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A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF DETERMINANTS OF FAMILY IDENTITY IN SELECTED PLAYS BY HENRIK IBSEN AND JOHN RUGANDA

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ABSTRACT

Allegiance to social categories is a universally acknowledged human phenomenon. Being a social category, family identity is an important function of human co-existence. This article analyses the traits that are emblematic of a harmonious and functional family and those that lead to its breakup thereof. Having been derived from this critic's Ph.D. thesis, truncation of detailed information has been employed to reach the necessary summary condign for a journal article. The analysis is thematic in approach and theory guided. Brecht's Realist Marxism has been used as a tool to interpret the meanings borne in the selected plays derived from Ibsen's and Ruganda's oeuvre: *A Doll's House* (1879), *Ghosts* (1881), and *Hedda Gabler* (1890) were taken from Ibsen's while *The Burdens* (1972), *Black Mamba* (1973) and *Shreds of Tenderness* (2001) were taken from Ruganda's. The analysis found out that traits called love (and not the mere fact of sharing blood ancestry), ranging from honesty to sensibility, selflessness to compassion make families succeed while competition for dominance to greed and selfishness; indifference to a desire to gain absolute control over others; violence and murder and/or suicide see families doomed to failure.



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1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Family and Identity

The master creators of the social unit recognized as the family perhaps intended it to be a cornucopia of delights. White (2015) says that a “one well-ordered, well-disciplined family tells more in behalf of Christianity than all the sermons that can be preached” (p.32). She conceptualizes her theory based on her Christian background. Unlike White who tends to advocate for a family with almost similar traits, Amber and Price (2008) contend that as families construct identity, they face competing interests and demands, increasingly elective and fluid interpersonal relationships and blended family forms that depart from prevailing ideals. They believe that each family houses unique bundles of identities. These include, but are not limited to the family’s collective identity, smaller groups (siblings, couples, parent-child) relational identities, and individual family members’ identities. This echoes Schwass and Amber (2017) who opine that a growing family over time brings, very predictably, a greater diversity in the characteristics of the family. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting’s (2004) chapter on identity reveals how identity can be regarded as a process, a phenomenon that is dynamic rather than rigid. This study too departs from traditional forms of identity such as ethnic, gender, linguistic, religious, and class to venture into an everyday, albeit taken-literally form of identity: the family. Literary families tend to mirror real-life families. It is thus something readers and theatre goers can find interesting to discuss.

Families by their very nature are so closely linked to the desire for human happiness that they invite searches for an ideal form. It is however noteworthy that one’s dream can become another’s nightmare (Gerson and Torres, 2017). This is so because the competing interests and demands (Amber and Price, 2008) therein bring about conflicts, and disintegration. Analysing family identity from a literary point of view would thus be so important a philosophical and sociological debate for anyone to ignore. This article takes cognizance of this opinion.

Research indicates that, traditionally, the family revolves around the breadwinner-homemaker theory where the husband is regarded as the head and almost always the breadwinner while the wife is the homemaker. The children ubiquitously bear allegiance to the parents, unquestionably obeying the parents’ dictates (Gerson and Torres, 2017; White, 2015). White says of the husband: “The husband is the house-band of the home treasures, binding by his strong, earnest, devoted affection for the members of the household, mother and children, together in the strongest bonds of union.” (p.211). Binding the husband-wife-children together, White elucidates that the father is the head of the household to whom the wife looks for love and sympathy and for aid in training the children. She is emphatic that the children belong to both the husband and the wife and that they look to the father for support and guidance. Nonetheless, this article argues that contemporary society is diverse, ranging from groups organized in the traditional blood lines to new forms deficient of blood kinship.

The concept of identity is something humanity has to grapple with ad infinitum. The process of constituting identities involves important continuities, ruptures and contradictions (Caplan, 2009). This observation is central to this article’s argument. As defined in this article, identity basically points to an individual’s consciousness of his/her own being. It can also include personality traits as well as an allegiance to social categories such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and religion (The Corporation for Public Broadcasting, 2004). Identity politics for instance are movements that focus on securing rights for people from various identity groups, such as women, ethnic and racial minorities, and sexual minorities. This article thus considers “family identity” as a diverse form of identity often determined by (but not limited to) means of racial, religious, sexual, gendered, financial, legal, tribal, and educational terms. These considerations, in spite of

their capacity to stand on their own and be discussed as independent identities, often find their way into family identity and influence the trajectory family identity takes. Members of a family, because of identity's fluidity, also belong to other forms of identity. They use these other identities to cement or loosen family identity. Prejudice driven identities such as racial and tribal identities can for instance strengthen or weaken family identity just like political and financial identities are wont to do.

