lensing who was unable to curtail events of predictably devastating consequences.

Dreams and events merge to create a nightmare-like world, which is not of her own making, but permeates her until the cause becomes irrelevant: "...o die boshafte Träume, sie kleiden sich in unsere Furcht, um unsere Hoffnung zu erschrecken."<sup>296</sup> It is interesting to note that to Klara dreams represent a negative experience. It is not a thrilling state which allows her to explore unknown regions of consciousness or conjure up ecstatic visions. It is rather a state which bares her fears and reveals a foreboding darkness which interferes with the more conventional and rational hopes fashioned by the light of day. Bad surely follows the good and the dream is an unwelcome messenger. Klara exhibits a much greater depth insofar that she senses much more than her mother could, but is still paralyzed in her actions. What she senses remains a vague, not forceful awareness. This is her great tragedy and her destruction. Psychological predilection and the stagnating demands of her milieu combine to destroy the sparks in Klara and drive her into a maelstrom of chaotic reactions which ultimately overwhelm her. She is unable to liberate her inner being which remains enslaved just as her social being is. This is her great guilt, she can not be true to herself.<sup>297</sup>

This inability leads her to the events which become the tools of her destruction. Through the demands of her parents and personal pride, she has committed her life to a man who corresponds to the moral norms of her world, but is repulsive to her person. Klara is caught in the unintentional betrayal of her natural inclination towards the man that she desires. This feeling is strong and genuine, but she betrays it by petty, transparent lies in order to retain what she considers her respectable alliance. She rather capitulates to the false and vain accusations of one man than to her desire for another. It is easier for Klara to violate the rules of a familiar and rigid morality, than to follow the deep and unfamiliar desire of her own being. She chooses to compromise herself to appease the accusing eye of an unworthy man: "...du standest vor mir, wie einer, der eine Schuld einfordert, ich--ach Gott."<sup>298</sup> The inner tumult boils under the surface, but finds no rational outlet: "...aber Tränen und Schluchzen erstickten die Worte."<sup>299</sup> So intricate is the web that binds Klara that she can not even find her own responsibility for her predicament. The awareness is so dim that she becomes nothing, but a passive object to be thrust about. She recognizes the lowly character of Leonhard, but can not recognize that her own actions or lack of them have bound her to this man. She submits with a passive cry: "O mein Gott, an diesem Menschen bin ich gekettet."<sup>300</sup>

The cold cruelty of Klara's world is quite evident in the character of the father. Klara accepts this world with a blind obedience and attempts to forge no avenues of escape. The father is a psychological sadist, who not only doggedly hangs on to his exhausted morality, but taunts his daughter into submissiveness by cruel allusions. He is cleverly testing his daughter when he refers to her as "mein unschuldiges Kind."<sup>301</sup> Her guilt or innocence is only an incidental matter as in the case of Klara's brother, the question is only relevant to his own well being in the eyes of his narrow world. As long as this world is not offended, his children could choke on their innocence and the father would emerge unscathed, because: "Ich kanns in einer Welt nicht aushalten, wo die Leute mitleidig sein müssen, wenn sie nicht vor mir ausspucken sollen."<sup>302</sup> Her death belongs to a world which he can not understand.<sup>303</sup> Even when he places his own improbable suicide at her feet, does Klara remain incapable of the slightest tendencies of rebellion. It is her inability to see, that drags her down like a foul and massive rock.

Hebbel's own father is the most likely model for Klara's father. He, too, felt that his children were a burden, his "wolves," who made life even more difficult. Displeasure and resentment characterize both.

The Sekretär intrudes into Klara's life with his pleas to listen to her heart and live according to her own wishes:



"Was man alles schwätzt, wenn man etwas auf dem Herzen hat und es nicht herausbringen weiss."<sup>304</sup> He implores her to rejoice in living and confess her love for him. But she still sinks in the murk of self deception: "Um ihm, um mir selbst zu beweisen, dass es nicht so sei, oder ums zu erstricken, wenns so wäre, tat ich, was ich jetzt...."<sup>305</sup>

Klara has completely abdicated any self assertion and asks absolutely nothing for herself. Her only remaining wish is to salvage the crumbling facade of offended morality: "Ich bettle ja nicht um ein Glück, ich bettle um mein Elend, um mein tiefstes Elend--mein Elend wirst du mir geben!."<sup>306</sup>

Leonhard represents everything that her heart rejects, but through marriage to him she can escape the wrath of her father and society. She makes her last empty, desperate offer to Leonhard, promising a devotion which seems adequate as measured against the man and the norms which he represents: "Ich will dir dienen, ich will für dich arbeiten."<sup>307</sup>

