

T.C.
SELÇUK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI
İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI BİLİM DALI

**TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE PLAYS: RELATIVELY SPEAKING, HOW THE OTHER HALF LOVES,
TIME AND TIME AGAIN BY ALAN AYCKBOURN**

YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

DANIŞMAN

Yrd. Doç. Dr. Dilek ZERENLER

HAZIRLAYAN

074208001004 Raşit ÇOLAK

KONYA 2010

to my family

Bilimsel Etik Sayfası



T.C.
SELÇUK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Müdürlüğü



BİLİMSEL ETİK SAYFASI

Bu tezin proje safhasından sonuçlanmasına kadarki bütün süreçlerde bilimsel etiğe ve akademik kurallara özenle riayet edildiğini, tez içindeki bütün bilgilerin etik davranış ve akademik kurallar çerçevesinde elde edilerek sunulduğunu, ayrıca tez yazım kurallarına uygun olarak hazırlanan bu çalışmada başkalarının eserlerinden yararlanılması durumunda bilimsel kurallara uygun olarak atıf yapıldığını bildiririm.

Öğrencinin Adı Soyadı
Raşit ÇOLAK

Yüksek Lisans Tezi Kabul Formu



T.C.
SELÇUK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Müdürlüğü



YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ KABUL FORMU

..... tarafından hazırlananbaşlıklı bu çalışma/...../..... tarihinde yapılan savunma sınavı sonucunda oybirliği/oyçokluğu ile başarılı bulunarak, jürimiz tarafından yüksek lisans tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.

Ünvanı, Adı Soyadı

Başkan

İmza

Ünvanı, Adı Soyadı

Başkan

İmza

Ünvanı, Adı Soyadı

Başkan

İmza

Acknowledgements

Doing a Master Degree is often looked upon as a solo-enterprise. However, one of the aspects that I most enjoyed is all the people I have met and how much I have learned from them. Though full of wonderful new experiences, my life as a Master Degree researcher has not always been an easy one. I have had to deal with numerous logistic and intellectual challenges and the most important one, my health problems I would not have been able to overcome without the help and encouragement of many people, some of whom I would like to give special thanks to.

First of all, I would like to thank to my supervisor Ass. Prof. Dr. Dilek ZERENLER, for all of her guidance, patience, advice and moral support. Special thanks to Ass. Professor Dr.Gülbün ONUR.

For research design and technical support thanks to Erkan AKBAY, Muhammed ULUÇAY, Yunus AKÇA and Fatma TEKKE.

I would also like to thank my parents, Murat and Hacer ÇOLAK for their constant support and encouragement. They are the foundation of all of my accomplishments.

Finally, I would like to thank my dear sister Ayşe and brother Hasan ÇOLAK.

CONTENTS

Bilimsel Etik Sayfası	i
Yüksek Lisans Tezi Kabul Formu	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
ÖZET	v
SUMMARY	vii
Introduction	1
1. ENGLAND IN 1960S.....	3
2. ALAN AYCKBOURN: A BIOGRAPHY.....	11
3. SUMMARY OF THE PLAYS	15
3.1. Relatively Speaking	15
3.2. How The Other Half Loves	21
3.3. Time And Time Again	29
4. ANALYSIS OF THE PLAYS	38
4.1. Middle Class Subjects.....	38
4.1.1. Family Issue of The Plays.....	40
4.2. Emotional Aspects of The Plays.....	42
4.3. Political View of The Plays	43
4.4. Characters of The Plays	45
4.4.1. Ayckbourn's Men	46
4.4.2. Ayckbourn's Women.....	49
5. FARCE OR COMEDY.....	53
5.1. Comic Elements in the plays	55
5.2. Technical Directions of The Plays.....	59
6. CONCLUSION.....	63
10. BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	65
APPENDIX.....	66
APPENDIX - A.....	66
APPENDIX - B.....	69
APPENDIX - C.....	71
APPENDIX – D.....	78



T.C.

SELÇUK ÜNİVERSİTESİ

Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Müdürlüğü



Adı Soyadı Raşit ÇOLAK

Numarası 074208001004

Ana Bilim / Bilim Dalı İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı / İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı

Programı Tezli Yüksek Lisans Doktora

Tez Danışmanı Yrd. Doc. Dr. Dilek ZERENLER

Tezin Adı

ALAN AYCKBOURN'un RELATIVELY SPEAKING, HOW THE OTHER HALF LOVES, TIME AND TIME AGAIN ADLI OYUNLARININ METİNSEL ANALİZİ

ÖZET

Bu çalışmamda seçkin, Çağdaş İngiliz oyun yazarlarından biri olan Alan Ayckbourn ve onun ilk oyunları Relatively Speaking, How the Other Half Loves, Time and Time Again'e ışık tutmak için yapılmıştır.

Ayckbourn, fars için sadece teknik konuda değil aynı zamanda kahkanın ardındaki korkunç gerçeği açığa çıkarma ve aydınlatma açısından ciddi bir oyun yazarıdır. Bununla birlikte Ayckbourn sıradan fars olarak kabul edilen alanı genişletmektedir. Bu görüşler doğrultusunda bu çalışma Relatively Speaking, How the Other Half Loves, Time and Time Again üzerine yoğunlaşmaktadır.

Oyunlarını detaylı bir şekilde incelerken sürekli değişen komik formatla birlikte yinelenen belirli temalar (evlilikte yaşanan hayal kırıklığı, kadına karşı erkeksi duyarsızlık korkusu, iyi niyetli fakat başarısız toplumsal reformcular ve yükselme meraklısı fırsatçılara olan nefret, aciz ve düşkünlere duyulan sempati) olduğu görülmektedir.

Önce duygusal açıdan kendi bölgesini desteklemiştir, teknik olarak, her zaman yabancıları dışarıda tutmaya çalışmaktadır. Bu yüzden birbirleri arasındaki

bağlantıları Ayckbourn'un gelişen bakış açısını takip ederek oyunlar detaylı bir şekilde analiz edilmeye çalışılmıştır. Kesinlikle onu büyüleyici yapan Ayckbourn'un oyun yazarı olarak göstermiş olduğu gelişme, teknik beceri ve psikolojik olasılık arasındaki dengeyi kurmasıdır.



T.C.

SELÇUK ÜNİVERSİTESİ

Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Müdürlüğü



Öğrencinin

Adı Soyadı Raşit ÇOLAK

Numarası 074208001004

Ana Bilim / Bilim Dalı İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı / İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı

Programı Tezli Yüksek Lisans Doktora

Tez Danışmanı Yrd. Doc. Dr. Dilek ZERENLER

Tezin İngilizce Adı

**TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE PLAYS: RELATIVELY
SPEAKING, HOW THE OTHER HALF LOVES, TIME AND
TIME AGAIN BY ALAN AYCKBOURN**

SUMMARY

The study is intended to shed light on Alan Ayckbourn, one of the distinguished Contemporary British Playwrights, and his early plays: *Relatively Speaking, How The Other Half Loves, Time and Time Again*.

Ayckbourn is essentially serious, for farce is not merely a matter of technique, but a use of technique to reveal or highlight sometimes dreadful reality behind laughter. In addition, Ayckbourn extends the range of what is ordinarily considered farce. In support of these views, the study focuses on *Relatively Speaking, How the Other Half Loves, Time and Time Again*.

Studying his plays in detail, it is noticed the recurrence of certain themes (disillusionment with marriage, horror at masculine insensitivity towards women, dislike of dogooders and bullish opportunists, sympathy with the feckless and incompetent) within a constantly varying comic format. At first emotinally, he has staked his own particular territory: technically, he is always trying to push the frontiers outwards. So that it is attempted to analyse each play in detail while traching the links between them and pursuing Ayckbourn's growing maturity of vision. Precisely what makes him fascinating, however, is the way Aycbourn,

making a great leap forward as a dramatist, maintains a delicate balance between technical cleverness and psychological probability.

Introduction

Sometimes people feel themselves as rolling downhill. Sometimes they can't decide what to do. They are not able to judge about anything around themselves. Man is not a sole body. He has heart, feelings like affliction and bliss, etc. Sometimes he feels him as the strongest man in the world. However, he doesn't know when he will taste the weakness, defeat. Finally he lives it. His dears want to make him feel well, strong, and cheerful as he was in the past though they can't. He perceives that nothing will be the same again. Nobody can help him even the dearest. Time wears out and he finds that the key is himself. In this mood he is so sensitive. He inspires better than the past. He inspires deeper meanings. Even in the darkness he finds a light. Under these conditions the plays were found, waiting to be discovered within deeper meanings.

With the study how he chose his subjects, in what aspects the change in society affected his plays, the way in which Ayckbourn created his characters, technically how he directed his plays, are tried to explain.

Any product, literary work such as poem, play, novel has its own social, economical, psychosocial background. Initially, it is important to have information about the atmosphere in England during the period of the plays. Thus, in introductory chapter information about England in 1960s is given. In the second chapter Ayckbourn's life and his personality as a playwright is given. Three plays: *Relatively Speaking*, *How the Other Half Loves*, *Time and Time Again* are summarized in detail in the third chapter. In the light of 1960s' middle class subjects, characters, emotional aspects, political view of the plays were given in the fourth chapter. Comic elements and technical directions are tried to be defined in the next chapter. In conclusion these features are evaluated and drawn a conclusion of mentioned plays and the playwright's artistic talent.

Thesis is prepared theoretically. Literature review and theoretic expression technique is used. Within the frame of books, essays, academic dissertations,

journals, columns, websites, a textual analysis of the plays is tried to be made. Evaluating the plays in detail in the light of his artistic personality and circumstances it can be said that he admires to have been awarded with Lifetime Achievement in the Theatre.

1. ENGLAND IN 1960S

Some historians claim that the sixties began, as a cultural phenomenon, in 1963. A convincing case can be made in support of this. The debut albums of both The Beatles and Bob Dylan immediately appear as cultural turning points. It is true that 1963 appears to be the point at which civil rights, counter/youth culture and a new, somewhat alien mentality began to emerge into the mainstream consciousness. In spite of this, Arthur Marwick supposes that it truly began in the late fifties, and came to its conclusion in the early seventies. (Marwick,1982:45)

This is compatible with the idea that 1963 was important, indeed Marwick suggests it marks the beginning of the "High Sixties", but we must also acknowledge the gathering momentum of change in the years leading up to this point. Thus, the period of the Long Sixties will be discussed here refers to 1958-1974.

A far more difficult definition comes with the terms "cultural" and "revolution". To further complicate matters, when the two are used together, we can turn them into a proper noun, as with Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution. Thus, it is important to differentiate between that Cultural Revolution, and Cultural Revolution in the far broader terms described here. Was this a collective movement towards a universalistic revolution, or were individuals campaigning for their own singular interests? So what is a revolution, and, perhaps more pertinently, what is a culture? Revolution is a term which appears with startling regularity in world history, and has been applied to many different things. In this case, revolution refers to a paradigm shift in the way in which people live. The Industrial Revolution is perhaps the most notable of these cases. Here it is seen a massive, quantifiable change e.g. the appearance of the factories, the urbanisation of the population that had inescapable ramifications for every strata of society. This widespread change in the lives of the population, and changes in the social structure of British society, is the definition of revolution in this thesis.

Not surprisingly, a shift in culture is far harder to measure than a change in the means of production. Over the past two decades there has been much debate on the precise meaning of culture. Culture has, in the common lexicon, come to mean

what we might more specifically refer to as "high-culture", the realm of literature, classical music and theatre, and generally the domain of the refined, educated middle and upper classes. The definition, for the purposes of this discussion, is that culture is the manner in which people live. It shall be analysed some of the elements which constitutes a culture, and attempt to evaluate whether these elements underwent significant change. Therefore youth culture, the role of women, education and religion will be examined.

Britain was a nation finally shaking off the doldrums of post-war austerity, with rationing (abolished in full by 1954) becoming a rapidly fading notion with staple food now cheaply available, the luxuries and conveniences now considered to be the central appeal of modern suburban life were becoming widespread (HEINEMANN, 2004:66).

The shift towards increasing leisure time, particularly with regards to women, was significant. The burden of domestic drudgery was lifted by labour-saving devices such as automatic washing machines (introduced to Europe in 1951) and electric steam irons (1952), was symptomatic of an increasingly affluent middle class. Entertainment too, was taking on a more universalistic role in society. Radio (although the transistor radio was only invented in 1953) and cinema were of course long established by this point. Television was also beginning to slowly pervade the cultural consciousness, but was not yet widespread. Certainly it would be sometime yet before this would become the utterly dominant social force that it is today, it was still reserved for the most part for the middle class. Remarkably, coupled with this new wave of prosperity, Britons were, for the first time, enjoying the benefits of a National Health Service (as of 1948), increased housing standards (the general move away from terraced housing, and toward suburban semi-detached) and a new education system (the Tripartite system which emerged following the Butler Act of 1944). What seems so striking is that such a seemingly socialist society could exist under successive Conservative governments. Indeed, the continuation of such institutions seem anathema to Tory ideology. What should be appreciated is how different Conservative policy, particularly under Harold Macmillan, was during this period. Instead of the almost dogmatic devotion to privatisation that characterised the

1980's Tory governments, the period of the 1950's saw a more compassionate mix of free market capitalism and state intervention.

So it is from this point that the beginning of "Long Sixties" is marked. A prosperous decade ensued - between 1955 and 1969, the increase in working-class and middle-class earnings averaged 128% (Government Statistics). Britain was a country which retained, for the most part, a long established culture. Many of its politicians, lawmakers and cultural icons still belonged to Edwardian age, not least the "aristocratic" Macmillan, its social mores and values (e.g. attitudes to women, attitudes towards the Empire) still adhered to the sensibilities of a more fastidious time. Indeed, while Britain may have economically re-emerged from the shadow of the Great Wars, its national psychology was indelibly marked by them. However, in the early 1960's, almost 40% of the population was under 25 (<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/>). The increasing affluence of Britain's youth provided them with greater personal choice and freedom. Between 1958 and 1966, young people's real incomes almost doubled in real terms. Indeed, the divides between the declining mainstream establishment culture and its ascendant youth counterpart were becoming increasingly apparent. Youth culture had existed in the past, the Jazz Age of the 1920's being a famous example, but never before had young people gone to such great lengths to express and distinguish themselves, through fashion, politics and music. We can attribute this, in part, to the increasing influence of American culture on British society. The curious mixture of rebelliousness, individuality and uniformity of fashion espoused by the likes of Elvis Presley and Chuck Berry in the mid to late 1950's would serve as the early reference points for such a movement. With the rise of the mass media, as well as the increasing availability and affordability of travel, the distinctions between the two separate cultures were becoming increasingly blurred. The onset of American popular culture on British youth was very difficult for the mainstream, "Establishment" culture to absorb. This movement was a rejection of all values and desperate attempt to generate new ones. It could be argued that as the Sixties progressed youth culture became increasingly indifferent to society, focusing instead on music, drugs, sex and fashion. This rejection of established values and traditions has been attributed to a number of

factors. Some would argue that the abolition of National Service in 1959 created a vacuum which undermined their sense of collective duty. Others would point towards rising levels of youth delinquency, manifested in gangs such as Teddy-Boys, Mods and Rockers, as well as the rise in violent crime. Indeed, the youth generation of the Long Sixties could certainly be labelled the first truly "permissive" generation. Fashion and music became, paradoxically, both more sexualised. It was becoming increasingly acceptable for young men to grow long hair, and for women to dress in traditionally "male" clothing. Musicians such as the Rolling Stones and Jimi Hendrix were respected for glorifying illegal activities such as drug taking. Extra-marital sex gained increasing acceptability. Crucially, for the first time in Britain's cultural history, it was young people themselves who began to set the trends that they would follow. However, youth culture was not purely hedonistic, as youth found alternative ways to challenge the establishment. One must only regard the long list of student causes of the time, nuclear disarmament, environmental issues (Greenpeace was founded in 1971), women's rights and anti-Vietnam War protests, to argue that this was perhaps the most politicised generation, before or since. This is vindicated by the lowering of the voting age to 18 in 1968. In addition, the changes in fashion and music were often a conscious affront to authority and establishment tradition, and thus were revolutionary in their own way.

In terms of equality and liberalisation regarding women, the law perhaps changed at a faster rate than it has before or since. In 1967, a range of laws were passed that changed the rights of women, and thus their lifestyle, forever. The Family Planning Act, made contraception widely and freely available to all women. This revolutionised the power of women to have a children when, and with whom, they chose. In addition, the sexual freedom that contraception afforded women (equal to that of men), profoundly altered sexual life in Britain forever. Moreover, the Abortion Act legalised abortion of pregnancies up to twenty eight weeks in development, and was an incredible catalyst in changing the lives of women. Two years later, the Divorce Reform Act reconfigured the way in which people perceived marriage, as it now allowed divorce under the looser condition of the "irretrievable breakdown of marriage", which greatly empowered women to end marriages. It also

provided Legal Aid to women applying for divorce, which meant it was no longer beyond the means of the poor. Following this Act, the rate of divorce approximately doubled. By 1964, half a million women were making use of the contraceptive pill, perhaps enabling an attitude towards recreational sex equal to that of men. On the other hand, Geoffrey Gorer's survey (April-May 1969, "Sex and Marriage In England Today") found that 40% of couples did not make use of birth control, and of the 19% of married women using the pill, they were mostly from "younger and wealthier" groups. Gorer also found an immense variety in attitudes towards sexual behaviour, although there was a slow movement, particularly in the middle classes, of changing social mores. The influence of the feminist movement, also began to effect the attitudes of many women, middle class backgrounds. Combined with increasing numbers of women entering higher education, this led to an increasing awareness of the repression of women in the traditionally patriarchal society. The introduction of labour saving devices meant that women were no longer tied to the household, and had greater amounts of free time. This shift in perspective was epitomised by the Equal Pay Act of 1970. The low unemployment rate and growth of service industries following World War II led to an increasing demand for women in the workplace. The Long Sixties represents perhaps the move away from patriarchal culture, what Marwick referred to as "the end of Victorianism", and toward a more egalitarian model (e.g. the changing role of women in the workplace). Britain could not have had a female Prime Minister (Margaret Thatcher) without the change in attitudes experienced during the 1960's. Without doubt, the nature of life for women in the Long Sixties changed completely.