Bwocha Nyagemi (2017) writes that plays by legendary playwrights such as Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* (1991) to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1992), from Moliere's *Tartuffe* (2000) to Strindberg's *Miss Julie* (1999), from Ionesco's *Rhinoceros and Other Plays* (1994) to Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1988), from Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* (1963) to Ruganda's *The Burdens* (1972) portray human societies with characters grappling with the question of identity. The characters are motivated by both individual and societal urges. Henrik Ibsen and John Ruganda belong here. Since identity is fluid, rather than stable, this article has limited itself to the selected plays of Henrik Ibsen and John Ruganda as used in the original thesis by this author: Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879), *Ghosts* (1881), and *Hedda Gabler* (1890); and Ruganda's *The Burdens* (1972), *Black Mamba* (1973) and *Shreds of Tenderness*(2001). The plays were selected on the basis of the comparative themes inherent in them as derived from the two historical periods in which they were constructed: late 19th century and late 20th century respectively.

1.2 Methodology

This article relies on literary characters to theorize on family identity. Themes recurrent in and cutting across the plays have been analysed in the process of constituting meaning and establishing the characteristics which both make and break this important social institution. The selection of the plays for this analysis was done via purposive sampling. This involved deliberate selection of the sample which represents the topic of this study after reading the dramatists' oeuvres. A rigorous comparison and analysis of the themes relevant to family identity has been done from a theoretical perspective. Bertolt Brecht's realist Marxism theory has been used to unveil the reading of meanings into the plays. Descriptive method of data analysis has been employed to bring out this case. The description of the themes and meanings/codes have been grouped together to form categories.

1.3 Theoretical Basis

Having been initially written as part of this writer's PhD thesis with theory forming part of the dissertation, this article has equally adopted theory as a tool for reading meaning into the plays. As stated before, this article adopts Brecht's (1930 and 1948) realist Marxist theory.

Bertolt Brecht (1930), a realist Marxist theorist, playwright and critic, contends, first, that "political theatre can activate only those who are predisposed to share its interests" (Brecht, 1930, p.56). He argues that realistic theatre presents and reinforces a particular political vision, a view of society as the inevitable product of evolution and history, and therefore not susceptible to change. For Brecht, the realism of time, which was based on bourgeois ideals and characters, was a biased representation of social reality. Brecht reinterprets Marx's concept of alienation as a theatrical ideology, in order to displace realism and show the hidden agenda of the theatre of the time. Conversely, Brecht's theatre aims to provide its audience with ways of looking at bourgeois reality (including Naturalistic Drama), as unnatural and a political ideology produced in the interests of profiteering. He thus envisages the following: first, Brecht's theatre seeks to alienate or estrange the audience from everyday reality so that it could be interpreted in a new light. He wants the audience to sit back from their views of capitalism and the society it sustained. This way, the audience has a chance to question what they initially considered as ordinary and create new reality. This article adopts this tenet which echoes Foucault (1980), who explains in his

Repressive Hypothesis why the institution of marriage claims exclusive rights to discourse on sexuality ... sex for pleasure was designated an object of disapproval, and discourse of sexuality has been controlled and confined, in the interest of the bourgeoisie: doctors, clergy, public officials, social workers, and even novelists. These have made sex determine the very being of an individual...is he a homosexual, thus identity. Foucault is of the opinion that humans need to break free from this repression by talking freely about sex and enjoying sex as a part of a larger political rebellion against bourgeois society. Second, Brecht wanted to show the possibilities of change for he believed problems were in society and, like Foucault, focused on the social classes. This article considers Brecht's Marxist view on social classes as an important aspect of family identity and employs the view in analysing the new realities created in the plays under this study with regard to family identity.