Klara is also pleading for the child that she carries, pure instinct drives her to clutch at the last straw of preservation for herself and her child. But in her desperate pleas she betrays the utter confusion which has paralyzed her into a state of unconsciousness: "Wärs um mich allein--ich wollts ja tragen, ich wollte gedulding hinnehmen, als verdiente Strafe für, ich weiss nicht was."<sup>308</sup> Klara is being punished by a world which she herself subscribes to and attempts to understand its rules and, yet, she is guilty of a transgression

which lies outside the domain of this morality. She cannot understand her punishment, because she cannot understand her crime. It is as though she senses that a wrong has been done society, but a greater wrong has been perpetrated against a genuine and subconscious desire. The framework of existence does not allow for this and Klara is unable to cope with the consequences. It is ironic when Leonhard consoles her with: "Tausende haben das vor dir durchgemacht."<sup>309</sup> He is the one who least of all understands Klara's situation. For him the world revolves around the Bürgermeister--"mit dem Bürgermeister ist nicht zu spassen."<sup>310</sup> Confronted with Klara's formidable problem, the structure of his world remains quite clear and stagnant.

Hebbel, like Leonhard, had been impressed by appearances and one's station in life. He did not hesitate to refer to Elise as von Lensing and thus promote her in social status. The words that Leonhard here utters could very well have been those Hebbel said to Elise.

Klara's salvation does not lie in marriage to this man, but in the hope that there will be no other man like him. Not only does Klara have to face a bankrupt morality, clutching more desperately than ever at its power, she feels herself losing the security of its hold and slipping into the frightening "Unbewussten." Leonhard can still escape what Klara no longer can: "Eine Rebellion im Kopf wo man Wurm nach Wurm nach Wurm gebiert, und einer den andern frisst oder

in den Schwanz beisst, ist die Schlimmste von allen."<sup>311</sup>

Klara's final plunge into death is not an attempt to escape an intolerable world, beyond which man can hope for a better one. Klara does not recognize the clash of individualistic inclination and the common morality. She goes to her death like a sleepwalker who is afraid that the awakening may be worse than the nightmare. Klara is the woman who has suffered throughout her lifetime and was driven to jump. Her desperate escape is a plea for greater awareness of society vis-a-vis its own morality. Man has to escape into a more refined, individualistic morality as long as society can not assimilate divergent forms of expression into its code. Through her blind deed, Klara serves as a catalyst to man's motivation to reevaluate the codes that he lives by. It was Hebbel's belief that: "Sittlich ist jede Tat, die den Menschen über sich selbst erhebt."<sup>312</sup>

Hebbel's Maria Magdalena is not forgiven her sins, she is punished by a cruel and dogmatic society. She is the exponent of a new morality, who escapes from an immoral one. As Judith shatters on internal chaos which invalidates her actions in respect to the greater whole, Klara succumbs before she even senses an inner conflict. Klara is the exponent of blind suffering which leads to death and promises a better world, a higher order of morality which may allow for the expansion of individual awareness. Klara provides the only hopeful glimmer in this bourgeois world.<sup>313</sup>

Klara remains servile and unaware, she can recognize her transgression against the world, but not against herself. She can not be true to herself, she is not a personality, she is a tool, a tool in Hebbel's own battle with the morality of his time. It is remarkable that Hebbel deals with sex more frankly in this drama than in any other of his dramas. Klara is neither beautiful nor clever, but she, like Elise Lensing, is obviously a sensual woman.

Maria Magdalena does not offer new avenues toward a more enlightened morality, it merely criticizes the old. In confining himself to a "bürgerliches Drama," Hebbel remained too close to personal reality. As pointed out by Kurt May, "Meister Anton und Klara sind Fleisch vom Fleisch und Blut von Blut ihres Schöpfers."<sup>314</sup> The characters become types based on traits exhibited by personalities Hebbel knew and lived with. Beppi's family serves as a model for Anton,<sup>315</sup> as does the good Elise serve for Klara.<sup>316</sup> Klara and her mother remain types exhumed from a world which Hebbel himself was attempting to cope with.

The woman may point the way through her suffering, so that man may forge a better world. The "Humanitätsideal" of the Weimar poets had never been realized<sup>317</sup> and the search for the "allgemein Menschliche" still permeates the literature of Hebbel's time and vacillates somewhere between the strongly individualistic and the provincial.<sup>318</sup> This drama, too, is Hebbel's protest and search, lead by a woman who is

blind to her goal. The woman is not an individual who participates in the process through her awareness and understanding of her suffering and man's faltering strides toward the Ideal of Morality.