The corner stone of any significant cultural change must surely come from education. If one thing could characterise the changing nature of education during this period, it would be the shift toward a more egalitarian system. In 1944 the Butler Act had set up the Tripartite system as the basis under which state schools would operate in Britain. At the time, this was seen as a revolutionary measure, as it promised an education tailored to young people of all abilities and backgrounds. The principle was that with each person taking standardised tests at the age of eleven, the education system would progress towards a state of equality. However, over the

twenty one years that followed its instatement, it became clear that the system was based not only on raw intellectual ability, but the outcome of the system also reflected the class system it was supposed to disintegrate. Additionally, the so called "parity of esteem" that was alleged to exist between grammar, secondary modern and technical schools, (that each would be treated with equal prestige and value) was widely regarded by employers and the general public as fallacy. Not only were secondary moderns under funded in comparison to grammar schools, but were regarded by the public as inferior. There was a far lower proportion of people to emerge from them with qualifications, and for many professions and Universities, a grammar school education was all but a prerequisite. Children from wealthy backgrounds who "failed" the Eleven Plus test were often simply entered into fee paying schools, were they got the same, if not greater, standard of education that they would at a grammar school. In this way, privilege could be perpetuated from generation to generation. This was seemingly the case until 1965, when Harold Wilson's recently elected Labour government instituted the Comprehensive school system. The principle here was that instead of Tripartite's gradual movement towards social change, the creation of a single type of institution, the Comprehensive school, would bring about a an education system that was entirely meritocratic, in which the trappings of status and upbringing meant nothing, and the most naturally gifted students would be rewarded. Indeed, in many ways, this was a success. From 1957 to 1967, the percentage of people who attended Universities from working class backgrounds rose . It was not, however, the revolution that some may have hoped for. Some grammar schools were allowed to exist alongside comprehensives at the discretion of local councils, and such authorities were perhaps inevitably, in the more affluent areas of the country, reinforcing the idea that such education was primarily the domain of the wealthy.

Private education, and most significantly public schools, were allowed to continue, with all the class divisiveness that implies. To this day, a disparity of academic achievement based upon background exists at all levels of the education system (people from middle class backgrounds are more likely to leave school with qualifications, and go on to higher education), although certainly not the degree to

which it was present prior to these changes. While following governments have indeed experimented, to a very minor extent, with the system, it is still largely intact from the mid-sixties.

When considering, indeed, the rising eminence of "New Age" spiritualism during the period, and the exponential growth in "alternative lifestyles" can not be ignored (Marwick,1998:92). The increasing availability of travel and foreign literature allowed people greater access to the traditions of other cultures. In spite of this, the unorthodox nature of such belief systems, and the peculiar nostalgia attached to them would tend to exaggerate their importance at the time, and draw attention away from the true paradigm of the age: the decline of established monotheistic religion. Of course, what we are really referring to by this is mainstream Christianity. Nevertheless, the snowballing decline in Church attendance far outweighed this. From 1961 to 1971, the number of baptisms per year fell by 65,000, and the number of confirmations decreased. One could argue that the Long Sixties was a very scientific period. The Ban The Bomb symbol became perhaps the iconic image of the decade. Indeed, the existential rationality that pervaded intellectual circles of the time must surely have been seeping into mainstream culture in subtle, yet powerful ways (towards the end of the Sixties, popular music, such as The Beatles' "Strawberry Fields Forever", began to tackle such issues). So, it would seem that Britain over the course of the period, despite its reputation as being a very "spiritual" decade, was a nation in which religion was declining, The social implications of this, as to whether it was an important step in the personal liberation, or the first step in Britain's moral undoing, is very much a matter of individual interpretation and outlook. What seems beyond doubt, however, is that the religious structure of the nation had changed forever, and thus in the context of religion, a cultural revolution certainly did take place.

While these arguments certainly make a compelling case for the occurrence of a cultural revolution it implies that all elements of society were affected by the changes that occurred. Some historians have proposed that instead the Sixties represented a period of continuity. For example,

for much of the working class, life did not significantly change over the Long Sixties. Much of the mainstream press, particularly the tabloids (often the best indicator of mass opinion) remained reactionist, and it would be incredulous to argue that by the early 1970's the majority of Britons had developed an enlightened attitude to homosexuality, race or even women's rights.(Petheram,2001:57)

The women's liberation movement, for example, had its origins pre-First World War. Most damaging, perhaps, to the assertion that a revolution took place is the relatively fast withdrawal of many of the values that it promoted. By 1979, Margaret Thatcher won an election with an image and agenda akin to the early 1950's. Some historians therefore argue that the events of the Sixties could be seen as short term cultural trends, rather than long term social change.

In 1970, Bernard Levin wrote that in the 1960's, "we saw an old world die, and a new one come to birth" (Levin, 1970, 28)This statement explains the nucleus of the debate. In order to accept that a new world was created during this era, then could not the same be said of any decade? No civilisation is unaffected by the passing of time, and no culture exists in absolute stasis for any protracted periods. Thus, could not the term "revolution" be applied to all historical change? So, it would seem preposterous to claim that an absolute cultural revolution took place. The legal and social changes which affected women during this period were profound and the position and role of women had altered dramatically. Not only did the lives of young people change beyond recognition, but the pervasiveness of youth culture into the mainstream had a lasting effect, well beyond the confines of the Long Sixties. The beginnings of secularisation in the late 1950's, in addition to the New Religious Movements that emerged in the 1960's, exacerbated the changing nature of Britain's morality and beliefs. In terms of education, it can not be said that the system was entirely replaced, nor was the class system destroyed. However, in principle, Comprehensive education provided greater social mobility, in terms of class, gender and race. The legal and cultural changes that occurred during the period are still having an impact on contemporary society. For example, the legalisation of homosexuality in 1967 prompted changing attitudes.

While revolution seems an ultimately inappropriate term for the phenomena that occurred, it is crucial not to underestimate the gravity of the changes that took place during the Long Sixties. These changes made room for the plays in theatres, poems and novels in literature briefly in every field.

2. ALAN AYCKBOURN: A BIOGRAPHY

Alan Ayckbourn is one of the world's most popular and prolific Professional playwrights. He has written 74 full length plays and more than 20 other revues and plays for children. He is also an acclaimed director, who Arthur Miller said directed the definitive version of his play *A View from the Bridge*. Alan was born in Hampstead, London, on 12 April, 1939. His mother was Irene Maud Worley – better known as the novelist Mary James - and his father Horace Ayckbourn, lead violinist with the London Symphony Orchestra.

Educated at Haileybury, Alan left school at the age of 17 to pursue a career in the theatre immediately gaining a job with the theatre impresario Sir Donald Wolfit. He was with the company for three weeks as an acting stage manager for the production *The Strong Are Lonely* at the Edinburgh Festival. Alan went on to work at theatres in Worthing, Leatherhead and Oxford, before being employed in 1957 as a stage manager and actor at the Library Theatre, Scarborough.

The Library Theatre had been founded in 1955 by Stephen Joseph and was home to the UK's first professional theatre in the round company, Studio Theatre Ltd. Alan was inspired by Stephen Joseph, who became a mentor to the young man and encouraged him to both write and direct. Alan's first professional writing commission was inadvertently inspired by his acting career when he complained about a role he was playing; Stephen threw down the gauntlet saying that if Alan wanted better roles, he should write one himself. Alan wrote *The Square Cat*. This was a success for the company in the summer of 1959 and Stephen immediately commissioned a second play, *Love After All*, for the winter of 1959.

Alan continued to act and write for the Library Theatre until 1962 when he was involved in the formation of the Victoria Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, with Stephen Joseph and Peter Cheeseman. This was the country's first permanent Professional

theatre in the round and Alan premiered two plays there, *Christmas V Mastermind* and *Mr. Whatnot*. The latter was produced in London in 1964 and received such a critical mauling that Alan retreated to the BBC in Leeds as a radio drama producer where he worked between 1964 and 1970.

Alan continued writing, though, and produced *Meet My Father* for the Library Theatre in 1965. This would be a turning point in his life. In 1967, the play retitled *Relatively Speaking* – opened in the West End and was a phenomenal hit. It launched him into the public eye and in quick succession, plays such as *How The Other Half Loves*, *Absurd Person Singular* and *The Norman Conquests*, established Alan Ayckbourn as one of the country's most popular and successful playwrights. As of 2010, he has written 74 full length plays, more than half of which have transferred to either the West End or the National Theatre. At one point in 1975, he held the record for having the most professional productions being performed simultaneously in the West End (*The Norman Conquests*, *Absurd Person Singular* and *Absent Friends*). His work has been translated into more than 35 languages and his plays are regularly performed throughout the world.

Stephen Joseph died in 1967 and Alan, alongside Ken Boden, Alfred Bradley and Rodney Wood, worked together to keep the Library Theatre alive. Although Alan was closely involved with the theatre during this period, both writing, directing and choosing plays for the company, he would not formally become Artistic Director until 1972. Apart from a two year hiatus between 1986 and 1988 when he became a visiting director at the National Theatre, he remained Artistic Director until retiring from that role on 31 March 2009.

Concurrent to this, Alan's directing career also flourished. He directed his first play in 1961, *Gaslight*, at the Library Theatre and in 1967, for the first time directed the world premiere of one of his own plays, *The Sparrow*. Since 1967 he has directed the world premieres of all his plays and since 1977, he has directed all the West End premieres of his plays. Since 1961, Alan has directed more than 260 productions and is considered one of the world's pre-eminent directors of in the round staging.

He is hugely committed to theatre-in-the-round, for which he has written the majority of his plays. It is always worth remembering that when he stages a play in London or they are performed in the proscenium arch, it is a step away from the author's original intention. It has frequently been stated that the definitive production of Alan's plays is the premiere production in the round in Scarborough, where he has premiered all but four of his plays.

Alan Ayckbourn has received more than 35 awards and honours including two Oliviers, a Tony, two Molières and Lifetime Achievement Awards from both the Variety Club of Great Britain and the Writers' Guild of Great Britain. He was the 1992 Cameron Mackintosh Professor of Contemporary Theatre at Oxford University and is also the recipient of a Montblanc de la Culture Award for Europe for 'establishing a thriving theatrical tradition in Scarborough and for his dedication and commitment to it'. Recently, he was inducted into American Theater's Hall of Fame and has received both a SOLT Special Award at the Laurence Olivier Awards and a Special Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Theatre. The holder of a number of honorary degrees, he was appointed a CBE in 1987 and in 1997 was knighted for services to the theatre.

His plays have been regularly staged in America and more than 10 have been produced on Broadway and Off-Broadway. In 1975 he held the record for having the most plays simultaneously running on Broadway (*The Norman Conquests and Absurd Person Singular*). However, he would probably consider his greatest success in the States came in 2005, when he took his Scarborough Company to the 59E59 Theaters' Brits Off Broadway Festival to present *Private Fears In Public Places*. The month-long run was an unprecedented success receiving great acclaim from audiences and critics alike. The New York Times proclaimed it "altogether wonderful" and the cast "flawless". In 2007, his production of *Intimate Exchanges* also toured to the Festival where it broke box office records at 59E59 Theaters and received a Drama Desk nomination for Outstanding Play.

In February 2006, Alan suffered a stroke leading to the announcement in June 2007 that he would step down as the Artistic Director of the Stephen Joseph

Theatre. He would officially step down in 2009 but is committed to continuing to premiere and produce plays at the venue in the future.

2009 marked the 50th anniversary and saw another acclaimed transfer to the Brits Off Broadway festival in New York with *My Wonderful Day*. The Old Vic also transferred its production of *The Norman Conquests* to Broadway where it won a number of awards including a Tony for Best Revival. In 2010, Alan will premiere his latest play *Life Of Riley* at the Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough (www.alanayckbourn.net).

3. SUMMARY OF THE PLAYS

3.1. Relatively Speaking

Greg and Ginny are a young modern couple, living together, who have arrived at that time in their relationship when a more lasting arrangement, marriage, is desired. To accomplish this, Ginny sets out for her former lover's home in the country to retrieve their letters. However, she pretends to Greg that she is going to her parents' home. Greg, a bit suspicious, follows after. In turn, each of them is welcomed into the country home, and a carefully involved series of misunderstandings is deftly played out. The tricks of the "game" and our pleasure is in the way the "parents," Philip and Sheila, inadvertently take up roles thrust upon them. Philip is the older ex-boss, who Ginny is trying to escape from; and Sheila, his wife, is simply in the basic British manner too polite to throw them all out!

What was it that made this seemingly lightweight play so durably popular? With hindsight, one can see that the play anticipates Ayckbourn's later preoccupation with uncomprehending husbands and neglected wives, with quietly rotting marriages and adulterous sex. But the basic truth is that the play is a sensational piece of comic craftsmanship which takes a simple misunderstanding a man who mistakes his girlfriend's lover and lover's wife for parents and keeps it unbelievably afloat for a couple of hours.

The problem for both author and actor is how to make that fist scene humorous and engaging as well as informative. It is not very easy; though Ayckbourn uses innumerable devices of comedy. The play is both a delicate conjuring trick and something based on a kind of human truth, however theatrically magnified. Ayckbourn also plays on a very English phenomenon: the nervousness of the guest encounters politeness of the host.

Watching or reading the play, one is constantly caught between two emotions: delight in what Coleridge called a "playwith", a mechanically ingenious toy, and admiration for the way Ayckbourn psychologically motivates the misunderstandings: not merely through Greg's immaturity but also through Philip's treatment of his wife as if she were a second-hand car and through Sheila's attempt to

stimulate her husband's suspicions by having special letters delivered to her on a Sunday morning. Machinery alone never makes one laugh. The play's complexities only work because Philip is unfaithful, because Sheila is trying to foster his jealousy and because the communication gap between them is so large that a total stranger can pass through it virtually undetected.

Ayckbourn also very subtly uses the complexities and comic role-playing to reveal the truth about the marriage of Philip and Sheila. Greg, who still believes he is talking to his fiancée's parents, starts to tell them about Ginny's past affair with a married man. Philip, still playing the role of Ginny's father, finds himself having to defend the behaviour of the married man (himself). Sheila, cast unwillingly in the role of mother, finds herself attacking it:

- SHEILA : Poor girl. Did you hear that, Philip? Poor girl.
- PHILIP : Yes. I was just going to say that there were probably two sides.
- SHEILA : Nothing but selfishness on his, I should think.
- PHILIP : I don't know.
- SHEILA : I do.
- PHILIP : How do you mean?
- SHEILA : It's obvious. I mean, what could he offer her?
- PHILIP : It depends on what sort of man he was.
- SHEILA : I can't see that that makes an awful lot of difference.
- PHILIP : If he was, say, for instance, a rather remarkable man.
- SHEILA : If he was all that remarkable, he wouldn't be carrying on behind his wife's back, would he?
- PHILIP : Unless he had a singularly unremarkable wife.
- SHEILA : Probably his fault if she was. Presumably he was quite happy with her when he married her.
- PHILIP : Perhaps she proved a bit of a disappointment though. Pretended to be something she wasn't and turned out quite different.
- SHEILA : He probably did the same to her.
- PHILIP : That's possible (Billington, 1990:24-25).

By any standards, this is the first-rate dramatic irony. Philip is discussing their marriage directly: Sheila quite indirectly. But both are disclosing their real feelings about each other. Ayckbourn, on the whole an observer of human weaknesses rather than a conscious moralist, comes close to judging Philip as a selfish, philandering prig. Ayckbourn is not, as his later work proves, hostile to adultery, merely to the egoistic exploitation of one human being by another. Ayckbourn himself says of this play that 'character plays a fairly secondary role in it'. Not even the best-oiled comic machine can function, however, without characterisation.

One of the marvels of this play is that all the misunderstandings stem from some recognisable traits. Philip is just sufficiently suspicious of his wife's putative lover, Sheila is just sufficiently undetermined in an upper-middle-class kind of way, Greg is just sufficiently unsophisticated for their behaviours to have an unforced plausibility. And Ginny is just enough of a liar to set the whole plot spinning. She lies about the phone calls, the flowers, the chocolates, the address on the cigarette packet and thereby gives all that follows a dotty logic. Indeed for Ayckbourn, the play represents a major advance into theatrical maturity. It is an elegant, delightful construct.

In this early play, the action and the outcome are relatively sunny. Deceit is the mainspring of the plot. It is initiated by Ginny, though she might be forgiven her white lies to Greg as she sets out to do the right thing. Sheila tells whoppers too; she suspects her husband of philandering and has invented a lover by sending letters to herself. Sheila's game of deception, devised to deflect the cruelty of her husband's suspected adultery, is a comic counterpoint to Ginny's and it keeps the action going. Phillip only half believes in her affair. 'I mean, of the two people who live in this house, you are the only one who ever gets letters on a Sunday. It is on a Sunday – who ever heard of letters on a Sunday?' what fun when this man, himself an arch deceiver, is introduced to a fresh faced young man who has apparently come to ask for his wife's hand in marriage.