In "A Short Organum for the Theatre" (1948), Brecht says that participation in social class struggle is vital to mastering and proliferating knowledge of human social life. He says that society cannot effectively communicate under class segregation emphasizing that art is not degraded by politics. He insists that mankind's highest decisions are in fact fought out on earth not in the heavens; in the 'external' not inside people's heads. Third, he insists that his typical play is not just meant to provoke the audience into thinking about the play, but nudge them into reforming society by challenging common ideologies. This study partially agrees with him because at times the audience might be challenged by what they spectate in the theatre to consider undertaking practical steps aimed at transforming their lives as suggested by what was enacted on stage. At other times, it may not be easy for anybody to say for sure what the effects of the enactment would be on the audience. Just like what Widdowson (2000) says about poetry's effects as being imprecise, this study contends that drama's effects are also never precise, and to quote Widdowson, "they are evocative, suggestive, allusive-elusive indeed." (Widdowson, 2000, p. xiii) On his part, Brustein (1991) sees a writer as a spiritual revolutionary, not a practical one, a contrast to Brecht's stand. This means that unless the writer's work is adopted by political activists who bring about practical political change to society, a writer's ideas will just remain mental/spiritual/academic. A good example of a practical revolutionary who also happens to be a spiritual one is Nigeria's Wole Soyinka. The playwright does not just make debilitating attacks on the vices of corruption and misrule in his country through his works such as *Kongi's Harvest* (1967), but also leads political activists in demonstrating on the streets against the vices. His detention (1967-1969) during the Biafra War and going into exile (1994-1998) are indicative of the fact that he is a practical revolutionary. This article thus adopts this view that good drama nudges the audience to reform society by challenging common ideologies thus changing society at large.

Finally, Brecht writes that transformation of society is a liberating act. The theatre should convey the joy of this liberation. This is the fourth tenet adopted from Brecht's ideas for this study. He also sees scientific progress as the gateway to societal change. Cognizant of his insistence that the goal of theatre is entertainment, Brecht emphasizes that pleasure should be experienced in finding that society is changeable. He says:

Let us hope that their theatre may allow them to enjoy as entertainment that terrible and never-ending labour which should ensure their maintenance, together with the terror of their unceasing transformation. Let them here produce their own lives in the simplest way; for the simplest way of living is in art (Brecht, 1948, p.6).

The liberating act on the audience Brecht implies here originates from a change in the mind-set of the playwright first, which could then trigger crucial liberation, mental as well as physical, on the audience. Producing their (audience's) own lives in the simplest way here is

echoed by Heidegger (1962) who writes (as quoted by Selden and Widdowson below) that 'Dasein' ('being there' or 'being-in-the world') is distinctive about human existence and that our consciousness as humans projects the things of the world and at the same time is *sub-jected* to the world by the very nature of existence in the world" (Selden Widdowson & Brooker, 1997, p.52).

The reader must thus experience the 'inner life' of a text in order to understand it all. This liberation points to the various 'sub-identities' of family identity which the characters work to realise in the selected dramas. This article thus ventures to locate the various liberating acts associated with the characters' actions in the selected dramas.

Besides Brecht, other major Marxist figures include Georg Lukács who in *The Historical Novel* (1937), asserts that a novel may conduct a reader 'towards a more concrete insight into reality' and that a literary work reflects not individual phenomenon in isolation, but 'the full process of life' thus making the work a 'special form of reflecting reality'. His other works include *Studies in European Realism* (1950) and *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism* (1957). Terry Eagleton who argues in *Criticism and Ideology* (1976) that criticism must break with its ideological prehistory and become a science, is another major Marxist figure. He asserts that texts do not reflect historical reality but work upon ideology to produce an effect of the real. Ideology here refers not to formulated doctrines but all those systems of representation (aesthetic, religious, judicial and others) which shape the individual's mental picture of lived experience (Selden, Widdowson & Brooker, 1997:109). These experiences shape the identities of the characters in the selected works besides shaping those of the two playwrights who tailored these selected works. In *On Evil* (2010), Eagleton writes:

Many things – art and language, for example – are more than just a reflex of their social circumstances, but this is not to say that they drop from the skies. The same is true of human beings in general. If there is no necessary conflict between the historical and the transcendent, it is because history itself is a process of self– transcendence. The historical animal is one who is constantly able to go beyond itself (Eagleton, 2010, pp16-17).