#### D. Herodes und Mariamne

The insecurity of man and his search for a meaningful commitment permeate the drama Herodes und Mariamne. The worth of the individual and man's guilt toward the woman are also to be found in this, as in other dramas.

The mighty king Herodes finds himself in a world of intrigue and murder. Political expediency has brought about the murder of his wife's brother and his own power and life depend on intricate plots and power structures. In his precarious situation he finds himself preoccupied with one reference point of absolute security. The world around him is a chaotic, treacherous place and it is in Mariamne that he hopes to find the only and absolute security. The attempt, however, is destined to failure, because he demands and, moreover, he demands from a position of weakness, not of strength.

When he thinks of his wife he already casts doubt upon her willingness to give him ultimate proof of her love. He instinctively suspects their relationship and proposes to test her love. As he hears of a woman who perished in the flames with the body of her husband, he intends to relate this to his wife:

Das will ich Mariamne doch erzählen  
Und ihr dabei ins Auge schauen--

...  
Sie war vielleicht der Frauen Königin.<sup>319</sup>

He himself is ready to offer the ultimate sacrifice, were Mariamne to die, and he must have the same assurance from her:

Du musst es ja empfinden, dass ich jetzt  
Nicht für mich kämpfen kann, wenn du mir nicht  
Versicherst, dass dein Herz noch für mich schlägt.<sup>320</sup>

Herodes is the blind fool who does not see that what he demands is already his, and by his desperate plea he destroys what he wants.

From this point on the alienation between husband and wife is complete, each becomes egotistical in his demands and love for each becomes secondary. Herodes tells of a wife who dies with her husband. Mariamne perceives the didactic aspect of the incident of the woman and gives a negative response:

Sie liess ja nicht sich zum Opfertier machen,  
Sie hat sich selbst geopfert, das beweist,  
Dass ihr der Tod mehr war, als die Welt.<sup>321</sup>

She, too, would do the same of free will:

Ich sterbe, wenn er stirbt.<sup>322</sup>

Mariamne, however, is not given this option, Herodes' fear of having someone else possess her and his fear that she may not even love him with all her life, forces him to utter the desperate words:

Mir schwurst du nichts, dich will ich etwas schwören:  
Ich stell dich unters Schwert.<sup>323</sup>

Mariamne knows that Herodes loves her, but she recoils at his demeaning approach. By his demand for her oath he has expressed lack of faith in her and failed to recognize her worth as an individual. When he orders her to be killed in case of his death, Mariamne sees this as final proof of his low esteem of her love and her person:

Ich war ihm nur ein Ding und weiter nichts.<sup>324</sup>

Herodes has now proven that he has no respect for her, no faith in her, he has left Mariamne with nothing:

Du hast in mir die Menschheit geschendet.<sup>325</sup>

Herodes has demeaned Mariamne in the cruelest way possible; he has doubted the love of a woman who has given him no reason to do so. He has demanded tangible proof for something for which there is no proof, only trust and understanding. This is precisely what Herodes and Mariamne lack due to their exaggerated individuality. Herodes has dealt his wife the cruelest blow by his mistrust of her, but Mariamne pursues the same path. She twice hopes that Herodes will sense her great love for him and allow her to take a voluntary oath of love. She, however, is not willing to take one step from her assumed pose, she will not expose her inner feelings:

Die Probe ist keine wenn er  
ahnt was dich bewegt.<sup>326</sup>

When Herodes fails to perceive the depth of her emotion she takes the path to demonic vengeance. She is not moved by her love for Herodes but by his apparent lack of love for

her and her mad desire to avenge the plunder of her excessive individuality:

Ich hatte nichts, ich habe nichts, ich werde  
Nichts haben! War denn je ein Mensch so arm!<sup>327</sup>

In the name of love, each has destroyed the other:

Zwei Menschen, die sich lieben, wie sie sollen,  
Können einander gar nicht überleben,

...  
Allein die Menschen lieben sich nicht so.<sup>328</sup>

The general insecurity of existence underlies the fabric of the drama.<sup>329</sup> Herodes demands that Mariamne be loyal to him because no one else is. He fails to see that in his demand he questions her loyalty and undermines their relationship by regarding her unworthy of his trust. Hebbel's conflict with Elise is reflected here in the man's disregard for the person of the woman. Possibly also Hebbel's jealousy of Christine and her past embellish the character of Herodes. The ideal, the idealized Elise, too, suffers a demise. She is justly tormented by the man's disregard for her individuality, but responds with nothing but cruel vengeance. She has failed to understand that the man, as well, may have acted out of the deepest fear and suffering. She fails to understand that the man pleads for love and security, for belonging and understanding. Her introspective vision is oblivious of this fact, and it is she in her blindness who gives the man nothing. Mariamne is not just the woman misunderstood, but the woman who does not understand.