Throughout the whole action there is never a moment when Phillip, or Greg, or Sheila can be sure which of the four characters know who is in what state of

sexual or marital relation. Ayckbourn manages, with the most thorough use of dramatic irony in any English comedy, to keep the two couples guessing for the entire play who wants, or loves or has bedded whom. Confusion piles upon confusion until the older couple are waving goodbye to the youngsters.

For example, when the confused Greg makes his first appearance, he gains his entry by his partial answers to natural first inquiries. Audience knows that he has come to ask the parents for Ginny's hand:

GREG: After a tentative pause Hallo.

SHEILA: Startled} Oh. Oh—Hallo there.

GREG: Hallo.

SHEILA: Are you... er?

GREG: I beg your pardon?

SHEILA: Were you wanting to see someone?

GREG: Yes.

SHEILA: My husband?

GREG: Not....altogether.

SHEILA: Me?

GREG: Partly.

SHEILA: Oh, well then (White, 1984:30).

What little is said is sufficient for the entry to be made and the misunderstandings to begin. In no time they are chatting away about delphiniums, and so forth, but every once in a while the "chat" abruptly halts and they quickly check each other as to who is who ("This is the Willows, isn't it," Greg asks), and then somehow the charade continues. Our delight is in watching the deft balancing act that farce demands in which truth and untruth somehow manage to side step each other.

However the lay finishes with some twenty line that are breathtaking in the way they threaten and overturn the comfortable comic conclusion. Watching the young couple leave Sheila says 'quite wrong for each other of course, it'll be a

disastrous marriage but great fun for them while it lasts'. She casts a shadow over our happy ending, for we suspect that her cynical assessment may be right. She is after all speaking from bitter personal experience. And her remarks are given a very cruel ring when Phillip discovers that the slippers found under Ginny's bed are not his after all. Could it be that Ginny has cruelly deceived everyone and that poor Greg is as cheated upon as Phillip was? It is a black moment indeed. But the audience is scarcely given the chance to digest its unpleasant implications. 'I was just wondering how that poor boy was going to make out', says Sheila. 'Never mind that... whose are these?' demands he has been deceived, in a penultimate line that almost darkens the play beyond comedy. Magically, Ayckbourn rescues the mood with a lively final return from the cheated wife- 'wouldn't you like to know!'

Philip becomes quite intense about the wife whom he believes he is losing: "She costs me thirty quid a week to run and that doesn't include over-heads." When the suitor, Greg, presents the facts about his income, it does startle Philip. He is even more taken back when Greg says that "she" has had other lovers—even "some bloke who's old enough to be her father." To Philip that means someone around seventy, which makes his wife Sheila even more of a remarkable mystery! Appropriately enough, the first act ends with Ginny arriving, again with the same tenuous but trusting reception by Sheila.

The glitter continues in act 2 with the confrontation between Philip and his ex-mistress, Ginny. For the first time in the play we have the "novelty" of being with two people who really do know who and what they are talking about. No miscues here: Ginny is quite direct she wants out of the affair. Philip still has ideas of maintaining his hold, but this becomes even more doubtful when Ginny introduces him to Greg as her father and, nonplussed, Philip has to accept the charade.

Scene 2 of the second act presents a major challenge to the playwright since now everyone except Sheila "believes" the father-daughter business —and yet conversations with Sheila must still, somehow, make sense. We run along this narrow edge for a little while, waiting for the ultimate drop; and then, abruptly, Sheila says to Ginny: "were you born in London or in the country?" Here, very wisely, Ayckbourn reverts to stage business to save the day: Ginny chokes terribly on her

coffee and in the ensuing melee the question is forgotten. The situation remains, nevertheless, and Sheila finally blurts out to Greg that Ginny is not her daughter. The farce formula—which is well worked here—remains, however, to stave off the truth. Earlier, Ginny had allowed Greg to assume that she was an illegitimate daughter. What follows now between the earnest Greg and the confused Sheila is an excellent comic scene in which he berates her "irresponsibility":

GREG: It's about time you tried to come to terms with this, isn't it?

SHEILA: I'm afraid I don't follow you.

GREG: Why, why, why turn your back on it? Ignore something that happened over twenty years ago? What's the point? (White, 1984:32)

Greg's "moral lesson" for Sheila is completely lost, however, since she still has no idea what he is talking about. Four times she has told this young man that Ginny is not her daughter, and the net result for Greg is to believe that he is hearing a mother's adamant rejection of her illegitimate child. The full comic force of the scene is made even better by the two "joining in" in their sadness for the deplorable situation. Note in the following that Sheila's comments are simply polite interjections (basic English polite concern) in the most objective sense:

GREG. (Getting excited) What do you think it's like to grow up in this sort of atmosphere? No wonder she came near to ruining her life. With a father who's a moral schizophrenic and a mother who refuses to admit her existence at all.

SHEILA: Oh, poor girl.

GREG: Yes, poor girl.

SHEILA: I didn't know. How terrible. GREG. You do see that, then?

SHEILA: Oh yes. I do. No wonder.

GREG: Yes.

SHEILA: It is irresponsible, isn't it? People of that sort really shouldn't have children at all, should they?

GREG: They haven't faced up to it, that's what it is.

SHEILA: Indeed they haven't

GREG: You get what I'm driving at?

SHEILA: Oh yes, I do. I do. I do.

GREG: Fine.

SHEILA: I'm not her mother though. {Moving off terrace} Please let's get that straight (White, 1984:32-33).

While the so-called absolute truths are being jockeyed around, the always engaging relative truths are being warmly maintained in conversations that lead nowhere. The trick is to have the "private" remarks hold enough double meanings so that each believes what he wants to believe of the other. It is as if two people strike a bargain and each walks away, saying "Yes," "Yes"—and yet nothing is really agreed upon. When Greg and Philip finally have their talk, and Greg asks if he (the supposed father of Ginny) knows about the two of them, "me and her," Philip believes that he is referring to an affair between Greg and his wife, Sheila. He answers with a ready, "Oh yes" and that allows the entire comic scene to be played out with each following his own truth of things.

Eventually, everything turns out the right way: Greg goes off with his Ginny, and the scheming Philip is cowed by the wise and patient Sheila. One last bit of irony is the doubt in Philip's mind as to how many other men were his rivals during his affair with Ginny.

The outcome is relatively cheerful. The new lovers leave, seizing each other and those charging letters, seemingly heading towards some sort of happiness; the old couple looks as if they will continue their statue of awkward suspect.

Nevertheless, all the domestic circles—the proper ones that is—snap shut again; and at the curtain we are left peacefully in the country again waiting for the inevitable chain of over politeness, British reticence, and mistaken identities to play itself out again. Such is the charm of the well-wrought farce

3.2. How The Other Half Loves

With Ayckbourn's next major play, *How The Other Half Loves* (first seen Scarborough in July 1969 and at the Lyric Theatre, London, in August 1970) theme and technique mesh. Audience can remember it as the 'dinner-party play' the one in

which a couple of timorous guests are seen dining simultaneously in two different households on successive evenings.

The play opens with the two couples the Fosters and Phillipses readying for breakfast and the ritual departure for work. They move in and out unaware, of course, of the others. Immediately, we have the contrast, in high humor, of the way they live. Frank Foster comes running in with his sweat suit to finish his jogging. He does a comical bit of business with the timer as he continues to jog in place, moving it ahead periodically so that his time will be up. Finally, it rings and he collapses on the couch. His wife, Fiona, meanwhile, waltzes in and out elegantly unmoved by his actions. The two exchange pleasantries on the day's routine: who will have the car, and so forth. Characteristically, Frank is absentminded, Fiona is patient and abiding. Morning at the Phillipses is another matter entirely, best described as organized hostility. A very obscene, bleary-eyed Bob Phillips nearly falls into the set, shouting for his coffee. Teresa indifferently tells him where he can find it; Bob complains of the service and cries a bit more, somewhat in company with baby Benjy (offstage) who has his own way of demanding service "beating on the floor with his wet diaper." We have a fairly good idea of the levels of devotion involved as breakfast is quickly served up; in this case, a lone peanut butter sandwich on a plate. Bob throws it across the room.

Teresa is very upset, she cannot cope, Benjy is too much (currently, pouring prunes over his head), no groceries in the house, and most of all, she wants to know "where the hell" Bob was last night. He attempts to evade an answer but finally makes up the story that he was with one of his co-workers, William Featherstone, who fears his wife, Mary, is having an affair. Teresa only partly believes this, knowing Mary to be a very meek, quiet person.

While the others are out, the two conspirators, the love pair of "last night," Bob and Fiona, manage a hurried phone call. Bob relays the excuse that he has given. When Fiona is equally pressed by Frank on the same question "What did happen last night?", she hurriedly gives the same excuse with a variation. She says she was comforting Mary Featherstone because Mary suspects William has another woman.

The elements of essential farce are fairly well joined here. Bob and Fiona have their respective quick lies; Teresa and Frank have the suitable doubts and speculations. Teresa acts quickly on hers and calls Mary and invites the couple to dinner tomorrow, Friday night. At the same time, in the Foster household, Frank announces in all innocence that he has invited the Feather-stones to dinner tonight, Thursday. He has had plans to promote William and now wonders about the so-called affair. Fiona, understandably, begins to squirm. The scene concludes with a marvelous bit of business in which both housewives sit poised on their kitchen chairs, holding pads and pencils, and planning the two quite different meals:

FIONA: Dinner at eight. Mmmm.

TERESA: Mmm.

FIONA: Thoughtfully Avocado.

TERESA: Can of chicken broth.

FIONA: Veal.

TERESA: Chopped chuck.

FIONA: Endives.

TERESA: Brussel sprouts.

FIONA: Sour cream.

TERESA: Frozen french fries.

FIONA: Zabaglione.

TERESA: Jello.

FIONA: Chablis.

TERESA: Booze!

BOTH: Coffee (Ayckbourn, 1986:36).

The two dinners. Scene 2 displays simultaneous two dinners, the Fosters of Thursday evening and the Phillipsees of Friday evening. More, however, is needed than simply adroit farcical acting to pull it off. Ayckbourn's clever script serves admirably. We have, for example, the stark contrasts of the two social levels in the way the table is spread; Fiona neatly places folded napkins so they stand up; Teresa

simply walks around the table carrying a paper roll towel with which she unceremoniously tears off the required number. The Featherstones arrive Mary, exceedingly shy and William a bit more confident and are greeted in turn by Fiona and Teresa. Bob had previously stomped out of the house for the nearest bar upon learning what Teresa was up to. He accuses her of trying "to settle their marriage over dinner."

When Frank finally joins the guests, he adopts the playful posture of the "earnest suitor" after Mary's affections, a bit of misdirected lightness which completely befuddles the shy Mary. Frank shifts to another approach, plants himself between William and Mary on the couch, one arm around each, and proceeds in Dutch Uncle fashion to make a plea for marriage:

You know, I'd like to say something to you both and you can take it as you will. My wife and I we've been married well, it was our anniversary yesterday for God knows how many years. And there are times when acrimony creeps in. In other words we drive each other up the wall. And it is at times like these I say to myself, Frank, it's better than nothing. And the older you get, the better it is and the bigger the nothing. So my advice is, stick it out. Stick it out. Don't do things now that you're going to regret when you get too old like me to want to do them anymore. Pause And that's all I have to say on the matter. Cheers. Toasts them (Ayckbourn, 1986: 42).

Matters now revert to the other dinner going on with the Phillipses. When William confesses to Teresa that he drinks sparingly, she is convinced now that Bob has been lying about his "evening out," supposingly consoling William at the bar. While the guests watch open mouthed, Teresa blithely puts Bob's dishes and silverware on a tray, goes to the front door and throws everything out. A bit wild by now, Teresa turns to the Featherstones and announces that, nevertheless, she will serve a nice dinner, that she will be "permissively modern" while "in the absence of our lord and master, who is probably groveling on the floor with some topless hostess by now."

As the Featherstones sit at the table, actually at two tables, they are in continual need of their swivel chairs. For example, everytime Teresa slams the

kitchen door and returns to the table, the Feather, stones quickly swivel to face her. And when that scene is over, they quickly swivel around to face Fiona or Frank Foster for another scene. Split second timing keeps the farce swinging back and forth, from Teresa's near mania to the extreme diffidence and politeness of the Fosters.

The evening finally reaches an uproarious ending with the return of the half-drunk Bob, now insulated against all further matrimonial adjustments with a coat full of beer cans. William backs away, resists the proffered beer, while Mary simply tries to hide somewhere from Bob's insistent greeting: "There's Mary the mouse. Hello Mary the mouse, how are you?" Teresa threatens violence as Bob continues to berate the guests. Finally she returns from the kitchen with the tureen of soup and, aiming at Bob, throws it on William instead. The Phillipses run out screaming at each other. The physical counterpart to William's adventures with the soup is provided for in the companion scene at the Foster dinner. There, his dowsing is explained by a leaking faucet in the upstairs bath, the faucet which has had most of Frank's attentions during the dinner in his inept attempts to be the "handy plumber."

The morning after. The second act opens with familiar morning activities in both households, Frank jogging, Bob bleary eyed, searching for coffee. This time, however, the sign above the door accounts for Teresa: "Goodbye forever." She has left with the baby. Surprisingly, Mary arrives at Bob's to help out; she is following William's advice to get out and be more social. An amusing scene follows in which Bob frightens Mary by quickly accepting her solicitations and then ordering her to clean the house. All Mary can do is to retreat again "I ought to go" as he advances on her with mop and bucket (Aycbourn, 2007:48). He suggests they have an earnest, frank talk about their respective marriages. Mary inches closer to the door. Bob pulls his belt off and snaps it before her. Completely frightened by now, Mary screams, grabs the bucket and mop, and runs into the kitchen.

At the Fosters we find Teresa and the baby as early morning visitors. While Frank rambles on about this and that in his own home life he manages, to reveal enough about Fiona's "missing act" last Wednesday night to ring the requisite bell with Teresa. She now knows about Bob and Fiona, and uses her advantage to drop a

few cutting lines for Fiona's benefit, and bewilderment. More confusions follow befitting a farce: Frank calls Bob and on getting Mary instead assumes that these two are the lovers. He calls William to come to his house, supposedly to fix the drain. Back at the Phillipses, things have taken a different turn. Teresa has returned home. Somehow, they both turn on the hapless Mary. Bob complains of her dusting: "In five minutes you've undone years of her Teresa's work"(Aycbourn, 2007:39). Teresa complains that the change in her nice jumble of news clippings into a neat pile is outrageous. The Phillipses begin another round of fighting in which the obvious sexual overtones completely bewilder Mary. Finally, Bob throws Teresa over his shoulder and heads for another room. The verbal assault continues:

BOB: You stupid bitch.

TERESA: Dirty bastard. "just before they go into the kitchen to Mary Honey, you won't wake Benjamin, will you?"(Aycbourn, 1986:28)

The final scene could be called the "reconciliation," as Frank gathers everyone in his home on the following Sunday morning. In quick order, the mismatches are unmatched and some truth and order are restored. The meek Mary even secures an apology from husband William. When he begins to splutter and cough and cannot quite say it, the wiser Mary explains: "It's very difficult for him. You see, he's never been wrong before." All leave; and now alone with Fiona, Frank realizes that there is still one question unanswered. This time Fiona chooses the direct approach and disarms Frank completely by simply revealing the truth. The cleverness of the scene is in the fact that she says it in such a polite way that she draws out an equal politeness (the characteristic English diffidence) from the absentminded Frank. When she says, "It really wasn't anything... He was really nothing compared to you," Frank is actually complimented—and forgives her. Shrewd to the last, Fiona withholds the man's name "not important" and Frank accepts.

The critics. Irving Wardle, writing in the London Times, conceded that everything in the play depends on "the manipulation of incidence." Unlike other comic playwrights who "hedge their bets" with "social relevance or psychological comment" when the laughs fail, Aycbourn puts all his considerable effort into

incident. "The fun he offers," continues Wardle, "is akin to watching a house of cards continually in danger of collapse." ⁸ The play was a great success in London, continuing for over two years. I have seen two productions, the original in London starring Robert Morley (Frank), and a college production in Rhode Island. I cite these two to indicate that the play as farce does not depend wholly on the expertness of the company to provide an entertaining evening. There is, in other words, certainly more to the play than what the cleverest professional company can bring out. At its base the play is essentially a series of very clever arrangements and incidents all the handiwork of a crafty playwright.

There are a number of small effects which are deftly worked out by Ayckbourn for maximum humor. For example, in the first scene, Fiona attempts to place a call to Bob and is prevented when Teresa instead picks up the phone. At the same moment Frank returns to the room, so Fiona gives the time aloud as if she had just called for it—and hurriedly hangs up. At the Phillipses Teresa says a woman called.

BOB: Woman?

TERESA: Yes. Told me the time and hung up.

BOB: Oh

TERESA: Aren't you supposed to call them?

BOB: Usually. Was she abusive . . . made lewd suggestions?

No. She was a couple of minutes fast. . . . (Ayckbourn, 1986:8).

This is a small moment, but it is effective and carefully arranged. There are other similar moments in the play, and the trick with Ayckbourn seems to be to rely on the sly recombination of apparently straightforward movements.

Clive Barnes, reviewing the New York production which successfully starred Phil Silvers as Frank, talked of "the theatrical adroitness of the author . . . which is as clever as tennis at its best. On the other hand, Walter Kerr, while acknowledging the excellence of Silvers and Sandy Dennis (Teresa), considered the play only "a strategy." "The error of the occasion," he maintained, "is the plot, which is simply a stock tale of suburban infidelity without any other comic nuance to put a

sparkle in its eye." It could well be that the essential British character of the play was not apparent enough in the New York production, according to Kerr. Certainly, Kerr is thoroughly aware of those disarming mannerisms in theatre which are characteristically British. Ayckbourn would be at a loss without them.