The historical conflicts Eagleton is describing here are the ones that shape the transcendent, once evil has gone beyond fathomable human imagination. His ideas have the potential of helping a Marxist critic understand some of the motivations for human actions. Fredric Jameson, another major Marxist figure, argues that the fragmented and alienated condition of the human society implies an original state of Primitive Communism in which both life and perception were 'collective' (Selden, Widdowson & Brooker, 1997, p.114). In *The Political Unconscious* (1981), Jameson takes from Freud the essential concept of 'repression' but raises it from the individual, to the collective level. Additionally, the following have significantly contributed to Marxism: Raymond Williams in *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (1958) and *Marxism and Literature* (1977); Louis Althusser in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (1971), Walter Benjamin in *Illuminations* (1970), Theodor Adorno in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1972), and Michel Foucault in *History of Sexuality* (1976) and *The Order of Things* (1972), to mention but a few.

Brecht's ideas thus help this critic make a commentary on the correlation between family identity in literary works and social realities in contemporary society.

1.4 Analysis of Family Identity in Selected Ibsen's and Ruganda's Plays

Most of the families in the dramas under this study are as a result of marriage and blood relationships: nuclear family. Additionally, friends and business associates function as part of the family to most of the families in the selected plays. Various factors work in a web-like relationship in order to construct what would be called a family or break one thereof. This identity thus succeeds or fails because of the actions, of commission or omission, of

the characters therein. These factors are the ingredients this study sought to identify in a bid to support the extent to which this form of identity pervades the works under this study. Meaning is thus read into the selected works in order to realize this form of identity as it is brought out in the relations among the dramatis personae in an attempt to comment on the relationship between these fictitious families and families in the contemporary world.

This analysis is divided into two sections: determinants of a successful family (identity) and determinants of a failed family. The various indicators/markers are derived from the themes identified and supported in the selected plays.

1.4.1 Determinants of a successful family

White (2015) contends that humans have limited time on earth and that one can pass through this world but once. She thus urges her readers to explore the best possible ways to live a happy life. Though sounding American, this ideology can be held as a gestalt or common mirror in which humans view themselves and gauge the quality of the life they lead. Reiss (1981) sees family identity as mutually constructed, both internally among family members and externally in relation to the perceptions of outsiders based on observable family behaviour. Being a microcosm of society itself, the family certainly emerges as arguably the most important institution that humanity has ever constructed. Families are the bedrock of identity that brings about social stability (though the converse is also possible to a less extent), whether they are a nuclear family, an extended family, a clan, a tribe, or a nation.

To begin with, generosity contributes to the success of a family. Ibsen's *A Doll's House* begins with the introduction of Nora and her husband Helmer. She is presented as a generous lady, something that helps prop her family. Helmer gives Nora some money which she uses to buy Christmas presents for the family. She then shows Helmer what she has just bought:

Look, this is a new suit for Ivar – and a toy sword. I got a horse and a trumpet for Bob. And a doll and a doll's cradle for Emmy; they're very ordinary – but she always breaks things so quickly, doesn't she? And some material and handkerchiefs for the servants. I really ought to have got something better than that for old Anne-Marie (p.99).

This shows that Nora and Helmer have three children, servants (the maid and the errand boy) and old Anne-Marie (Nora's childhood nanny) as members of their immediate family. They all work together for the purpose of making the family successful. Nora is not just doing her best to make the family have a merry Christmas. She is also working even harder to repay her loan. This loan had helped provide medical care for her husband, a further indication of her generosity. She is a dedicated wife, contrary to the pusillanimous woman Helmer would like the audience to believe when he calls her a spendthrift. Compared to the Helmer family is the Alving family in *Ghosts* which constitutes Mrs. Helena Alving, Oswald Alving, Regina Engstrand, Carpenter Engstrand, and Pastor Manders. While Mrs. Alving is the mother of Oswald, Regina is the daughter of the late Capt. Alving as Mrs. Alving reveals in the drama. Mrs. Alving is equally generous, the reason she raises Regina in spite of the narrative behind Regina's birth. The two Engstrands and Pastor Manders are friends to the Alvings. This generosity is the love which brings in more members to the Alving family. Mrs Alving's story of self-sacrifice for the sake of her family, refusing to leave her husband in spite of his dissolute mannerisms, makes her Nora's contemporary. This is true to Tinka in *The Burdens* who has to put up with Wamala's violence and drunkenness for the sake of her family. Finally, Namuddu has had to put up with Berewa's avarice for the sake of her family in *Black Mamba*. Stella is generous to both her brothers, warmly welcoming Wak