It is as though in their alienation Herodes and Mariamne



expect a solution from external circumstances which never comes. They can not reconcile themselves to one another, nor to the world. They are the absolute antinomy of reality and that which is essential and basic to their beings.<sup>330</sup> Yet, in spite of the fact that Mariamne never overcomes the schism between herself and her husband, she feels a need to confess her true devotion to Titus before her death, it is her triumph, her justification to herself, but also her plea for communication. For in Hebbel there is pessimism, not nihilism. Man always remains the focal point and source of any possible progress and perfection.<sup>331</sup>

Hebbel and Elise, also, could not reconcile themselves to one another or to the world, but in spite of this fact Hebbel continues with this relationship as if hoping that either some external circumstance or inner reconciliation would render it an acceptable one. In spite of the fact that his friendship with Amalie Schoppe was less than satisfactory and his affairs with Elise, Emma and Beppi were less than idyllic, he does, at a mature age, enter into a marriage full of hope for love and contentment which he, indeed, is able to find with his wife. The cruelest fate is to be alone and misunderstood, but, in his private life, Hebbel would say that it could be otherwise.

Hebbel had to clarify his outlook on marriage in his personal life and this is clearly reflected in dramas like Herodes and Mariamne. Man's life becomes a series of possi-

bilities and marriage is one of them. The delimited world vs. infinite possibilities,<sup>332</sup> is a concept also to be found in the contemporary author Max Frisch, who often explores marriage in his works. In his play Santa Cruz Pelegrin returns to visit Elvira and her husband. Elvira and Pelegrin had been lovers and they have not seen each other for seventeen years. His return forces a reappraisal of the marriage and stirs old memories.

Frisch depicts marriage as a state of imprisonment and boredom with which Hebbel has upon occasion concurred, as expressed in his diaries when he theorizes over a possible marriage to Elise.

As Herodes and Mariamne and Genoveva and Siegfried, Elvira and her husband live together but do not know each other. They have shared their living habits, but have lied to each other about their dreams and longings. Pelegrin has been honest with himself and understood himself sufficiently to give up something for a life that he wants. Frisch is more insistent that marriage is synonymous with a coffin than Hebbel, but both are cognizant of the need for the partners to know themselves and each other and to communicate. The women are more guilty than the men, because they can not admit and recognize their true longings, they would rather hide in a status quo security.

### E. Agnes Bernauer

In Agnes Bernauer, Hebbel has created one of his most beautiful and attractive women. Agnes is not a cold and chiseled beauty, petrified by an innate code as is Rhodoppe, nor is she cursed by her beauty as is Judith. Agnes is beautiful, likeable, reluctantly willing to be loved and admired. She is the naïve flower born to charm and to love. In her one finds Hebbel's best and freeest expression of love in all of his dramas.<sup>333</sup> Agnes is a truly naïve being in the finest sense of the word, she is not ignorant of her charm or desire of love, but she is free from anything which may cloud or obstruct her love for a man. There is an apparent obsession in Hebbel with women who are physically beautiful; possibly born of the plainness of Elise. Agnes is all he and any man could wish for. He clearly establishes this and her innocence early in the drama. Theobald, her faithful admirer, has brought her roses, and with his words Hebbel has characterized Agnes and won our sympathy for her: "Um die schönen Rosen wars schande, die sind unschuldig."<sup>334</sup> Agnes is an innocent and beautiful rose, but because she is unique she is destined not to walk a common path. She quickly senses that her youthful friends resent her beauty because she outshines them all and she feels the resentment in their remarks: "Nonne und doch keine Heilige, aber noch nicht im Himmel!"<sup>335</sup> This is all yet an innocent prelude of her fate and Agnes responds with a very ordinary and girlish pout,

she shall not attend the tournament in order not to arouse more resentment. She is neither driven by haughty aloofness nor does she consider her beauty a curse. Her beauty has a naïve charm which does not overwhelm.

Agnes attends the fateful tournament, where after one look at Albrecht her fate is sealed. She has been chosen by the finest man and her being knows but one response. This is one of Hebbel's purest and most idealized love episodes. In the midst of a chaotic crowd two people have chosen each other as the most desirable being each has encountered. From that moment on, cognizant as they may be of reality and the consequences, they know but one goal. Albrecht, in the characteristic manner of a lover, promises more than he can hope to give: "Dir schwindelt! Halt dich an mich! Und ob die Welt sich dreht, du wirst fest stehen."<sup>336</sup> Agnes, too, is willing to give all: "Und müsst ichs mit dem Tode bezahlen--das täte nichts."<sup>337</sup>

Agnes for herself knows that it is this love with Albrecht that now is her life, and she has no qualms or regrets. She loves the man without any conditions and is aware that external events may terminate their love. But for her there is nothing else, nor does she ask for more. She is very much in possession of herself and her words warn Albrecht that it is he who should be wary of his duty and his father: "Und wenn er das Schwert zieht."<sup>338</sup> She is aware that Albrecht's father has to rule his land and can not

exchange that responsibility for her beauty.