Everything about the upper-class Fosters depends on the couple's extreme genteelness. The condition provides exactly the right frame of basic awkwardness and absentmindedness within which Frank can properly stumble. All the business, for example, about the electric toothbrush that he is forever trying to fix and the upstairs plumbing leaks, which he makes worse, serve to, define an essentially British character. True, the comic elements are sufficient to apply anywhere; however, the difference here is that we have an automatic depth of characterization where ordinarily a stick figure would do as well. The very fact that Fiona is able successfully to "tell all" (up to a point) at the end of the play and get away with it is the clearest mark of the convenient genteelness and unflappability of the British.

The success of *How the Other Half Loves* depends on the cleverness of Ayckbourn's daring stage conception, two family settings literally superimposed upon each other. Two pairs of actors walk deftly around each other playing out their own scenes unaware of the others. The fun, of course, is that we are invitingly aware of the trick, particularly when the two stories quickly merge along the lines of the standard farce. The set, therefore, demands a rather careful consideration. At first glance it appears to be a normal arrangement of a living room on one side and a dining room on the other. The entrance is in the middle upstage. However, on a closer look at the published sketch, we see that various pieces of furniture are marked for the respective family member. For example, the Foster sofa is handy to the Foster telephone, and the Philips chair handy to the Phillips telephone all necessary for the somewhat tricky telephone business from one family to the other. The dining table chairs are marked the same way, with the additional clever business of having two rotate chairs for the guests who sit at two dinners at the same time.

3.3. Time And Time Again

You can see this borne out in *Time and Time Again* which had its summer debut in Scarborough in July 1971 and which appeared at the Comedy Theatre in August 1972 with Tom Courtenay memorably in the lead. For the action begins at a post-funeral tea party in a suburban garden. Graham (dogmatic know-all) and Anna (his clamped-down wife) are giving a little do after the funeral. The party is for Peter, one of Graham's employees who has helped with the funeral arrangements. Peter is a muscular sports fanatic who brings along his delectable fiancée, Joan, and what is clear is that propriety of the occasion is merely a mask for all kinds of sexual competition. Graham, aborn dirty old man, has clearly arranged the tea party so that he can make a pass at Joan. Meanwhile Graham's live-in brother-in-law, Leonard, an underachiever who sits in the garden is communing with a gnome while the others are all having tea in the conservatory, also gets hooked on Joan. Indeed he accepts Peter's invitation to play cricket with the East Pendon Occasionals purely to get close to her. The mainspring of the plot shows Leonard pinching Peter's girl from him while all the time making him think that Graham is the guilty party. The sexual cockfight that is the play's running theme stems from an occasion intended to pay tribute to the burial of an old woman, Leonard's mother.

It is not, however, simply a wry comedy about vacant rituals. On one level, it is also a play about the absurdity and vanity of masculine competition and an endorsement of the luckless Peter's remark that 'there's more to life than winning trophies'. The three men in the play are all in pusuit of the same woman; and she very sanely abandons all of them. Ayckbourn exposes the dottiness of their behaviour; but suggests that, if you do compete, it is better to be a luckless, accident-prone thickie like Peter or a congenital no-hoper like Leonard than a nastly little thruster like Graham. Ayckbourn, a natural winner of trophies in his chosen field, always displays a humane, likeable and civilised sympathy for life's also-rans. That however, is the obligatory 'nut of message' which David Hare once suggested all modern dramatists felt obliged to put in their plays. At a deeper level, Ayckbourn is also tackling a theme which he was to develop in later plays: the casual

destructiveness of the innocent. This theme is embodied in the fascinating figure of Leonard.

Outwardly Leonard 'a comic suburban Hamlet', Peter Lewis dubbed him in the Daily Mail is harmless, defenceless, naive, someone who talks to gnomes, quotes poetry and one taught English, History, Religious instruction and 'had a rather attractive line in nature walks'. But he is also the play's agent of disruption. Within a few minutes of meeting Peter he has, in a spasm of koke sparring, landed him a blow in the stomach. Peter, tinkering with a jammed mower, then gets his fingers stuck in the blades while Leonard pulls the mower gently backwards. When it comes to the marvellous, of-stage cricket match in the second scene, Leonard is no less destructive: in his outsize flannels and undersize boots, he looks helplessly comic, but when fielding he hangs on to the ball while declaring his love for Joan, irritatedly chucks it back in and finds he has hit Peter on the knee.

Simply to annoy his voyeuristic brother-in-law, Leonard persuades Joan to stick her tongue out at him. She does so and Graham, in sheer disbelief, chokes on his sandwich. Not, coldly described on the page, a major piece of comic invention. But it kept the audience laughing for a good half-minute partly because of its sheer improbability (pretty girl sticks out tongue at her boy friend's boss) and partly because it sprang directly from character. It would not be funny if just anyone did it. It was funny because it sprang from Leonard's mischievousness and Graham's leering nosiness. But it is also a mark of Ayckbourn's technique that he builds on this gang so that, when Leonard and Joan return to the conservatory, Graham wantonly and cruelly brings up the fact that Leonard was once thrown out by his wife, bag and baggage. Achill infects the spring air as for a moment, Leonard falls uncharacteristically silent.

Emotionally, he is no less the innocent destroyer. There is nothing malicious or ill-intentioned about Leonard: he simply produces chaos. His covert affair with Joan reduces Peter to a mooning wreck, turns Graham into a full-time, binocular-toting spy ('He's hardly been to work at all', complains his wife) and ultimately leads Peter into an attempted strangulation of his boss.

To Graham's gruff remark that Leonard does not believe "in wasting time," Leonard calls attention to his brother-in-law's drinking: "It's a funeral you've been to, you know, not a launching." The wide, unimpassable gulf between these two is well demonstrated by the following brief exchange in which Leonard's characteristic tone is playful and Graham's, matter of fact:

LEONARD: [Asked how they cut the grass in the Navy] We used to paint it blue, instead.

GRAHAM: Blue?

LEONARD: The grass. It was a secret Admiralty device to run the enemy aground.

GRAHAM: Puzzled I never heard of them doing that.

LEONARD: It was just an experiment.

GRAHAM: Shaking his head I never heard of that.

LEONARD: They had to abandon it eventually. It confused the R.A.F. When they flew over it, they weren't sure which way up they were. Half the bomber commands were flying upside down at one time.

GRAHAM: I don't believe that for a minute. You're making the whole thing up. That's a pack of lies.

LEONARD: That's just what the Air Ministry said (Aycbourn, 1973:2).

Leonard and Graham are natural adversaries: Leonard "a pale, alert, darting sort of man" is sensitive, quixotic always has a pat for Bernard, the garden gnome and exceedingly private; whereas Graham is coarse, blustery, and seems to have a perpetual leer for a pretty leg. His sensible wife, Anna, understands him too well and continually acts as the buffer between Graham's gross limitations and the real world. Graham's present "involvement" is with the young and pretty Joan, fiancée of his employee, Peter. "Involvement" for Graham, of course, means the usual sly tricks and risqué remarks, which flavour their afternoon tea together following the funeral. Obvious to all is that Graham is characteristically all smoke and no fire.

Leonard chooses to have his tea in the conservatory, since he has been warned by Graham not to do a repeat of last week not to "tell his life story," and also "no more poetry recitals either." A clever comic scene is established when Peter brings tea out to Leonard in the glassed conservatory enclosure where they are still able to see and react to the others in the house. Graham, alone with Joan, plays up to her, pats her leg above the knee "Some men have all the luck, eh?", and continues to bother her as she calmly protests. Leonard, highly incensed, sees all of this and tries to alert Peter, but every time he calls his attention to it, Graham takes his hand away.

Peter admits, however, that he trusts Joan completely even if they are apart a lot. He explains to Leonard that they must because "basically we're violently jealous people." Peter confides that he once had to fight three rounds with a rival; and over Leonard's objections, says bluntly that it settled things. There was no grudge; the man left the country he had the better reach. To illustrate, they spar a bit, and Leonard is easily convinced of Peter's athletic prowess. Long arms, he muses, would win all the girls, even if "not the usual dimension a woman looks for in a lover." Peter urges Leonard to join his cricket team but Leonard backs off, reminding him what he has taught "English, history, religion, nature walks, no games."

PETER:Pity I can't persuade you to play cricket, though. You live practically on the field. All you've got to do is jump that fence. . .

LEONARD:That's the bit that deters me (Aycbourn, 1973:4).

For all his physical ability, Peter is, seemingly, prone to accidents, as the play bears out. He too tries his hand with the reluctant mower and gets his fingers jammed. Leonard frees him and sends him off into the house for some first aid. Leonard eventually finds himself alone with Joan in the garden, and introductions are made all around, including Bernard, the gnome. During their conversation, Graham sits in the window, munching a sandwich, and watching them like a hawk. Joan complains that he is always staring at her, even in church. Leonard has the ready answer to all this harassment; he smiles and waves to the bug-eyed Graham who can hear nothing through the glass: "Stop staring, you great bald headed twit." He even urges Joan, who catches the spirit, to stick her tongue out at Graham. She does—and Graham nearly chokes. Leonard rolls in the grass.

The hesitant hero. Apart from the usual Ayckbourn suburban mishaps, the real attraction of the play lies in the character of Leonard. Here we have a genuine misfit, as a central character, someone so passive that he even allows himself to be locked out when he discovers his wife with another man. We find him in the play devoid of some of the usual life supports — without wife, three children, and job. And yet Ayckbourn makes Leonard a fascinating character to watch, as he wanders in his desultory way through his sister's home and garden, constantly setting his brother-in-law on edge; and in his own inimical way about to fall in love with Joan, the assumed "property" of another man, a very muscular other man, reportedly violently jealous. There are enough elements here for standard farce and, in addition, with some very skilful manoeuvring on the author's part, some rare opportunities to search the mind of a hesitant hero, a kind of bumbling Hamlet in oversized cricket flannels.

In his quest of Joan, as the action of the play continues, Leonard consents to join Peter's cricket team. Entirely out of character but with a hang-dog persistency, he shows up with borrowed flannels to do his bit in the adjoining recreational field. As created by Tom Courtenay, the resultant picture of expert ineptness is marvellously complete and, according to the critics, hilariously funny. As Felix Barker of the Evening News wrote, "The line 'there is definitely something wrong with those trousers' is not exactly a dazzling epigram. Yet it produces a gale of laughter. "4 Leonard tells Joan that if he does appear ridiculous "There's no need to laugh", it is only for her. And when he adds that he loves her, she puts him off by being whimsical. "I don't know," she says. "It's a sunny day, the pollen count is high, there's nobody else much around at the moment. . . . I don't know. Your elegant flannels have gone to your head. . . . "

Nevertheless, Joan becomes sympathetic to Leonard's plight. She hears the entire story of his marriage breakup. Of course, all these signs of concern thoroughly confuse Graham, who watches them intently and keeps yelling to his wife, Anna, to witness what they are up to next. "She was stroking his face," Graham reports, and is hardly calmed when Anna reasons that she was probably applying sun tan oil. The preparation for the game continues and Peter arrives from the field (barely visible on

stage) and says that Leonard is up next. Leonard struggles awkwardly with his new studded cricket boots and somehow manages, to the running accompaniment of Graham's coarse jokes and Anna's encouragements "he should always wear white", to go off with Peter to the game. A good comic scene follows as the action is called offstage. Graham shouts, "Hit up, Leonard!" and immediately they "bowl him" and he is out.

The new "lovers," Leonard and Joan, continue their conversation while he stands in the field "I'm deep extra cover", and Graham continues his mocking remarks: "They've put him there to try and stop them breaking our windows." Added to the fact that he is the reluctant cricketer is his absorption with Joan's warming remarks of affection. The net result for the game, as we might expect, is that he drops the ball when it comes his way. To make it even worse, he distractedly holds the ball while telling Joan that he loves her. When he finally throws the ball back on the field he hits Peter on the leg. Graham, by this time, is a screaming idiot: he accuses Leonard of "killing off his own team now." While Peter is eased off again for the first aid, the lovers find themselves alone and frolicking in the pond. As they playfully embrace and kiss, Graham abruptly returns and is shocked again. Seemingly, successful amorous play is deeply immoral when he is not a party to it. The curtain descends on act 1 while Graham sounds the alarm again: "He's at it again. He's at it again. He's at it again. . ."

Marriage plans. In the second and last act the intriguing characterization of Leonard as an hesitant Hamlet deepens. Months have passed and it is now autumn; our shy hero has a new job picking up leaves for the Park Department. The marriage plans with Joan go forward, despite the caution of the sister "he should have a better job" and the heckling of the brother in law: "He doesn't need a wife, he needs a nurse." Nevertheless, the women talk of the future, the housing they will need and not forgetting the immediate need to inform Peter. Leonard shies away from this duty, says he does not want to upset Peter, and the remark upsets Joan, as it should. She presses the issue and tells him to change out of his work uniform, the park overalls, and tell Peter right now. Doggedly, Leonard resists; unpleasant things are best put off. And, anyway, if it must be done, "I can tell him about us in overalls."

Hints of the major impasse to come are evident in Joan's quandary and Leonard's highly individual behaviour. He may be the conquering suitor but he shows little indication of taking full possession of the field. In fact, he seems to enjoy the secrecy, at least in reference to Peter. When Graham enters the discussion, and suggests that Peter will tear him apart, Joan defends Leonard, but has no success in getting him to speak for himself. All our hero can do is to nod agreement in a silent, perfunctory way. Joan becomes exasperated. Leonard has the simplest answer to Graham's charge that he does not really want to be domesticated: "I think I'll just go for a walk."

When the meeting finally does come about with Leonard and Peter, the full frustration of the issue is completely demonstrated. Theatrically, it is one of the cleverest scenes in the play. Ayckbourn arranges a full reversal of intentions between the two "adversaries." Although the device is a standard one in farce the bumbling misunderstanding there is a thoroughly familiar and unsettling reading of character that is closer to Chekhov than Feydeau. As soon as Leonard tries to begin the conversation about Joan, he is put off abruptly by Peter's flat refusal to talk about it: "I'd rather not . . . if you don't mind." Somewhat similar to Leonard's own complete involvement with his own world, the robust Peter unhesitatingly assumes that the broached issue is really Joan and himself.

When Leonard confusingly tries again, Peter turns sharply on him ("don't push me"), and by now Leonard is thoroughly quieted and resigned. Anna brings tea and exits. The two "adversaries" sit resolutely down, each apparently convinced of what he wants to believe. Although Peter's misunderstanding is plausible actually, he believes Graham is the barrier between Joan and himself Leonard's meek acceptance of a communication that doesn't exist is entirely unreal:

LEONARD: Well. That's it.

PETER: Yes. Seems to be.

LEONARD: Glad it's cleared up, anyway. You've taken it very well.

PETER. (Still bitter] Hardly much choice, had I? (Ayckbourn, 1973:48)

The resolution of the action in the final scene is consistent with the audience's growing acceptance of Leonard as one of life's charming but inept losers. He even goes one step further in his passivity by allowing Peter's misunderstanding to wreak a kind of curious justice on Graham's leering improprieties toward Joan. When Peter storms into the house convinced that Graham is the one who is stealing Joan away and asks Leonard what to do, all that Leonard can say is to mumble something about the two of them (Peter and himself) being really alike and that "we must stand up to tyrants."

Finally, when calm and truth is fully restored, Joan is thoroughly disgusted with Leonard for letting the charade continue. Obviously, very little is left in their relationship to salvage. Leonard's defense ("I was reading my book. I didn't really notice") is enough to send her packing. So much for the indecisive hero. Now left to themselves, Peter and Leonard sort things out along a sort of sporting world philosophy it was a fair fight, both have lost. They talk earnestly of the approaching cricket game, and in their friendly jesting Leonard kicks Peter's ankle. Peter grits his teeth and manages a smile, "Nothing at all just help me on. I'll be all right."

The audience's feelings about Leonard are necessarily mixed again more appropriate to Chekhov than to farce. We are led to wonder about the type and not just the dancing figure. What about the Leonards of this world? "His inability to assert himself," Frank Marcus says of Leonard, "stems endearingly from a reluctance to hurt people's feelings, and the author rightly shows us that it is men like these who cause the greatest havoc."⁶ It may well be that the "wreckage" following in Leonard's wake may be even more insidious if we accept Peter Lewis's view: "It is his ambition to fail dismally at everything. But his gift is to make everyone else's ambition fail dismally while he remains unscathed. He does it by simply not trying. It is a brilliant strategy.

It is questionable as to how much depth Ayckbourn has built into the character of Leonard. The play may be more a "whimsical fancy" which did not rise very far as John Russell Taylor sees it rather than the comedy of philosophical significance that some of the critics were anxious for. According to Taylor, Leonard tries to be Jimmy Porter, but is not really up to it; "he is too soft and silly" to be an-

other angry young man.⁸ Ayckbourn, himself readily admits that he is not politically committed:

I'm the all time "don't know" really. I'm usually against whichever government is in at the time, simply because it often seems so incompetent. In general, I try to reflect the sort of people I know who are also a bit like this. They don't vote and they have wild prejudices occasionally which are not based on any deep-thought reason. . . . My characters tend to live rather day to day, which I think most people do. They are that great big body in the middle in this country who are don't knows.