home in spite of Odie's opposition and forgiving Odie in spite of his intolerable selfishness. This portrayal of women's characters' generosity at the first instance as the pillars upon which families stand would alienate or estrange the audience from everyday reality (Brecht, 1930) so that it could be interpreted in a new light.

Additionally, Mrs. Kristine Linde in *A Doll's House* can be compared to Mrs. Elvsted in *Hedda Gabler*. The two women appear to be agents of the change through their generous acts. Just like Kristine has married Krog so that, together, they can raise Krog's children (Kristine's stepchildren), Mrs. Elvsted is raising her stepchildren. This is the second family in *Hedda Gabler*, the first being the Tesmans. She has written a book with Eilert Lovborg (who used to be her children's tutor). Mrs. Elvsted says she has stepchildren (p.19). What does this tell us about Mrs. Elvsted? What about Eilert Lovborg? The two are certainly working together in raising these 'step-children' which could be interpreted as their contribution as a family to humanity's better tomorrow. Mrs. Elvsted however is later on dealt a death-blow when writer Lovborg dies of a gunshot wound which is suspected to have been self-inflicted. This death has profound effect on this family. The death of an important family member potentially results in the failure, ruin or serious injury to the family. The deaths in both *A Doll's House* (Kristine's husband) and *Hedda Gabler* (Lovborg) however do not water down the fact that raising children is an essential ingredient to the success of a family.

Second, special circumstances envisaged in Brecht's (1948) idea that good drama has the potential to alienate or estrange the audience from everyday reality so that it could be interpreted in a new light emerge in these dramas. Estranging the audience from what happens in reality would make them interpret reality differently in order to view the question of lying from an extra-moral perspective. Can lying be beneficial to families? This article attempts to support the case that lying can be a marker of family success. While Krogstad in *A Doll's House* is of the opinion that once a man has been involved in such a felony (read Krogstad's alleged forgery), he is supposed to confess his crime and take his punishment, Helmer seems averse to the idea of clemency. Nora's forgery of her father's signature in order to obtain a loan from Krogstad for the purpose of meeting her husband's medical bills is extra-moral. It however saves her husband's life. This echoes Yahya and Mulwa (1996) whose character Nunda must steal money in order to save the life of his niece Rehe-ma who is ailing. Can Nora's and Nunda's acts be judged as theft as other thefts are thefts? Nora denounces Helmer's accusation that she could corrupt her children and poison her home: "It could never be true" (p.127). She could be right because besides the loan she had taken for the purpose of saving her husband's life, Nora has not engaged in any other 'lying' that might end up corrupting her children or poisoning her home. Besides, she is faithfully repaying the loan she had 'fraudulently' obtained. Helmer could thus be overstating his estimation. Nora thinks of her children all the time: "I have three children" (p.128) which portrays her as a responsible lady. Krogstad is intent on using Nora's 'theft' to ruin the Helmer family. This appears to have drained Nora's energy and withered her vitality. She has begun to seriously think about the idea of quitting altogether. She engages old Anne-Marie in a serious talk about children being left by their mother, and whether they would "forget their mother if she went away for ever?" (p.129) Nora is trying to come to terms with the likely consequences of her impending action. She wonders how Anne-Marie could have given up her child:

Nora: Listen, Anne-Marie, tell me. I've often thought
about
 this, how could you bear to give your child
away to
 strangers?

Anne-Marie: But I had to, I was going to be little Nora's nanny.

Nora: Yes, but surely you didn't want to?

Anne-Marie: Where else could I have found such a good place? A
poor girl who's got herself into trouble has to
make
the best of things. That good-for-nothing man
wasn't
going to do anything for me (p.129).