The marriage takes place and is, as is Agnes, an ideal image, it is the epitome of what a marriage could be. As Hebbel has frequently and sometimes unjustly pontificated against the institution, here marriage is all that it could possibly be. The two partners remain passionate lovers, filled with admiration and friendship for each other. Agnes has given herself completely and freely while remaining aware of the world around them: "Und käme jetzt der Tod, ich dürfte nicht mehr sagen: Du kommst zu früh."<sup>339</sup>

And the external world quickly enforces its will. Albrecht is destined to rule his father's land, lest chaos and bloodshed are to take over. Neither divorce or convent can provide an escape for two forces so great--the love of Agnes and the conviction of Ernst. Like Agnes, he has no other way: "...ich tu, was ich muss, der Ausgang ist Gottes."<sup>340</sup>

There is no chance that Agnes may betray her honor and renounce herself or her love, nothing in this world has any power over her or any meaning for her. To renounce Albrecht, she can no longer be Agnes. She, too, has no other way:

"Sind wir nicht unzertrennbar, eins durch Geben undNehmen, wie Leib und Seele?"<sup>341</sup> To deny her life is quite conceivable to Agnes, but to deny her love for Albrecht is not. Thus she accepts Ernst's command for her death, but not a plot to renounce herself or Albrecht. She can give her life, but no more: "Wie mild is Herzog Ernst! Der will doch nur mein

Leben!"<sup>342</sup>

Agnes Bernauer is, of course, a drama of the unique individual who disturbs the world order. But it is much more than that. It is, as though, Hebbel has poured into Agnes all that he wished to find in a woman. Agnes has beauty and charm and is made to love and be loved. She is naïve and innocent, yet aware of herself and her destiny, her wish to be a woman. The love of Agnes is not idyllic, nor is it common, it is characterized by passion and devotion. She brings this quality to her marriage and in her awareness is the ultimate "du." Her greatest gift to Albrecht is not her death, but her life. She has no honor to betray, there is no clash within herself, the clash is an external one.

Throughout his life Hebbel struggled with the idea of emancipation of the woman. Agnes, in a real sense, represents the synthesis and reconciliation of these assorted ideas. Agnes is the emancipated woman, she knows that she loves Albrecht and her emotions toward him are quite clear to her and because of this she can accept and understand the consequences of her commitment to the man. She is free, but she is not an equal to him so that she may still represent the ideal to Albrecht, she embodies beauty and passion and virtue. She is the free and ideal woman. Society has not yet emancipated her, but according to Hebbel, society was not supposed to be the instrument of emancipation. Agnes is an emancipated woman insofar that she understands herself,

but she is no way the "new" woman who has been emancipated by society, as is Anna Mohr in Hauptmann's Einsame Menschen.

A reconciliation in regard to the question of the liberated woman has been achieved, but it suffers from oversimplification. Agnes is perfection, as no woman in Hebbel's life was, or as he may have occasionally regarded his wife; Albrecht is free of the slightest guilt, as Hebbel never was; and society is imperfect.

The external struggle around Agnes leads one to another question of values. The circumstances which lead to her death are representative of an ideology. As in Maria Magdalena, where an undesirable order brings the downfall of an individual, here it is an order which Hebbel seems to condone. He has created a woman who has his sympathy and the reader's, but he also has recognized the reality of his ethics. He wishes for an ideal, but it has to correspond to a reality. Hebbel writes of his Agnes Bernauer:

"Nie habe ich das Verhältnis, worin das Individuum zum Staat steht, so deutlich erkannt wie jetzt, und das ist doch ein grosser Gewinn.... Die Ultrademokraten werden mich freilich steinigen, doch mit Leuten, die Eigentum und Familie nicht respektieren, die also gar keine Gesellschaft wollen, ja die konsequenterweise auch nicht den Menschen, das Tier, den Baum usw. wollen können, weil das doch auch Kerker feier Kräfte, nämlich der Elemente, sind, habe ich nichts zu schaffen."<sup>343</sup>

Thus, Agnes dies and the state prevails. However, here we come to the ultimate clash of values and find a modern element in Hebbel's Agnes Bernauer. We witness the drive for life and love versus a blind and possibly faulty order.