Time and Time Again shows Ayckbourn getting deeper and deeper into character: it is a sign of his increasing maturity that Leonard's role as an agent of farcical mayhem is combined with a sense of pain and loss. As his brother-in-law never ceases to remind him, he could not even hold on to his wife and three children. It is typical of Leonard's Chekhovian gift for disaster that even his exit from the family home (he left his wife and lover together and then found, after his dignified departure, that he had forgotten his suitcase) was accompanied more by error than towering outrage.

This rich play with its depleted rituals and Leonard's well documented dangerous fecklessness- also highlights the hardest of all Ayckbourn's gifts to bring out on the printed page: his visual sense. His plays, as written, are in a sense all blueprints for performance. They simply cry out to be seen because Ayckbourn, a craftsman to his fingertips, makes so many of his points through sight gages.

4. ANALYSIS OF THE PLAYS

4.1. Middle Class Subjects

Initially the true nature of the play was somewhat obscured in London by Robert Morley's idiosyncratic star performance. Ayckbourn is basically an ensemble writer: his work needs to be performed either by a permanent company as at Scarborough or by stars by a permanent company as at Scarborough or by stars of equal weight. When Peter Bridge cast Robert Morley in the role of Frank Foster in the initial London production, the play inevitably changed its character. Morley is a natural life-and stage enhancer. So a play about three married couples inevitably became a work dominated by Morley's own lustrous charisma. If Ayckbourn silently chafed at the reality of the star system, he at least picked up some very handsome royalties since the show ran for 869 performances and confirmed his position as the West End's hit-man.

His farce revolves around dinner parties, birthdays, wedding anniversaries; reunions, all of which fall apart as indeed more tangible man-made objects also tend to do on his stage. The play's initial conceit is beautifully blithe. It puts two living rooms, belonging to two different couples, on the same stage. But where any normal dramatist would place them side by side in the conventional manner, Ayckbourn superimposes one on top of another. Thus the upper-middle-class living room occupied by the Fosters occupies exactly the same space as the middle-middle-class room dwelt in the by the Philippses. So entwined are the two sets that the communal settee has smart cushions belonging to the Fosters and slightly tattier ones owned by the Philippses. Obviously the comic possibilities of this juxtaposition are the enormous with characters leading separate emotional and physical lives while brushing up against each other. But it also highlights the basic theme of the play. The Fosters are the best off of the couples, childless it seems, and have developed the decorous good manners of the sophisticated middle class. Even under stress they treat each other with polite, evasive insult. In this atmosphere an enquiry about suspected infidelity is posed with studied casualness. And it is parried with offers of 'more coffee' and the exchange of small gifts and shows of gratitude. It is an

atmosphere in which toilet paper is referred to with discreet gentility- ‘Darling! Crisis! We’re out of bathroom stationery!’

In contrast, the Phillips live in a mess, engendered by baby Benjamin and Teresa’s habit of cutting out Guardian articles for her own haphazard filing system scattered throughout the living room. It is a home where people inevitably tread on abandoned squeaky toys and leave coffee cup around. It is also an environment which invites a spiky, ill-tempered, confrontational relationship. Candid truths and physical objects alike are hurled for routine argument’s sake, and an unfaithful husband is naturally over-defensive to the point of aggression when questioned about late homecoming. Inevitably he will seek to blame others and who better than the Featherstones.

They are at the bottom of this social heap. William Featherstone is very anxious for professional advancement and his focus is almost entirely on impressing Frank Foster as the key to this.

How the other Half Loves starts with the morning routines of two households, the Phillips and the Fosters, juxtaposed on stage, dramatically and physically. So, from the start of the action, the way each couple treat each other in their early habits reflects the class differences between the marriages and explains the contrasting styles of loving.

Mary is shy, gauche, even less socially experienced, and the mercy of her husband’s ambitious nature. He sees her as a necessary appendage and one which must be bullied into appropriate social skills. ‘do you realize, Mrs. Foster, the hours I have put into that woman?’ he cries in a remark that is a cruelly revealing of his marriage as it is of his farcical self-importance. When he is forced to stumble an apology to marry, she exposes his real humiliation by saying, ‘It’s difficult for him. He’s never been wrong before, you see.’

Alan Ayckbourn is not a political didacticism, but it is hard to ignore the use of class differences in his plays. They are never presented with a political badge attached, for he is instinctively drawn to the underdog in whatever class he or she may be. But he does describe the consequences of being that underdog in different

social circumstances. Ronald Byrden is therefore partially right when he says, 'Ayckbourn' is a political propagandist who works on people's minds without letting them know he is doing it or drawing attention to his own rectitude. He simply demonstrates in terms audiences have to recognize as fact, the tragic absurdity of some of the things our society forces on human beings.' But, for Ayckbourn, class is not imposed on his characters; it is a conspiracy they enter into

The surroundings are typically middle-class suburban, placed firmly, despite the author's home base, in the south of England. The hero is a shy young man, ill at ease in these unfamiliar surroundings. He causes mayhem almost accidentally through his gauche ineptness. This is reinforced by the behavior of the other characters as they observe the social niceties of English middle class politeness. The victim of his destructive presence is frequently the relationship of a married couple and, typically in *Relatively Speaking*, the marriage contains an innocent and guilty party.

4.1.1. Family Issue of The Plays

In Ayckbourn's plays the family home is the crucible in which the concept of the family can be tested. When a family gets together to celebrate or to holiday, the intension is probably as Norman declares: 'For god's sake, this is family.... If we don't hands, what hope is there for anybody?' It clearly strikes a chord with everyone on stage and probably these in the auditorium. The problem is that the getting together of a family group often accentuates all the stresses in family life. Individual people are sometimes strained to breaking point at a celebratory event. Alan Ayckbourn constantly makes merry with this irony of the human condition turning the observation of its consequences into social comment.

It is an exploration of man's unconscious inhumanity to man that forms the heart of Alan Ayckbourn's work. In Ayckbourn's world, the married state itself frequently becomes a weapon of destruction and not only for the husband or wife. For when marriages break down, they rarely implode. Marriage difficulties distribute their own disturbance; and as Kalson, the American critic who is particularly incisive

about the themes, aptly puts it, we get picture upon picture of ‘the destruction caused by the fall-out from a disintegrating nuclear family’.

This is perhaps most clearly explored in the next West End Success, *How The Other Half Loves* (1969). As the lights come up, we see two living rooms ‘not a composite setting but two rooms contained and overlapping in the same area’. The fosters have smart reproduction furniture in a tidy and neat household, but it shares the stage space with the trendy, modern but grubby fixtures of the Phillips’s untidy home. Most graphically, three-seater sofa is shared: two seats Foster, plump cushioned Waring and Gillow, and one-seat Phillips abuse Habitat with children’s toys under the cushions.

The dramatic purpose of this device is quickly explained. Fiona Foster telephones her younger lover, Bob Phillips. But when his wife, Teresa, answers, Fiona puts down the receiver and attends to the jaunty eccentricities of Frank, her own husband and Bob’s employer. The two households are obviously one again connected by infidelity. This time, however, the action takes place within a setting that is a metaphor for the predicament of the adulterer.

The situation and the set, composed as they are of elements from two homes, look precarious. The threat of collapse is heightened when another marriage is dragged into it. William Featherstone is also employed by Frank, and Bob uses him in a spur of the moment alibi to explain his own absence from home. He was, he claims, offering Featherstone advice about his wife’s adultery. Almost simultaneously, Fiona is using Mary Featherstone as her alibi, saying that she has been advising her about handling William’s extramarital affair. When the unfortunate Featherstones are invited to dinner, they become the victims of the deceit and confusion inherent in the situation. The result, of course, is to aggravate whatever cracks may have lurked under the surface of their own marriage. They suffer the domino effect of marital breakdown. But not before they have been socially and physically abused at dinner parties within both errant households.

We do, however, encounter unmarried couples in this comic world who have just met and are in the initial throes of love or lust. In *Relatively Speaking* we first

meet Greg and Ginny together in her Chelsea flat. They are clearly lover and he has asked her to marry him; innocent young love preparing for a happy future. But lurking, quite literally, under the bed is the worm in this love apple.

Greg finds a pair of slippers there, not his own, and not, despite Ginny's feeble suggestion, the property of the pet dog. The poor young man is so besotted to tumble to the notion that they might have been left behind by another love, and that his might explain many bunches of flowers in the bathroom. Indeed, he is so infatuated, he believes her story that she is setting out to visit her parents, and decides to follow her. But he will not only arrive at Ginny's parents home to ask for her hand in marriage; he will fall into one of Ayckbourn's suburban traps. Ginny's real errand is to break off from her previous sexual partner, Philip, an older married man, and demand the return of incriminating letters.

Once again, a shy, socially inexperienced intruder blunders into the dangerous milieu of suburban married respectability. Arriving announced, Greg meets first, not Phillip, the unfaithful middle-age husband, but his wife, Sheila, whom Greg takes to be his girlfriend's mother his tongue-tied shyness and her English suburban manners invite lack of communication. 'No Ginny' he asks. 'No I'm afraid not...' says Sheila, who is unaware of her supposed daughter,'... there is some sherry, if you'd like.'

The confusion is compounded by the arrival of Ginny. Thus we have the meeting of two couples: one legal married and one hoping to be. They are each made up of an innocent partner and one with a guilty past. The majority of the lay is a hilarious journey through the pitfalls of misunderstandings when innocence meets guilt within the context of marriage and courtship. It is a structure that Ayckbourn was to exploit in many guises throughout his work

His move down the collective scale into more modest environments reflects the social development of the sixties and seventies.

4.2. Emotional Aspects of The Plays

Ayckbourn is not a didactic writer or pulpit moralist. But there is , for all that, an instinctive sympathy with the harassed wife trying to cope with a prune-

covered child and an errant husband and an equally clear dislike of the kind of upper-middle-class wife who escapes on an anniversary and cannot disguise the fact that her husband has bought her the wrong perfume. As in *Relatively Speaking* and *The Sparrow*, Ayckbourn shows himself against emotional exploitation in any form. There is also something implicitly healthier about a house like the Phillipses, in which dirty linen is brandished as well as washed in public, than that of the Fosters in which it would doubtless be sent to the cleaners. The two households are linked by sex in that Fiona Foster's night out has been spent with Bob Phillips. But they are separated by a whole world of emotional candour.

So what Ayckbourn does in this lengthy and elaborate first scene is not merely establish two different marriages, houses and classes. He also gets the motor of the plot going. Frank Foster, who is Bob's employer, rings him up to ask him if he knows anything about William Featherstone 'bright little chap from accounts'. Bob, the name implanted in his brain, uses Featherstone as his alibi for the previous night, saying he was advising him about his wife's adultery. Meanwhile Fiona uses Mary Featherstone whom she hardly knows as her alibi, claiming she was consoling her for an affair which William is having. So an entirely innocent couple are dragged into Bob and Fiona's sexual escape: what is more, a couple whom Frank Foster has invited to dinner that night Friday. The stage is set.

All good comedy, in the end, is about the meshing of plot and character. And *How The Other Half Loves* which could easily have been an arid technical exercise becomes hilarious precisely because the couple invited to dinner are in themselves so bizarre: William is the bullying, upwardly mobile little thruster and Mary the cowed, socially nervous wife whom her husband treats as a do-it-yourself appendage. They are the third example of marriage Ayckbourn gives us in the play; and one locked together in almost sado-masochistic union.

4.3. Political View of The Plays

Ayckbourn had always studiously avoided political stances: Political theatre is usually so busy with being political that it forgets to be theatre. Indeed, he eschewed almost any opportunity to be judgmental about his characters or their

situations. An author so firmly focused on the narrative line in both his plays and his directing had shown a reluctance to condemn even in his most ferociously unsympathetic characters. It is very hard to think of real villains in Ayckbourn's work before *Way Upstream*. Uncle Harley, in *Season's Greetings* (1980), is dangerous, practically demented, but, as always, understandable. His disagreeable nature can be explained by his excluded position in the family. This is even clearer in the unpublished first script of the play, where his wife, an unseen, offstage, disgruntled heap, provides a presence to share a feeling of exclusion. The device proved unsatisfactory and was cut from the play in its later performances: Harvey became a more sinister character.

The new locations herald a discussion of larger issues. The plays retain their comic force, losing some of the bleakness of the plays of seventies but sharpened by a moral and social irony. Ayckbourn has begun to write about the nature of evil in his society in his own way. There remains the focus on ordinary apolitical human beings who just wish to get on with their lives. The Scarborough playwright never loses his concern for the little man (or woman) and their desire for self-fulfilment in a domestic bliss. And his comic genre demands that the innocent can finally say 'It's OK, we'll be OK'.

Moral and political absolutists will sometimes find this less than satisfactory, but they are misunderstanding Ayckbourn. He is essentially a describer and arbiter, not a judgementalist. In this he is to be likened to two playwrights he cites as influences, Pirandello and Priestly. Like them he has experimented with chance and time, using both in contracting multi-pathed plays. As an accomplished technician, he seizes these elements as dramatic puzzles and theatrical opportunities. But they are more than that. What does emerge, as he uses time and chance in a series of plays, is a conviction that in life these two elements are catalysts in the forging of innocence or guilt.

As Billington says: 'if there is any one message to be deduced from these multi-layered, seemingly contradictory, extraordinarily rich plays, it is that the pattern of our lives is determined by a multitude of things and that the illusion of

chance is balanced by the imperatives of character' (Alan Ayckbourn, London, 1983/1990).

The other great element that Ayckbourn has exploited is dramatic time. It becomes not only a metaphor for real time but an alternative element to chance as a determiner of character. The most sustained development of this theme forms the action of *Time of My life* (1992).

Wildest Dreams and Things We do for Love are a long way from *Relatively Speaking* with its cosy surface and adulterous center. But all are reflections of and challenges to social and artistic norms. This is what has made Alan Ayckbourn's comedic eye and technique continually relevant.

4.4. Characters of The Plays

The pranks of time and chance go a long way to explaining Ayckbourn's attitude to the majority of his characters. His reluctances judge them adds the bleakness to plays such as *Just Between Ourselves* and to the sustained elegiac last act of *Absurd Person Singular*. There is rarely a truly culpable person at the heart of these situations. For Ayckbourn, innocence or guilt is a result of the throw of the dice of chance, time and character Blame is not his purpose as a playwright.

Until, that is, after *Way Upstream*, he looks outside his domestic battlegrounds and examines factors, institutions, organs of state which impinge on the lives of the meek and unassuming. There he finds characters to personify the malign effects of these forces. They emerge as epitomes of evil, to confront the ordinary man or woman and to use them as their plaything.

In tackling this subject with his new found structural freedom, Ayckbourn is reflecting, in both content and form, a reality recognizable to much of the theatergoing audience. This is the essence of his play writing. His fifty-three plays over thirty years have always reflected the political and social drifts that the ordinary man or woman is subject to, and done it by means both accessible and challenging.

Robert Morley, doing *How the Other Half Loves* with Robert Morley, an established and singularly independent performer, was quite a lesson in theatre for the young playwright. From the very start, the play became Morley's own vehicle,

apparently to do with whatever he pleased. "He's an actor who rapidly gets very bored," Ayckbourn recalls, "and in order to refresh himself and to engage himself he always treats the theatre as one huge game organised by himself. The joy of the man is that he does have great enjoyment for what he does, an infectious, playful enthusiasm. Unfortunately, the people who suffer are the people who are on stage with him, or who are attempting to get on stage with him."

There were obvious clashes between Robin Midgley, the director, and Morley. As a very new young author, all Ayckbourn could do was "to sit rather quietly and weep in corners." Morley actually saw himself as an actor manager; he had strong views on how the other parts should be played. For example, his relationship to Fiona, his wife in the play, was not as Ayckbourn wrote it. The fact that Fiona is really a malicious character completely escaped Morley. She is meant to be faithless to her husband and to treat him with crushing sarcasm. "Robert insisted," according to Ayckbourn, "that anyone who was on stage with him should look as if they loved him." "Look," he would say, "Nobody wants to come to the theatre and see people squabbling." The fact that the center of the play does depend on some rather severely strained domestic relations somehow escaped him.

Nevertheless, as Ayckbourn is quick to admit, the overall experience taught him some valuable lessons about theatre. Morley's interpretation of the play can surely be questioned, but he did do a masterful job in playing the part of Frank. True, it might have been better if he stuck to the script. The point to be made is that theatre is an all-embracing art form which has room for a wide variety of entertainments. And Morley, in his own right, is an "entertainment." "You can't argue with the system," Ayckbourn concludes. "Eighty per cent of that audience had paid to see Robert Morley, and I, as an unknown dramatist, had really no right to stand between that process if I wanted to take the money."

4.4.1. Ayckbourn's Men

Alan Ayckbourn is not only skilled in his trade of playwright, he is a comic genius. It is subtle genius, however. The lack of flamboyance that characterizes him personally carries over into his plays. His characters particularly the men seem at first glance to be as commonplace as he seems himself. They exhibit a "suburban

blandness,” as the pushy female television reporter says of the unlikely hero of *Man of the Moment*. If, as Aristotle says, a tragic character is better than the norm and a comic character worse, an Ayckbourn farcical hero seems on our own level, neither better nor worse “It Could Be Any One of Us,” to quote the title of one of Ayckbourn’s own plays. Yet, just as Ayckbourn’s appearance of blandness is a facade concealing extraordinary qualities, so too is the blandness of his heroes. Underneath, they are often driven, obsessive characters, suburban Oedipus’s or Macbeths, or else they are abused and tormented, suburban Agamemnon’s or Lears. Like tragic heroes, too, they often commit harmful acts in a state of blindness, abusing those near and dear to them usually women. What makes the men untragic is that they almost never recognize who they are or what they have done. Not only do we think they are ordinary, they think of themselves as ordinary, despite growing evidence to the contrary, right to the end of the play. An Ayckbourn play usually concludes with the hero just as befuddled as ever, unaware that he has done anything wrong, or that anything wrong has been done to him a bleak and cynical ending, whose tone we barely notice because we are laughing so hard.