Even though Hebbel is committed to the order, the very existence of Agnes questions the order. The ideas of state are not stable as in the case of Hegel, the ideology becomes nebulous.<sup>344</sup> In an attempt to stabilize his world and attain some security, man will instinctively exaggerate the importance and value of an ideology, as if in an effort to stabilize that which is stable no longer. There seems to be a parallel between the need to question and negate old values and an even stronger need to exalt some other ideology which will provide security. Modern man seems to experience his bleakest hour when he triumphs as the iconoclast and sets himself free from all guidelines. The tragedy of Agnes is not that she, the innocent, dies at the hands of the state, she has resolved her problem and for her there is but one law. For Hebbel, she dies for an essential yet questionable ideology. Which law is man to obey? It is this question which gives Agnes Bernauer contemporary importance.

#### F. Gyges und sein Ring

A more intricate imprisonment of the woman is evident in Gyges und sein Ring. Rhodope is indeed bound to the narrowest possible circle, but her confinement is self imposed. Her individuality and her pride do not even allow her to confess her love for a man.<sup>345</sup> Rhodope can only love Kandaules if he will abide by her conditions for this union. She can not give pleasure to her husband on his terms, she



is unwilling to yield to his pride in her and his desire to exhibit to others what he possesses. His wishes are irrelevant to her existence, she is bound to a tradition and her own pride, much more than she is to her husband. Her personality and tradition are holy and she refuses everything new:

Bei uns ist das nicht Sitte, und mir wars,  
Als ob ich essen sollte ohne Hunger  
Und trinken ohne Durst.<sup>346</sup>

To Rhodope the man is the violator of all that is holy. He may only possess a fraction of her being and he dare not transgress her norms:

Ei nein! Dir sangs die Amme nimmer vor,  
Dass Mannes Angesicht der Tod für dich.<sup>347</sup>

The man understands nothing of what Rhodope's inner being demands of her and she completely isolates herself within the walls of what to her is the essence of her person. She, too, understands nothing of the needs of the man and only sees him as the violator who tramples her most sacred image. When she discovers that her husband has allowed Gyges to see her, she is blind to everything:

Ich bin befleckt, wie niemals noch ein Weib.<sup>348</sup>

She offers nothing to Kandaules but her demands and becomes his judge and condemns him for his guilt. She demands reverence, because

Als Königstochter trat ich in dies Haus.<sup>349</sup>

She even has the audacity to accuse Kandaules:

Es ~~st~~ mehr Stolz auf den Besitz, als Liebe;  
In der Empfindung, die dich an mich fesselt.<sup>350</sup>

Her self centered pride has reduced her to a figure of cold marble. She can not give herself in love to a man and, as she tells Gyges, she believes herself to be the most delicate and vulnerable creature.

Je mehr sonst ganz nur Weib, nur scheues Weib  
Je mehr vom Manne wird sie da verletzt.<sup>351</sup>

Unflinchingly Rhodope pursues her course to its gruesome end, destroying herself and the man.

In Rhodope Hebbel has swung full circle from his image of the woman as an insignificant, suffering being to the woman who has elevated the worth of her person until she resembles a beautiful and cold statue, which the man has to worship and be destroyed lest he pay homage to her. It is as though here he attempts to expurgate his guilt; his egotistical individualism has subjugated and reduced the woman to a non-being and if there is no woman who can relate to the man on a new and enlightened plane, then let that woman become a remote deity which the man has to worship and pay for his transgressions against her. In this form at least she provides the man with a thing of beauty to revere, if the woman is to understand nothing of the man's needs and can in no way communicate with him, let her have a dignity and serenity of her own which makes the man responsible for his actions to her, but not for her. Rhodope is the coldest and cruelest of Hebbel's women. She is not a woman, she is an idea gone mad. Rhodope resides in the narrowest circle,

within herself. The man does not understand her but she understands neither herself nor the man. With Rhodope the man does not have to look down upon her and pity her and himself, he has forever lost any hope of easing his isolation, but his suffering is his own and not caused by her dependence upon him.

Hebbel's path to reality leads him through the ideal and it is only as such that Rhodope can be regarded. By complete isolation she has attained inner freedom and lives within the realms of her conscience. Hers is a lofty circle, but still a narrow one. Her alienation from the world is so complete that it is difficult to comprehend her torment. Hebbel himself recognized that, "freilich wird die Motivierung der Königin schwer sein."<sup>352</sup> Rhodope is an intellectual abstraction representing the opposite pole of the narrow woman as seen in Hebbel's reality.

She is too far removed to be convincing and moving. In this drama one also becomes aware of how much Hebbel's successful dramas and most vivid characters are both a reflection of his intellect and experience. The exaggeration of Rhodope has removed her too far from reality.

Chapter V  
THE IMAGE OF THE WOMAN

Thus far we have been concerned with the woman in the life and works of Friedrich Hebbel. The emphasis has been on identifying and defining her properties and ascertaining the reason for her prominence in the works of the author. Hebbel's true concern was with the self and with the female figure. She is the product of experience and an intrinsic polarity which makes itself felt throughout the lifetime of the author.<sup>353</sup> In the works of Hebbel one has to deal with persons who are the products of his problematic nature. He attempts to reconcile his intellectual concepts to his emotional inclinations.<sup>354</sup>

The ambivalences pertinent to the woman are numerous--sensuality versus spiritual love; morality versus freedom; ideal versus the real; conservatism versus new and daring concepts, which all seem to stem from one basic polarity in Hebbel--the spiritual versus the physical. He wishes for liberation in experience, to experience what his intellect conceives and to reconcile his intellect to the experience. The inability to harness the onslaught of emotions and intellect hurls him into a sea of ambiguities. Self expression almost comes to resemble a religious trance,<sup>355</sup> in which he tries to perceive a semblance of totality. His art is "Ausdruck seines Ringens und Werdens."<sup>356</sup> The women in his

art are intellectual concepts filtered through the turmoil of his emotions. They do not exist as complete entities in themselves because Hebbel could never perceive the woman as she really was; she is divested of her own reality and re-incarnated in the image of assorted ambiguities. Hebbel never saw the woman as a whole, he saw her through his "I" predisposed vision. Her identity is further obscured by Hebbel's inability to allow for individual assertion in man and even less in the woman.<sup>357</sup> She can never be an individual to Hebbel, she is the reflection of the self.

The women in his early life had taught him that women are submissive, servile beings who can be depended upon for minimal sustenance, but little else. His mother, his teacher and his benefactors had never initiated action.

The most devastating encounter with the female in Hebbel's life occurs in his relationship with Elise Lensing. For a decade of his life Hebbel perpetuates this demanding relationship which he claims is not based on love. Yet, the bond is evidently so deep that it is hard to call it anything else.<sup>358</sup> The devotion of Elise was admirable, but she further defines the image of the woman in the life of Hebbel as "Beschränktheit der menschlichen Individualität."<sup>359</sup>

Hebbel could not, at the time of the encounter with Elise, adjust to the fact that the basic tie between them was sensual and was diametrically opposed to his concept of morality. He believed that "Unschuld ist erwachene

Sinnlichkeit, die sich selbst nicht versteht."<sup>360</sup> A woman that one loved and married had to have a sexual identity and incorporate the qualities of the ideal and for Hebbel love was the incarnation of the ideal.<sup>361</sup> As Schunert states,

"Dass für ihn reine, von aller niedrigen Sinnlichkeit freie Liebe der Geschlechter der Ausdruck höchster Sittlichkeit und ein Symbol des idealischen Zustandes ist."<sup>362</sup>

The decade of torment with Elise, motivates him to postulate on the possible variations on the theme of man's relation to the woman. The greatest difficulty in this process to define the "du" is his guilt. He ventures a very daring step by alluding to the possibility of a sensuality which would exist for itself irrelevant of all other norms. The insurmountable difficulty lies in the fact that this kind of freedom demands an awareness and responsibility of the individual which certainly did not exist in the society of Hebbel's time, nor has yet been realized. Until the woman is such, she has to succumb to the total unawareness. Hebbel's works are attempts to incorporate this remote ideal of the truly aware woman into the more conventional ideal, the moral woman who is both sensual and "pure."

The women as seen in the works of Hebbel reflect his intellect. They are not ordinary women, they are his ideas of the female sex.<sup>363</sup> His concept is not based on understanding her, his own personality transforms her into his image. To quote Oskar Walzel:

"Vielmehr lag es von vornherein in Hebbels Natur, verschlossene Charaktere zu zeichnen, deren Inneleben, sei's bewusst, sei's unbewusst, der umgebenden Welt gegenüber versteckt spielt."<sup>364</sup>

The women are not figures to be found in everyday existence, especially his dramatic heroines. According to Lublinski, they are "...ausserorderntliche Menschengestalten, die gleichzeitig krankhaft problematisch und sehr gewaltige Kolossalnaturen waren."<sup>365</sup>