Most of Ayckbourn’s plays have cliché titles, which makes it hard to remember which is which. Like the bland titles, the characters seem to have a double meaning, a hidden punch that hits you before you notice. *Relatively Speaking* concerns a young man who mistakes his girlfriend’s former lover and his wife for her parents;

Despite the word play in his titles, Ayckbourn uses few verbal jokes in the plays themselves. Character and situation are his forte; he writes true situation comedies, unlike American television sitcoms, where comical situations are rarely exploited, and everything is subordinated to the verbal gags.

Exploitation of situating is apparent in *Relatively Speaking*, his first big commercial success. It all classic farce, with a formal, technical quality; Ayckbourn writes scenes between all possible pairs of the four characters, and always exploits the central misapprehension ruthlessly. The only deviation from the norm of what we would expect is that, although Sheila does figure out that Philip and Ginny had an affair, Greg never does. Farce typically ends with all the misunderstandings cleared

up, but this play ends with him and Ginny going back to London, Greg still convinced that he has spent the day with her parents.

Ayckbourn typically focuses on ordinary business people working for large, faceless corporations. The characters in *Relatively Speaking*, as in the later plays, are prosaic middle-class folk. Greg has a minor job in a big insurance company; Philip is some kind of executive in a business firm with a lot of foreign branches, a position that requires him to travel a lot. Sheila goes to church regularly; both she and Philip are avid gardeners. Their lives are so mundane, so typically English, that even their sexual misadventures seem tame. Sex always hovers around an Ayckbourn play, as it does in most farce, but with Ayckbourn it never seems passionate, erotic, or even fulfilling. It is often a snare, as here; Ginny is trapped by her past clandestine relationship with Philip, which she is trying to erase. All the trouble in the play – and all the humour – arises from her desire to keep the affair a secret.

The two male characters of *Relatively Speaking* are of contrasting types that recur in almost every subsequent Ayckbourn play. One is assertive, the other unassuming. This resembles a pairing that goes back to ancient Greek comedy. Philip is an example of the blazon the impostor, the boaster, the swaggerer, the man who presents himself as more than he is. Greek Comedy, he was coupled with a hero who was typically an eiron the ironic self deprecator, the man who presents himself as less than he is. Greg is certainly modest and even self deprecating, but Ayckbourn alters the standard character in a significant way. Traditionally, the eiron is a shrewd character. As FM. Cornford notes, “The eiron... masks his cleverness under a show of clownish dullness. He is a fox in the sheep’s clothing of a buffoon”

Why, then, are characters like Greg not dull? What makes him so funny? The answer is in his obtuseness, the blissful ignorance that continues, as noted, until the very end of the play. Such ignorance is generally a quality of Ayckbourn’s men; we always know more than they do. Although we may sometimes sympathize with the unassertive eirons, we never identify with them. Ayckbourn holds both the eirons and the alazons at a distance that grows as the play progresses, with the widening gap between what we know and what they know becoming ever funnier.

The obtuseness of both Greg and Philip causes no real damage. Both Ginny and Sheila are victims of Philip's philandering, but they do not seem much bothered by it. Ginny just wants to break off the relationship; she not only succeeds in doing so, she ends up having Philip pay for her honeymoon with Greg. Sheila, when she figures out that her husband and Ginny had had an affair, seems merely bemused by it. By contrast, in the 1970s, as Ayckbourn reached his maturity as a writer, he often explored the destructiveness that evolves from his men's lack of perception.

4.4.2. Ayckbourn's Women

Ayckbourn's work has been largely ignored by feminist critics. His even-handedness is apparent in the fact that- excepting perhaps Richard and Anthea in *Joking Apart*- there is no wholly sympathetic or admirable character of either sex in any of his plays.

Sidney Howard White analyzes two contrasting Ayckbourn character types: "the male bumblers" and "the men in charge" Just as an essay on the women in Oliver Goldsmith's plays would almost necessarily assign them to categories, one might see Ayckbourn's women in terms of mother figures, career women, seductresses, and so forth. Although Ayckbourn's plays have steadily evolved from board farce toward a fellows in a new light, and... make them feel for the characters, without loving them" there is no Madame Ranevsky in his canon. That is, he has not yet arrived at a stage in which his characters are richly endowed with memories and piquantly observed details that suggest a life beyond the confines of the present dramatic action.

Most of Ayckbourn's couples seem condemned to an endless co-existence built upon unfulfilled expectations; Ginny and Greg, Sheila and Philip in *Relatively Speaking*; Teresa and Bob, Fiona and Frank in *How the Other Half Loves*; Anna and Graham in *Time and Time Again*;

Not all of Ayckbourn's married women are defined primarily by their marital status, For some, the husband exists as a mere appendage to a more important life function. In *The Norman Conquests*, for example, Norman's wife Ruth defines herself in terms of her office job. Sarah, in the same play, is Reg's wife, but she

functions predominantly as a mother and as a household organizer. On the whole, the number of women who allow themselves to be defined by a relationship with a man is approximately equal to the number of those whose sense of self derives more from what they do. A third and much smaller group may be distinguished as self-determining women; those who chart their own courses and are comfortable with who they are as individuals. It is this latter group that ought logically to merit examination from a feminist perspective, but these are largely secondary characters and generally not very sympathetic. An analysis of Ayckbourn's women in terms of these three forms of self definition, reveals a fairly stable pattern from *Relatively Speaking* through a *Chorus of Disapproval*.

In addition, there is an apparent shift in the prevailing view of the couple. In the plays of the first two decades, the relationships are characterized by strain, as if the man and woman were constantly pulling in opposing directions. In Ayckbourn's most recent plays the relationships are still beleaguered by misunderstandings and mutual disappointments, but the characters seem at least subliminally aware of the need for a symbiosis of the sexes. Ayckbourn claims as his "biggest recurrent theme" that "people do care about each other; it's just that they handle each other in boxing gloves half the time and not with kid gloves"

Another change of emphasis for Ayckbourn occurs in the category of women defined by their main function in life, particularly among those whose function is motherhood. Lucy in *Confusions* "Mother Figure" serves as an extreme example of a woman defined by the function of looking after the children. So numbed is she by the demands of the job, and so accustomed to her husband's insensitivity, that she cannot even respond to her neighbour Rosemary's proffered sympathy. She proceeds to treat Rosemary and Rosemary's boorish husband Terry as a children to be alternately coddled and disciplined. Among Ayckbourn's other harried mothers are Teresa in *How the Other Half Loves*, Sarah in *The Norman Conquests*, Louise in *Joking Apart*, and Belinda and Pattie in *Season's Greetings*. These women find themselves caught up in childcare responsibilities so all-consuming that they cannot sustain another activity, even one as simple as communicating with their husbands.

After 1985 Ayckbourn's plays give evidence of a move toward a more positive treatment of the mother's role, a more wholesome view of motherhood, especially as manifested in mother-daughter relationships. Pattie's comment in *Season's Greetings* about her ability to cope with her two daughters but not with her son Gary presages the situations of Susan in *Woman in Mind* and Corinna in *Henceforward....* Susan compensates for her unsatisfactory relationship with her son Rick by fantasizing a perfect daughter, Lucy, who flits about the garden in fresh, summery dresses.

Although childcare is the function that most often defines those women who opt for self-definitions based upon a social role beyond that of a wife, a number of other options are illustrated in the plays, some thrive on home management, often to the point that it becomes even more of a defining factor than motherhood. In *Relatively Speaking*, Philip describes Sheila as "a fine wife and mother," although she is not Ginny's mother and she is hardly satisfied with her lot as Philip's wife. She is, however, one of the few women in Ayckbourn's plays whose cooking is praised rather than mocked and scorned.

In *How the Other Half Loves*, Mary Detweiler finds herself almost compulsively bringing order to the chaos of Teresa and Bob's apartment. Anthea is not only a perfect mother and mistress, but also a generous friend and neighbour, community volunteer, and perhaps even an artist's muse. Other women organize events on a volunteer basis outside their own home.

If there is any evolution in Ayckbourn's handling of this latter group of women after 1985, it is that the career women begin to appear somewhat more frequently than the fulltime mothers and the household organizers, that their careers tend to gravitate toward a somewhat higher level of visibility and responsibility, and that they become more flexible in defining themselves through their work.

The smallest category of women in Ayckbourn's canon is those who might be called self-determined. Neither emotionally dependent upon a man, nor identifying themselves very strongly with a social function, they can be refreshingly

free-spirited, but often appear petulant, rude, or rebellious. Among these are Ginny of *Relatively Speaking*, Joan of *Time and Time Again*.

Ginny is self-possessed enough to play two men off against each other, knowing that she will settle for Greg in the end. Sheila observes that it will be “a disastrous marriage”, but one suspects that Ginny will become a Rowena rather than subside into “the old familiar parade of wives”.

She also suggests that Ayckbourn’s women in future plays might not be so easily categorized as those of past plays. Ayckbourn says:

The really vigorous feminist movement would say I’m still portraying women in model roles, whereas I think What I’m doing is trying to reflect them as they are, not as the feminist movement would like them to be, because I think a lot of them fall very short of that. Don’t we all! And it’s much more interesting for me as a dramatist, and certainly as a slightly humorous dramatist, to see people trying to achieve something rather than being madly successful at it. Therefore, most of my women – career women, independent women – are having a terrible struggle with their metabolism or their men folk or themselves. I think they’re caught in a crossfire. Sometimes women, I think, are actually feeling they ought to be doing things simply because they ‘re letting down the side if they don’t, and I’m always amused by the women who now almost apologize for having children. They say, “well, I’m just going to have a quick baby. I’ll be right back to work again. “Well, I’m just going to have a quick baby. I ‘ll be right back again.” And you say, “No, if you want to be a mother, then that’s perfectly good job.” But having said that a lot of women in the street, if that’s the right word, do come up and say, “Thank you for that. That is how I feel.” (Holt,1999:36)

Certainly with plays like *Woman in Mind* and with this one again. I don’t know what they thought of *Revenagers*. A women’s completely mad in that, but I wanted to write of really dangerous women, and say, “Women are not only victims, they can be extremely lethal, like Karen Knightly in *Revenagers*. It’s the other side...” She’s some distant kin to that girl in *Play Misty for Me*, that Clint Eastwood got tied up with, that line of attractive madness.

5. FARCE OR COMEDY

Four early plays illustrate Ayckbourn's witty use of the techniques of the traditional play: *Relatively Speaking*, *How the Other Half Loves*, *Time and Time Again*, and *Absurd Person Singular*. The usual subject matter, in the context of a satiric treatment of middle-class manners and mores, is an entertaining story about real or suspected marital infidelities, mixed with a dash of materialistic greed.

The techniques of traditional comedy include:

(1) much physical action; (2) an intricate, fast-paced plot that progresses by split-second timing of convenient entrances and exits; (3) the importance of plot over serious characterization; (4) the use of mistaken identities and misunderstandings to create the plot complications, often referred to as quid pro quo actions and dialogue; (5) a crucial dependence on ordinary objects to help develop the plot (in *Relatively Speaking*, a cigarette packet and a pair of slippers); (6) initial lies or cover-ups that breed more deceptions; (7) flat (as opposed to fully developed) characters, who fall into one of two categories: the deceivers and the deceived (or gulls); (8) an obligatory scene, known also as the scene a faire or the big scene, in which all deceptions and misunderstandings are cleared up (the most famous, Sheridan's screen scene in *The School for Scandal*); and finally, (9) a happy ending. As standard comic ingredients, these developed over time into the mechanical, frequently sentimentally well-made play, spurned by the new dramatists and critics (Dukore, 1991:43).

The secret of farce's versatility is that it employs an entirely different means to satisfy our souls. Farce eludes Fry's otherwise voluminous net because it does not fit experience into mythic patterns although it may be an even more primitive and fundamental form of expression than myth. Farce does not transform life into myth; it converts it into a game. The hallmark of comedy is the happy ending; the signature of farce is the belly laugh. Comedy assures us that the renewal and reintegration of society are true, at least in the particular instance in question. Farce insists only that we laugh at life, however we find it. This paradoxically seems to imply that farce is intrinsically more honest than comedy, but no form is inherently more true than comedy. Comedy insists that we believe in happy endings; farce demands that we

treat life as a joke. Farce is thus potentially more objective because it asks us to laugh cheerfully at life rather than to believe that our good humour is supported by facts.

Of course the distinction is rarely clear-cut. Whenever comedy invites us to laugh at our lives it can be said to borrow from farce, and whenever farce offers a happy ending it impinges on the territory of comedy, but it is not true that significant distinctions can be made between the two only in extreme cases. Few interesting musical compositions remain rigorously in the key in which they are written; yet the key of a piece is not a trivial or insignificant characteristic. Alan Ayckbourn writes in the key of farce. In some cases he stays consistently in that key and produces what might be called pre farce; in others he varies it a bit, not so much with other keys as with a touch of modern atonality or dissonance. These two aspects of his plays are not disparate elements improbably welded together but different aspects of the same thing. When L. C Knights insisted that comedy is fundamentally serious, he told only part of the truth, for no work is more serious than the author makes it and any form including farce can be used seriously. Alan Ayckbourn is essentially a writer of serious farces.

Many playwright have used farce, but few have made such extensive use of the range farce provides. The fundamental technique of farce is the welding of the familiar with fantasy, a transformation of the real into the unreal. Farce has its limits, as not all aspects of reality lend themselves equally to such treatment, but Ayckbourn seems intent on exploring and even extending the range of the farcical.

Like most great farceurs, Ayckbourn is most at home using pitiless objectivity of farce to dissect the horror, banality, and numbing pains of everyday living. This is true of the most thoroughly farcical of Ayckbourn's works, such as *Relatively Speaking* and *How the Other Half Loves*, as well as of "darker" and more disturbing plays like *Absent Friends* or *Just Between Ourselves*. Feydeau insisted that farce dealt with events more horrible than tragedy and that to write a good farce one must first find situation "as tragic as possible, a situation that would give the shivers to a night watchman at the morgue, and you try to bring out the burlesque side of it" To think of farce as merely a matter of technique is always a mistake; the transformation of reality through the technique matters, and the more horrible and the

more painful the reality, the better the farce. This can be clearly seen in early “romps” like *Relatively Speaking and How the other Half Loves*, which are propelled by much the same trenchant observation and keen insight praised in the later works.

Relatively Speaking represents Ayckbourn’s most conventional use of orthodox farce technique, but even here one can see those elements which make him a particularly important playwright. Ayckbourn is best admired by audiences for his brilliantly clever technique and is most esteemed by critics for his keen character portrayals and insights into human relationships.

The quid pro quo is always funniest when it is not innocent when, for example, a sweet young virgin is mistaken for a notorious courtesan in Feydeau’s *Amour et Piano*. Those myriad doors, the most notorious feature of conventional bedroom farce, are an effective metaphor for the terror of disclosure. Flying open and slamming shut with split-second timing, they turn the back of the set into a Pandora’s Box with many chambers and a multitude of lids. Although it need not lack either complexity or subtlety, conventional farce is straightforwardly Freudian in content and technique.

5.1. Comic Elements in the plays

Alan Ayckbourn championed the cause of comedy in the theatre against the counterclaim by television for the audience’s attention. His influence on the television sitcom is easily demonstrable *The Good life* and its cast grew out of *The Norman Conquests* but more important is the ground he claimed for playwrights such as Alan Bleasdale, Willie Russel and John Godber. He had persuaded an audience, who could more easily find entertainment in their own homes, of the value of the theatre as an expression of their reality. The younger playwrights readily exploited this, taking their cue from Ayckbourn by focusing on the lives of their audience and placing entertainment at the heart of their work. He had continually challenged the conventional form of theatre and each of these playwrights owes much of the filmic quality of their scripts to him.

Audiences rock with laughter at these plays; they contain many wonderful scenes of comic dialogue and farcical action. But at their heart is a disenchantment

born out of this playwright's affinity with the women, in families and friendships, sympathetic personalities and unsympathetic ones. As he says to Ian Watson, ' My biggest recurrent theme is that people do care about each other; it's just that they handle each other in boxing gloves most of the time... And I remember that all the screaming and shouting and hurling of food against the walls that happened in my early relationship had to do with wanting to get closer to that person I wanted to share my life with. It wasn't that I wanted to hurt them although occasionally I did because I felt they were hurting me. It was to do with caring and loving: it wasn't to do with anything destructive.'

What exactly is that comic purpose? Part of it is immediately established in the first scene with the class contrasts between the Foster and Philips households. The Fosters, and apparently childless, well-to-do-couple, lead good-tempered lives in which even the wife's coming home drunk at two in the morning is not something enquired into too rigorously. The Phillipses, on the other hand, are messy, rancorous and typically middle-class with the socially-concerned wife endlessly filing articles from the Guardian and the husband snappishly objecting to peanut-butter sandwiches for breakfast. With the Fosters the great crisis is running out of bathroom stationery and the electric toothbrush going on the blink: with the Phillipses, it's baby Benjamin trying to swallow a spoon and toy is not simply making easy sociological points. He is suggesting or rather demonstrating) that class dictates the tone and style of behaviour. Take, for instance, the way Teresa Phillips, edgily querulous, brings up the question of husband Bob's absence the previous night:

TERESA: Did you want some breakfast then? Is that what this is all about?

BOB: Not if- you're rushed off your feet.

TERESA: Well, there's no need to go on at me. I mean considering the fact that you rolled in here at two o'clock this morning stinking drunk and I haven't said a word about it -

BOB: Till now-

TERESA: Haven't said a word about it, I think it's really a bit of a nerve to sit there complaining there isn't any breakfast-

BOB: I'm not complaining.

TERESA: Good.

Meanwhile, over at the Fosters, Frank brings up the question of his wife Fiona's late arrival the previous night in very different style:

FIONA: When?

FRANK: Last night?

FIONA: Oh, I got hed up-

FRANK: Oh, (Pause.) I see. Doesn't matter.

FIONA: It's no secret. There's no secret about it.

FRANK: Isn't there?

FIONA: No. No secret at all.

FRANK: Godd.

FIONA: More coffee.

FRANK: Ah, thank you (Aycbourn, 1986:8-9).

Not only are the Fosters Pinteresquely evasive where the Phillipses are rudely blunt. Aycbourn also makes point throughout the scene that adultery or at least nocturnal absence means different things in different households. Fiona's life consists of meetings, engagements, 'dashing around' as she euphemistically puts it: her husband is even moodily reconciled to having spent their wedding anniversary alone watching television. Fiona has a world outside the house of which adultery forms and unsurprising part. Teresa, on the other hand, finds herself the victim of adultery precisely because she is a classic house-bound, child-ridden wife:

TERESA: No, I'm sick of this. Other husbands tell their wives where they go to. They don't just dissappear and come blundering in at two o'clock in the morning. Other husbands. I mean here I am stuck here with Benjamin and you're out having parties and God knows what else while I'm stuck here (Aycbourn, 1986:52).

Once again the setting provides the springboard for the comic action. Though they happen on two different nights, we see both dinner parties taking place simultaneously. The Featherstone switch from one table to another by simply swivelling their chairs, transcending both location and time. They become embroiled

in embarrassingly vigorous rows between man and wife and two separate occasions. The fun is that we see them coping concurrently with the consequences.

Ayckbourn exploits the device to its full comic potential. At the Phillips' table, the Featherstones endeavour to be a calming influence patching the troubled marriage; at the fosters', they try to make a good impression with William's boss and his impressive wife. Their efforts are of course doomed. Not only are they themselves suspected, on both occasions, of sexual indiscretion, William ends up covered in soup from a tureen thrown by Teresa. The hilarity of this humiliation is tinged by the suspicion amongst the audience that playwright has snookered himself. How to explain a wet actor in the other household? Of course the technical wizard, Ayckbourn, has the coup waiting; Featherstone's humiliation is completed. He has sitting under the leaking upstairs.

At the same time, the miserable Featherstones find themselves playing different roles at the different dinner parties in the play's montagingly crazy second scene. When they are with the Fosters, they are scarified dependents with William, at one point, mistaking his boss's gesture in placing his shoe on the table and offering to tie up his laces. When they are with the Phillipses, they become embroiled in a full-frontal domestic row in which plates, beer cans and insults are hurled about in wild profusion. It is a famous scene which people think is funny because it shows two people in swivel chairs – which swing through an angle of 90 degrees – pretending to be at two distinct dinner parties. It is funny because of who the people are and the roles they are forced to play: with the Phillipses they aim to be marital mediators and Mr Featherstone ends up with the contents of a soup tureen flung in his face; and with the Fosters they aim to make a cool impression only for Mr F. to wind up sitting under a lavatorial drip. All of which suggests that comic 'business' is never funny in isolation: it all depends on who is doing it and whom it happens to.

Admittedly in the second act the fun becomes a little more mechanical and 'plotty': in the first scene Frank Foster jumps, on rather shaky evidence, to the conclusion that Bob Phillips is having an affair with Mary Featherstone and, as a result, William Featherstone goes charging round to the Phillips house clutching a monkey wrench to administer physical retribution. But even when the dynamics of

farce take over, Ayckbourn does not squander his sense of character or theme, William Featherstone's cry 'do you realise, Mrs Foster, the hours I've put into that woman' is one of the most chilling and funny in all Ayckbourn: a terrifying lower-middle-class conception of a wife as some kind of vacuum one fills up with hobbies and leisure pursuits. Ayckbourn men seem to treat their women either with cool, sublime indifference; or as bits of do-it-yourself apparatus with which they tinker obsessively during their spare time.

5.2. Technical Directions of The Plays

Ayckbourn was by now regarded as capable of making a popular audience laugh whilst exploring his subjects with kindly objectivity that could cast a dark shadow over the laughter.

As in all great comic writing, characters show us what they are by what they do and say. But they rarely explain themselves to us. Self-justifying explanations, when they do occur are often careless remarks, inadvertently revealing more than characters would want us to know. Indeed, careless slips of the tongue are frequently the windows through which we see the true depths of despair and loneliness.

Often ignored technical skills are never abandoned by Ayckbourn. For example, characters in an Ayckbourn's play are never left without a covering line for entrance or exit. Any appropriate remark, usually of explanation or justification, is always there to motivate and cover the move. But this technical necessity in Ayckbourn's skilful hands becomes an opportunity for a further fleshing out of character or plot.

At the opening of most of his plays, Ayckbourn contrives a starter motor for the comedy. A well honed set-piece joke provokes the audience to initial laughter.

The opportunities for director and actor are obvious; a simple comic situation inviting acting and directing skill to kick start the audience into laughter. As Michael Billington points out, Alan Ayckbourn is primarily a visual playwright. He understands the primacy of dramatic narrative which is a narrative of action not of words. What is funny is most of then what the audiences sees as much as what is hears. His scripts are skilful constructions of both elements; to read only the ill timed

or thoughtless remark, without visualizing the ironic consequences for all participants onstage, it is not fair to ignore the real strength of a playwright who is also one of his generation's most experienced theatre directors. This playwright has an encyclopaedic knowledge of the technical resources of the theatre and knows how to deploy all of them for his narrative.

Technique for Ayckbourn is a means of control over the realization of his script. But is not control for its own sake. It is skilful weaving of means of delivery and theme together. The action is manifest onstage in the way most appropriate to the theme, even if that means employing technical facilities and equipment in unconventional ways. Sometimes it means breaking accepted rules of theatrical method. It is essentially the writer for the stage becoming 'auteur' a term more usually associated with the film creator and implying the fusing of script and image under the control of the prime film-maker, the director.

Alan Ayckbourn's empling filmic conventions should not surprise us. His love of cinema and its methods has influenced his output greatly, as we shall see. When questioned recently about these technical skills, his answer was interesting. The reason why we have so much 'director's theatre', he claims, is because the young playwright hands over so much to the realize.

That Ayckbourn sees his role as related to that of a cinematic auteur is underlined in his 1996 televised lecture at the University of Wales in Cardiff. He said: People ask what was my stage influences... my stage influences were almost entirely from cinema. I spent the whole of misspent youth in cinema. My stage geography is in fact, I suppose, the sort of grammar that is common in film rather than on stage. I use the cut, the superimposed shot and so on which are more or less clichés in the film these days but still novel and unusual in the theatre. It means that action can be moved very quickly..... Narrative techniques have speeded up... Thanks to Film and TV... Film techniques have a vital part to play in the tagging of my plays today. Despite such brilliant use of the split-location setting, this play is carried by more than just technical skill. The plotting and action are sustained but other dramatic elements; what happens is funny because of who it happens to. How *The Other Half Loves* even more than *Relatively Speaking*, is underpinned b comic

characterization. The three couples are drawn with a vivid observation that wittily individualizes every character and contrasts every different marital relationships.

Technical proficiency is perhaps Ayckbourn's most distinctive characteristic; he never lets us forget for very long that a playwright is at work. His devices are delightful in themselves, but they usually also enrich the action and comment on the characters.

But his most striking and original trick is the superimposition of two actions in *How the Other Half Loves* and *Taking Steps*, two conflicting interpretations of the same event at least one of which is emotionally or sexually charged are simultaneously presented.

However daring the device seemed when he introduced it, its brilliant success is entirely a function of the fact that it is essentially a novel way of doing what farce has always done. The extended quid pro quo and the use of doors to juggle different groups of incompatible characters are tricks of the trade that go back at least as far as Plautus, however much they may make us think of Feydeau, but the essence of both techniques is superimposition. The nineteenth-century farceurs especially Feydeau took these tricks close to their natural limits, so perhaps it is only to be expected that someone like Ayckbourn would make the conceptual leap necessary to show us two separate actions not only at the same time but in the same place. The trick is precisely right for Ayckbourn's brand of farce, which is dependent not on repressed sexuality and terrified respectability, but on the frustrations and agonies of petty, alienated, and desperate little people.

The function of the multi-doored set is to insure that the audience is always conscious of two groups of characters; those presently in view and those just on the other side of the door. To heighten our awareness someone invariably starts to open a door, which would lead to some shocking revelation, then changes her mind at the last moment. When adroitly handled, the technique produces the sensation of several sets of characters occupying the same space at the same time.

How the Other Half Loves neatly combines the lives of the two principal couples to create a clever counterpoint of class values and attitudes, brightly set off at

the end of the first scene as the two wives prepare for their very different dinner parties. The simultaneous dinner parties provide us with a farcical cleverness, but the scene is ultimately effective because the points it makes about class differences and social relationships including marriage have the ring of truth. Again, what appears as a merely clever piece of playwriting virtuosity becomes a means to heighten the comic reality which is the heart of the play. The play is not only about class differences but about the way people's lives are inextricably tied to each other, not in a smooth, sane, orderly way, but in broken, disorderly bits. These people are like birds crowded together in an incommensurable cage, perpetually in each other's way, fighting for space, but somehow always maintaining the established pecking order. Anyone who has had to clean a birdcage knows what is apt to happen to the poor bird on the bottom perch of a crowded cage, and, indeed, the pathetic William's place in this hierarchy is firmly established by an indelible visual metaphor when his employer's blocked water closet overflows directly onto his head.

6. CONCLUSION

1960s England shaped Ayckbourn's plays nearly in all aspects. It is noticed that middle class was source for his settings. Under this main frame he directed his plays. Neither he nor his characters had an overtly political agenda. His plays were not set in a working-class environment; indeed, they clearly described middle-class settings and preoccupations. Most suspicious of all, he apparently aspired to writing 'well made' plays and was promising to have a great commercial potential. Resolutely sticking to comedy as his chosen genre, he quickly found star actors and managements eager to snap up his plays. It seems all too obvious that, in the cultural climate of 1960's, he would be labeled as the inheritor of the lightweight boulevardier mantle. He admires to be found under the inspiration and guidance of an experienced idiosyncratic theatre director.

Ayckbourn's technique serves to heighten not projected fantasies of the audience but the actual follies of the middle class characters. All are heightened and made ridiculous by the lengthy misunderstanding. Character plays a fairly secondary role in *Relatively Speaking*. Everybody's too busy trying to find out what's going on and 'character' doesn't have a chance.

How the Other Half Loves is really fascinating by the uses of distortion of time and space; especially the comic potentialities. Ayckbourn succeeded in writing a play with highlighted different and contrasting social lifestyles. But mainly it seemed like a great deal of fun.

The interesting thing about *Time And Time Again* is that he has upset the balance. The central character should be the driving force. He wanted to write a total vacuum, a central character who took no decisions, did nothing, everything was done for him and by simply taking no decisions he affects the whole course of the play. Doing nothing, he upsets about five lives. He comes through it in the most extraordinary way; everybody else ends up miserable. Like certain characters in life, he attracts people who have an irresistible impulse to push him in one direction, but he slides out of the push. Some people get angered by this type, others get concerned.

It is obviously recognized that *Relatively Speaking* and *How the Other Half Loves*, demonstrate Ayckbourn's mastery of plot construction and characterization, the basis of traditional English comedy. In such works as *Time and Time Again*, he started "upsetting the balance" giving his unique stamp to plot, hero, and tone, which increasingly darkened. His contribution to theatre has been recognised as both the Olivier's Special Award and a Special Tony Award.

10. BIBLIOGRAPHY

AYCKBOURN Alan, Time And Time Again, Samuel French, London, 1973.

AYCKBOURN Alan, How The Other Half Loves, Samuel French, London, 1986.

AYCKBOURN Alan, Relatively Speaking, Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough, 2007.

BILLINGTON Michael, Macmillan Modern Dramatists, Alan Ayckbourn Second Edition, 1990.

DUKORE Bernard F. Alan Ayckbourn A Casebook, Garland Publishing, Inc. New York & London, 1991.

HEINEMANN Christopher Rowe, Britain 1929-98, Oxford, 2004.

HOLT Michael, Alan Ayckbourn, Northcote House in association with The British Council, 1999.

LEVIN Bernard, The Pendulum Years, Icon Books, Cambridge, 1970.

MARWICK Arthur, The Sixties- Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998.

MARWICK Arthur, British Society Since 1945, Pelican Middlesex, 1982.

PETHERAM Liz, Britain In The 20th Century, Nelson Thornes Chester, 2001.

WHITE Sidney Howard, Alan Ayckbourn, Twayne Publishers, Boston, 1984.

National Statistics Online

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/>

www.alanayckbourn.net

APPENDIX

APPENDIX - A



Relatively Speaking



How The Other Half Loves



How The Other Half Loves



Time And Time Again



Time And Time Again

APPENDIX - B

Alan Ayckbourn: The Definitive List Of Plays (1959 - present day)

This is a complete and definitive list of Alan Ayckbourn's plays and other writing to the present day. For in-depth details on specific plays, click on the play title. For a downloadable version of this list, visit: alanayckbourn.net

Full Length Plays (composer - where applicable - in parenthesis)

1959	The Square Cat	1984	A Chorus Of Disapproval
1959	Love After All	1985	Woman In Mind
1960	Dad's Tale	1987	A Small Family Business
1961	Standing Room Only	1987	Henceforward...
1962	Christmas V Mastermind	1988	Man Of The Moment
1963	Mr Whatnot	1988	Mr. A's Amazing Maze Plays
1965	Meet My Father - <i>subsequently</i> Relatively Speaking (revised 1967)	1989	The Revengers' Comedies (pt. 1 & pt. 2)
1967	The Sparrow	1989	Invisible Friends
1969	How The Other Half Loves	1990	Body Language - <i>subsequently</i> Body Language (revised 1998)
1970	The Story So Far... - <i>subsequently</i> Me Times Me Time Me (revised 1971) - <i>subsequently</i> Me Times Me (revised 1971) - <i>subsequently</i> Family Circles (revised 1978)	1990	This Is Where We Came In
1971	Time And Time Again	1990	Callisto 5 - <i>subsequently</i> Callisto#7 (revised 1999)
1972	Absurd Person Singular	1991	Wildest Dreams
1973	The Norman Conquests - <i>comprising</i> Fancy Meeting You - <i>subsequently</i> Table Manners (retitled 1974) Make Yourself At Home - <i>subsequently</i> Living Together (retitled 1974) Round And Round The Garden	1991	My Very Own Story
1974	Absent Friends	1992	Time Of My Life
1974	Confusions	1993	Dreams From A Summer House (with John Pattison)
1975	Jeeves (with Andrew Lloyd Webber) - <i>subsequently</i> By Jeeves (with Andrew Lloyd Webber) (revised 1996)	1994	Communicating Doors
1975	Bedroom Farce	1994	Haunting Julia
1976	Just Between Ourselves	1994	The Musical Jigsaw Play (with John Pattison)
1977	Ten Times Table	1995	A Word From Our Sponsor (with John Pattison)
1978	Joking Apart	1996	The Champion Of Paribanou
1979	Sisterly Feelings	1997	Things We Do For Love
1979	Taking Steps	1998	Comic Potential
1980	Suburban Strains (with Paul Todd)	1998	The Boy Who Fell Into A Book
1980	Season's Greetings	1999	House & Garden
1981	Way Upstream	2000	Virtual Reality
1981	Making Tracks (with Paul Todd)	2000	Whenever (with Denis King)
1982	Intimate Exchanges - <i>comprising</i> Events On A Hotel Terrace Affairs In A Tent	2001	Damsels In Distress - <i>comprising</i> GamePlan FlatSpin RolePlay
		2002	Snake In The Grass
		2002	The Jollies
		2003	Sugar Daddies
		2003	Orvin: Champion Of Champions (with Denis King)
		2003	My Sister Sadie
		2004	Drowning On Dry Land

Love In The Mist	2004 Private Fears In Public Places
A Cricket Match	2004 Miss Yesterday
A Game Of Golf	2005 Improbable Fiction
A Pageant	2006 If I Were You
A Garden Fete	2008 Life & Beth
A One Man Protest	2008 Awaking Beauty (with Denis King)
1983 It Could Be Any One Of Us - <i>subsequently</i>	2009 My Wonderful Day
It Could Be Any One Of Us (revised 1996)	2010 Life Of Riley

Revues (composer in parenthesis)

1978 Men On Women On Men (with Paul Todd)	1984 The Westwoods (with Paul Todd)
1980 First Course (with Paul Todd)	1985 Boy Meets Girl (with Paul Todd)
1980 Second Helping (with Paul Todd)	1985 Girl Meets Boy (with Paul Todd)
1981 Me, Myself & I (with Paul Todd)	1986 Mere Soup Songs (with Paul Todd)
1983 Incidental Music (with Paul Todd)	1998 Cheap And Cheerful (with Denis King)
1984 The 7 Deadly Virtues (with Paul Todd)	

One Act Plays

1962 Countdown	1984 A Cut In The Rates
----------------	-------------------------

Plays For Children And Young People

1969 Ernie's Incredible Illucinations	2003 The Ten Magic Bridges
1989 The Inside Outside Slide Show	2004 Miranda's Magic Mirror
1999 Gizmo	2005 The Girl Who Lost Her Voice
2002 The Princess And The Mouse	

Adaptations (original author and translator - where applicable - in parenthesis)

1982 A Trip To Scarborough (R B Sheridan)	1989 Wolf At The Door (Henry Becque; translation by David Walker)
1985 Tons Of Money (Will Evans & Valentine)	1999 The Forest (Ostrovsky; translation by Vera Liber)

Screenplays

1974 Service Not Included

Books

2002 The Crafty Art Of Playmaking

The Grey Plays (Performed but never published and not included in the canon)

1960 Double Hitch	1983 Backnumbers (with Paul Todd)
1961 Love Undertaken	1987 An Evening With PALOS
1962 Follow The Lover	1992 Between The Lines (Book: Paul Todd / Lyrics: Alan Ayckbourn)
1975 Dracula (sketch from What The Devil!)	2005 Untitled Farce
1977 The Jubilee Show	

APPENDIX - C

Relatively Speaking Quotes By Alan Ayckbourn

"I wrote this play for Scarborough, for people who had had their holidays spoilt by rain." (*Financial Times*, 8 July 1971)

"[Stephen Joseph] was preparing the advance publicity and he needed a title. I said *Meet My Mother*; he changed *Mother* to *Father*, and I'm still very proud because I got the line in near the end of the play.... I avoided Stephen for a week because I thought he wouldn't like it, then one day he just said 'You've written a very funny play.'" (*Financial Times*, 8 July 1971)

"I can see now that *Relatively Speaking* was a fairly deliberately devised play. When I was writing it, Stephen Joseph said (and it's a good tip that I always try to pass on) that there's absolutely no harm whatsoever, whatever you think of the state of the theatre and playwriting in general, to try and write one 'well-made' play; that is, a play that, in general terms, is fairly actor-proof, well-constructed and which works. If you want to break the rules of theatre, he said, its very useful to know what the rules are. Breaking them by accident can lead to all sorts of trouble later. *Relatively* is a little machine of a play." (*Plays And Players*, September 1975)

"Peter Bridge said "that title's very vulgar and seaside, darling, really not suitable for the West End." So we went round and round and round until we came across a Noel Coward title that he hadn't written!" (*Tea For Two with Alan Ayckbourn and Richard Derrington*, *Stephen Joseph Theatre*, 24 July 2008)

"Plays like *Relatively Speaking* are continually knotting and unknotting. There's never a moment when somebody isn't discovering or about to discover something." (*Personal correspondence*)

Ten Relative Facts

This article was first published in the summer 2007 edition of the Stephen Joseph Theatre Friends' newsletter, Newsround.