The demise of Hebbel's women is intricate. The hybris of the individual no longer clashes with the absolute of the idea, the individual has been liberated to forge his own concept of the idea and until he is able to do so, his very individuality becomes his downfall and his guilt, it is the guilt of the unaware society. Hebbel's vision is a wild and elusive dream, it vacillates between nihilism and the purest "Humanitätsideal " conceived. His women can not be "real." They are part of his own unawareness and inability to relate this concept to reality and part of the total unawareness of contemporary humanity.<sup>366</sup> Man has lost his absolute adherence to the idea, a norm, an ideal. The inability of the woman to emerge into a new state of clarity points the way to a possible nothingness, to nihilism. It is only Hebbel's personal and unshakable adherence to morality as an even greater ideal than individual freedom which saves him from nihilism. To quote Wolfgang Liepe,

"In allen Stadien seiner dichterischen Entwicklung hat die Idee des Daseins als sittlicher Aufgabe das:

Werk Hebbels davon bewahrt, in die Tragödie des Nihilismus abzugleiten."367

Judith and Agnes Bernauer most clearly reflect Hebbel's ideas in regard to the woman. Judith is his passionate rebellion against the beautiful and sensual woman who is wasted by her own inability to reconcile her desires to reality. In Judith, one also sees the most complex female character, she is the woman who most clearly senses the infinite possibilities that she carries within herself and is totally confounded by this awareness. In Agnes these ideas have mellowed. Agnes is not torn by conflict, she is quite aware of what she wants to be and what she is. Agnes is the emancipated ideal, she is the answer Hebbel has chosen to his problem.

Genoveva and Mariamne are direct reflections of Hebbel's experience. Genoveva, as Judith, is born of his involvement with Elise, but Genoveva is a pale and passive figure who is deified by Hebbel's desire to confess his guilt over the unfortunate decade of his life with Elise. Mariamne is written by the happy husband as a plea for communication, understanding and security. Probably motivated by jealousy over Christine's past, he sees the devastating consequences of the inability to communicate with one another.

Maria Magdalena reflects the milieu of Hebbel's early life and the woman as he saw her. Maria Magdalena is in no way equipped to resolve the conflict she is faced with, the conflict of morality and sex. She has no deep awareness of



herself, but she is the woman in whom Hebbel recognizes sex as one of the motivating forces and questions the society to which she has to relate.

Rhodope, as opposed to other female figures which are closely related to the events of Hebbel's life, is a woman born of the intellect. It is as though the author no longer believes in the ideal that he has created.

The battle between the sexes as portrayed in the works of Hebbel is a battle for the articulate awareness of the woman, an awareness which would lead to a new humanity. It is not an absolute Iphigenie-like humanity<sup>368</sup> which Hebbel yearns for through his female figures. It is a humanity based on the sensual needs of man, his need for security and companionship, on his need to incorporate these in his intellectual and spiritual world, on his need to become an aware and functioning component of an aware society.

## CONCLUSION

Friedrich Hebbel's personality was so acutely under-nourished during his childhood and youth in Dithmarschen that he never quite overcomes this deficiency. The unsatisfactory relationships with his father, teacher and benefactor intensify the introverted man's sensitivity and egotism. Intent on cultivating his talent, Hebbel leaves his homeland and subsequently embarks on a relationship with a woman, which, like his childhood, motivates and dominates his art.

The image of the woman too rigidly reflects the author's personal struggles to have permanent universality. The woman of his life had been a bland, passive, inferior and sensual person, subjugated by the male and her sex. This in turn imposed a burden of guilt upon the man and Hebbel desperately struggles to escape, since his morality does not allow him to dismiss his own guilt. His art directly reflects this struggle and his heroines range from rationalized facsimiles of reality to a being too idealized and theoretical. In fact, the woman is not an ideal and the whole process is set in motion to atone for his personal guilt feelings.

There are aspects of the woman in his art which do merit recognition. The pessimistic, dour and self centered author takes himself and his art too seriously and always remains confined by insecurity and convention. Yet, he does

have his moments of daring and insight and his women have a dimension which is of interest today.

Hebbel recognizes the immeasurable and varied possibilities inherent in man. He is aware that not only he himself needs a new perspective of the great process, but the woman herself has to be recreated in a new image. She needs to recognize and become aware of sex as a motivating force which thrusts her in a critical relationship to man and society as a whole. In this respect, Hebbel's greatest contribution lies in the fact that sex, to him, is not yet just a good thing, but he does recognize its force and chaotic aspect in the personality of the woman. Rigid morality can in no way clarify this. It is she herself who has to learn to be free and aware and only then can its relationship to the man and society become more clarified. At his best moments, Hebbel's heroines embody the awesome complexity of living, for which the author declines to give a formula for solution.

Through some aspects of his female figures, motivated by the polarity in his own existence, Hebbel is cognizant that sex, marriage and their role in society have not yet been mastered by man. He does not condemn, nor is he able to liberate his women, but he allows his heroines to grope for a better world, which in itself is a "modern" approach.

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