1) *Relatively Speaking* was originally titled *Meet My Father* when it opened at the Library Theatre, Scarborough, on 8 July 1965.

2) *Meet My Father* is the seventh of Alan's plays and marked his first play at the Library Theatre for four years. His previous two plays had premiered at the Victoria Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent.

3) *Meet My Father* was the last Ayckbourn play to be directed by Stephen Joseph and the final Ayckbourn play not to have its world premiere directed by the author himself.

4) Alan Ayckbourn's first chance to direct the play was for an amateur production. He directed Leeds Art Theatre in 1970 in a production at Leeds Civic Theatre.

5) *Relatively Speaking* is remembered as Alan's first West End hit, but it was not the first of his plays to go into the West End. The first was actually *Mr Whatnot* in 1964; *Relatively Speaking* was just Alan's first West End success.

6) *Relatively Speaking* opened in the West End on 29 March 1967 directed by Nigel Patrick and starring Richard Briers, Celia Johnson, Michael Hordern and Jennifer Hilary. It closed on 3 February 1968.

7) *Relatively Speaking* was the first Ayckbourn play to be published. Despite being given to the publishers Evans in 1967, the play took more than two years to reach publication.

8) *Relatively Speaking* is the first Ayckbourn play to be adapted for television and the only one to have been adapted twice for British television – both by the BBC – with productions in 1969 and 1989.

9) Despite fervent attempts to mount the play on Broadway from 1967, the play was not professionally produced in New York until 1984. Its American premiere was in 1970 at Westport Country Playhouse, where it was also revived in 2007.

10) Alan Ayckbourn has revived the piece professionally twice. The first time in 1977 at the Stephen Joseph Theatre In The Round with Robin Herford, Diane Bull, Robert Austin and Alison Skilbeck. The second time in 2007 at the Stephen Joseph Theatre.

How The Other Half Loves Quotes By Alan Ayckbourn

"Light comedy must be recognisable to people in the street. The difficulty is to make it fun and relevant." (*The Guardian*, 7 August 1970)

"I'm interested in theatrical time in the Priestley sense. But you can become more complicated and more damned ingenious until no-one understands the plot at all." (*The Guardian*, 7 August 1970)

"My secretary had just got married and wanted a flat, and I said 'There's one going two doors down'. So she got that one. Of course the flats were identically designed and unless you were some weird eccentric you had to put your furniture in a certain way - your television there because of the plug in the wall there, and the dining hatch was there. Often I'd go for a drink with her and her husband and one would say 'I wonder which flat we're in'. And I started to think that if you actually ripped the lid off those boxes and looked in, you'd see people treading these identical little patterns, wearing out the same bit of carpet. I was also thinking 'I don't think I can write a full-length play this year. I'm a bit exhausted'. So I thought 'I'll try writing two at once. Let's be clever'. So I got this family going this way, and this the other, and eventually they tied up. I've always wanted to play around." (*The Times*, 4 July 1973)

"It was a couple of years later that I was to meet the first of my mega-stars, Robert Morley, when I wrote *How The Other Half Loves*. I didn't write it for him, I actually wrote it for my company. The thing I was learning was how to write for groups of actors. I've never been against the star system. What I've hated is the idea of a vehicle for a star, and I've always tried to write equal parts, equal shares for actors. I hope I've never written a part that I wouldn't have played myself. To that extent I was writing team plays. But I came to a head-on collision for the first time with Robert Morley. He was due to play one sixth of a play of mine which increasingly became one third, one half and then three quarters. Now, if you employ Robert Morley there is no point trying to pretend he isn't there. He is very very big, and big too with his audiences. People who pay to see plays by unknown writers in fact pay to see people like Robert Morley. So, in the end one let him out of his cage

and he rampaged about the play, and it was the longest run I've ever had. He said, very sweetly, to me at the end - he knew I was wincing a lot as yet another scene vanished - ... I've left a trail of sadder but richer writers behind me'. I was forced to agree with him." (*Drama, Volume 1, 1988*)

"It all seems rather manic, and I thought the dialogue desperately heavy. I hope I've got a bit cleverer than that; it's not that I've abandoned humour, but I think perhaps there are more serious things to write about than dinner parties going adrift." (*Sunday Telegraph, 20 November 1988*)

"For my second successful play, *How the Other Half Loves*, I was trying to solve how to tell a story about two couples and to cross cut between them in the round. I was bored by the usual solution, which was to divide the stage down the middle, because in the round, if you're sitting here, and the stage is divided there, then that flat is a long way from you and will be throughout the evening; while this flat, being in the foreground, will always be more important than the other, although the action you might want them to think is important is actually in the other. So how do you mix it? Then I thought: put them one on top of the other! Suddenly, a whole realm of comic possibilities opened up. There was Mr A sitting on the same sofa as Mr B, and suddenly all that happened; then I had a thought, we'll observe them on the same night. So out of necessity, came a comic motor." (*Plays International, July 2000*)

"When you do it [*How The Other Half Loves*] in a proscenium (theatre), everyone's trying to make sure that the wallpaper alternates, so the thing looks like a complete cat's cradle with doors everywhere. The thing about the round is that you have no wallpaper and minimal furniture, and just the pattern on the floor. The props are never really denoted as being particularly one or the other family's, so you let the story unwind in a much freer way. It's the first play in which I played with time and space". (*Leeds Guide, June 2009*)

"We've left it where it is [for Alan Ayckbourn's 2009 revival], in the 1960s. It's a child of its time really. Obviously the whole social scene has shifted somewhat. Men and women's attitudes have changed quite a lot. It's interesting that in that

period when I was writing, none of the women worked. They were all so-called housewives. Now you would probably have a job to write a play about a woman without at least having a job. It's very interesting to see the social shift. Audiences today sit and say, 'Gosh, I would never take that'.

"It's a very old one in my canon. It's like a very old friend and was my second big hit after *Relatively Speaking*. With being my second play, it really sort of established me. Everyone always says, if you're doing your first play and it's a success, 'Oh well, he's maybe a one-play wonder', but once you've got a second one in, they say, 'Oh he's got some legs!'."(*The Sentinel*, 4 September 2009)

Time And Time Again Quotes By Alan Ayckbourn

"The play invites us to explore the tale of an eternal quadrangle. A girl and three men. One man she wants, one she used to want and another she doesn't want at any price. The one she doesn't want doesn't want her associating with the one she does want; whilst the one she used to want mistakenly thinks she wants the one she doesn't want. As for the one she does want – he doesn't know what he wants." (*Time And Time Again programme*, 1983)

"It's an attempt more and more to get comedy to spring out of the characters and their relationships." (*Financial Times*, 8 July 1971)

"It's a very odd play really, odd for me. Anybody who has seen the two others [*Relatively Speaking & How The Other Half Loves*] might expect to see a fair old mess-up, people mistaking each other for each other's grandfathers - that sort of thing. This is about a sort of misfit in a rather conventional family who thinks he has fallen in love with a girl who thinks she has fallen in love with him; and neither of them have really, and he finishes up without her. How's that for a plot; it really isn't a story. Some people say the ending is sad, others say it's about how men can do perfectly well without women if they have to. I don't think it's about that. Some people can do without some people. This just happened to finish the way it did. One avoided the boy gets girl ending because it was dishonest, having worked a whole play about two people who are not destined to get together." (*Plays And Players*, September 1972)

"It was a very simple plot, by my standards, and the characters grew. It was an experiment in which I wrote about a totally inert central figure. Most plays have at the centre a motor force character, but this man does nothing, makes no decisions. What he does is opt out all the time." (*The Times*, 4 July 1972)

"There's a terrible man in *Time and Time Again* called Graham, who is the monster bore of all time. He rambles on at great length. He was a wonderful man to speak and he got bigger and bigger when I was writing it. I had to cut it down a bit because one got his speech patterns going and one was able to talk as a Graham for hours on any topic." (*The Times*, 5 January 1976)

"I remember it, I suppose, as a conscious effort on my part to break away from mechanical plays where the plots ground on remorselessly and the characters were borne along by the tide of events.

"I resolved to try and let my characters dictate the action and not vice versa in future. Actually, with *Time And Time Again*, it didn't quite work out that way as my central character Leonard is almost entirely inert. A sort of Judo hero who prefers to use the body-weight of his adversaries to create movement.

"All the rules of playwriting tell you to concentrate on a central character directing events and driving the plot. Leonard is driven not by plot but by the actions of the other characters." (*Correspondence*, 1984)

"I wrote this play in 1971 when society - certainly the trimmings, mobile phones, computers, social morals, sexual attitudes - were rather different. Sexual attitudes have changed, certainly for women, who have gone extreme and then come back again! What doesn't seem to have changed at all are the attitudes of men and women. They still want the same things. They still go to equal lengths to get them; and they still go to even greater lengths, occasionally, to prevent others from getting them. To that extent, nothing's changed. I think there's still plenty we can recognise of ourselves in *Time And Time Again*....

"We did it in July 1971 at The Library theatre and again in the 'middle building', the Westwood, in 1986, and it's one of the plays in the canon that's not done as much as the others, although it was very popular when it was first done. I

thought it would be a nice contrast to my latest play, *Improbable Fiction*, and it's also probably new to a lot of the audience, and some of the cast were not born when it was written!

"You need a pond in it, and we managed to flood the Reading Room at The Library the first time we did it, which made me rather unpopular. I'm doing this new production in period, simply because of those changes of attitude that might seem a little strange now, Not only mobile phones but also Leonard going into bat in cricket boots with studs; they don't have them now... I remember when we first did it, the Chappell brothers, Ian and Greg, were the anchor of the Australian team and they both came to see it. I was really pleased that the cream of the Aussies watched it!

"The scheming girl, the guy who opts out, the lecherous man, it all seems a bit sleazy now but that gives this play another life. It was probably the third play of mine that went into the West End, and when it was offered to Tom Courtenay by director Eric Thompson, he expressed grave doubts, saying it wasn't as funny as the other two. I remember his nervous reaction that he might have bled all the humour out of it as he was known as a serious actor at the time, and I said, 'No, no, it's just a different play'. Though it was darker than my earlier plays it was by no means as dark as I was to become, it was medium dark, but I knew I was writing something that was a departure for me. I thought, 'I hope this is going to work, as it starts with a funeral, and that's not normally high comedy.'" (*Yorkshire Evening Press, 29 July 2005*)

APPENDIX – D

Özgeçmiş

Adı Soyadı:RAŞİT ÇOLAK

Doğum Yeri:KARAMAN

Doğum Tarihi:23.01.1984

Medeni Durumu:BEKAR

Öğrenim Durumu

Derece	Okulun Adı	Program	Yer	Yıl
İlköğretim	G.M.KEMAL İLKOKULU		KARAMAN	1990-1995
Ortaöğretim	BİFA 2 İLKÖĞRETİM OKULU		KARAMAN	1995-1998
Lise	Y.DİL AĞIRLIKLIL KARAMAN LİSESİ		KARAMAN	1998-2002
Lisans	ATATÜRK ÜNİVERSİTESİ	İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI	ERZURUM	2002-2006
Yüksek Lisans	SELÇUK ÜNİVERSİTESİ	İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI	Konya	2007-

İş Deneyimi:	<p>COMENIUS 1.1 TO TEACH TRADITIONAL ARTS IN SCHOOLS AB PROJE KOORDİNATÖRLÜĞÜ</p> <p>COMENIUS 1.1 LOCAL TRADITIONS,CULTURE AND PERSONAL GROWTH AB PROJE KOORDİNATÖRLÜĞÜ</p> <p>LİFELONG LEARNING HOSTİNG A COMENIUS ASSISTANT PROJE KOORDİNATÖRLÜĞÜ</p> <p>COMENIUS 1.1ENERGY AND CREATIVITY AB PROJE KOORDİNATÖRLÜĞÜ</p> <p>COMENIUS 1.1 ENERGY AND SOLIDARITY AB PROJE KOORDİNATÖRLÜĞÜ</p> <p>ÖZEL ENDERUN İ.Ö.OKULU İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENLİĞİ</p> <p>ÖZEL ENDERUN FEN LİSESİ İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENLİĞİ</p> <p>ÖZEL GENÇLİK İ.Ö.OKULU İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENLİĞİ</p> <p>EREĞLİ ER ÇÖZÜM DERSANESİ İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENLİĞİ</p> <p>KOMEK İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENLİĞİ</p> <p>2005 AĞUSTOS AMSTERDAM VRİJE ÜNİVERSİTESİ</p> <p>TERCÜMANLIK(Bu konuya ilişkin referans mektubu ektedir)</p> <p>Erzurum Atatürk Üniversitesi Türk –Ermeni İlişlileri Araştırma Merkezi</p> <p>Tercümanlık</p>
Katıldığım Seminerler:	<p>New Europe New Education 11 MAYIS 2007(by Kenan Barut)</p> <p>Boosters for English Teachers 10 MAYIS 2008(INGED)</p> <p>Using Storybooks to Develop English 1Haziran 2007(by Tony Mahon)</p> <p>Etkili İletişim ve Eğitim Öğretimde Yeni Yaklaşımlar 2009(Doç.Dr Ali Murat Sünbül,Dr.Ercan Yılmaz)</p> <p>Okuduğunu Anlama Stratejileri 2010 (Doç.Dr.E.Rüya Özmen)</p>

<p>Hakkımda bilgi almak için önerebileceğim şahıslar:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">PROF.DR.BEKİR KARLIK MEVLANA ÜNİVERSİTESİ MÜHENDİSLİK FAKÜLTESİ DEKANI PROF.DR.ŞABAN ÇALIŞ SELÇUK ÜNİVERSİTESİ ULUSLAR ARASI İLİŞKİLER BÖLÜM BAŞKANI PROF.DR KAMİL AYDIN (ERZURUM ATATÜRK ÜNİVERSİTESİ İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI) YRD. DOÇ.DR. ECE SARIGÜL SELÇUK ÜNİVERSİTESİ İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENLİĞİ ÖĞRETİM GÖREVLİSİ YRD.DOÇ.DR.DİLEK ZERENLER DİLEK SABANCI KONSERVATUARI SAHNE SANATLARI BÖLÜM BAŞKANI FAZİLET UYAR (REKTÖRLÜK ÖZEL KALEM MÜDÜRÜ) DOÇ.DR. HAKAN SARI (SELÇUK ÜNİVERSİTESİ ÖZEL EĞİTİM ANA BİLİM DALI BAŞKANI)</p>
<p>Aldığı Ödüller</p>	<p>The English Access Summer Institute for English Teachers in Turkey :Dr. Craig L. Dicker (Acting Cultural Affairs Officer U.S Embassy, Ankara), Dilek Dengizek Ersanal (Executive Director Turkish American Association, Ankara)</p> <p>Konyada Anaokulu ve İlköğretim Okullarında Çevre Bilincinin Geliştirilmesi Projesi Sorumlu Öğretmeni olarak Konya Büyükşehir Belediye Başkanı Tahir Akyürek'ten plaket 06-09-2007</p>