Anne-Marie's words point to the necessity of making hard decisions. She had to make the best of things when she decided to put her daughter up for adoption. Nora wonders whether Anne-Marie's daughter had forgotten her mother. Anne-Marie responds: "No, she hasn't. She wrote to me when she was confirmed and again when she got married" (p.129). Nora reaffirms the fact that old Anne-Marie was a good mother to her when she was little. What does this exchange imply? The answer to this: perhaps the love and understanding Anne-Marie displays could have made her raise Nora the way she would have done her own biological daughter. She had given up her daughter because the situation she was in at that time would not have been best for raising a baby. This position helps Nora make a decision about her children's future. Anne-Marie thus, by raising Nora as Nora's nanny, qualifies as a family member of the Helmers. The power she has that has transformed Nora's life and made her (Anne-Marie) a permanent feature of Nora's life is the love she has. Her promise to raise Nora's children indirectly supports Nora's decision to lie in order to obtain a loan for the purpose of saving her husband's life. It is this power of love, which turns strangers into a family, which would change society according to Brecht's (1930) understanding of what good drama ought to possess.

Helmer's holier-than-thou attitude toward Nora's forgery nonetheless ends up forcing Nora out of the family. This article argues that lying/forgery intended to obtain money for the sake of saving human life is preferable to the fear of incarceration (and perhaps letting the indisposed person lose their life). Nora's decision to leave Helmer is what Brecht (1948) calls a liberating act. It liberates both Nora and society at large for any human being who believes in the sanctity and dignity of human life must indubitably do anything necessary to preserve that life.

In Nora's case, both Helmer and Krogstad cling to the dictates of the law, while Nora asserts that such a law, just like King's (1963) call, should not be obeyed (Martin Luther King, Jr embraced, in his Civil Rights Campaigns, Henry David Thoreau's ideas derived from his essay 'Civil Disobedience' (1849). Mohandas Gandhi had also adopted this nonviolent revolt in his campaign against racist oppression both in South Africa and India). Both King's and Gandhi's operational techniques concur with Brecht's idea that good drama could nudge the audience into transforming society (1930). This transformation invariably involves a revolt against unjust laws which favour rigorous bureaucracy at the expense of humanity.

Would Nora have done as Krogstad expected her to do? Her actions prove the contrary. She exudes the confidence and the determination of a rebel character who would justify her zeal to break the law in order to save human life. Brecht (1948) insists that mankind's highest decisions are in fact fought out on earth not in the heavens; in the 'external' not inside people's heads. He insists that his typical play is not just meant to provoke the audience into thinking about the play, but nudge them into reforming society by challenging common ideologies. Thus, viewed as a metaphor for the members of contemporary society, Nora's actions have the potential of reforming society.

From the foregoing argument, lying is constructed by individuals or by groups of individuals. Had there been such a thing as objective (but is there universal objectivity anyway?) lying, this article would have responded differently. Does lying become necessary at certain points in one's life? Absolutely. The use of such phrases as cheat death/fate implies avoid-

ing death (read bad situations) by either sheer luck or clever manoeuvre. The implication here is that if lying (whatever it might be taken to mean) would save one's life, a people's lives, or help prevent catastrophes, then such an act would be welcome.

Nora thus endures pain here for the sake of her family. Kristine's selfless act of marrying Krogstad in order for Krogstad to drop charges against Nora can be read as a pain she endures (though she could be expressing her altruism, and perhaps genuine desire for Krogstad's love and companionship) for the sake of her friend. She thus gains a new identity as a member of Krogstad's family. Her actions might be read as lying in the first instance in order to save her friend Nora, but is she? Her need for companionship suggests that her generosity has helped her kill two birds with one stone. This drama thus has the ability to change society as Brecht (1948) envisages.

Third, can death help a family succeed? Lovborg's death is partially a function of Hedda's attempt to make her family succeed financially by ensuring Lovborg does not compete with Mr. Tesman for the university job Mr. Tesman has been promised. His getting out of Tesman's way is thus supposed to contribute the success of her family (*Ghosts*, p.78). Similar to Lovborg's death in *Hedda Gabler*, which could have been deliberate or accidental, is Wamala's death in *The Burdens*. These deaths are related to both the dead men's indulgence in alcohol or rather what Tinka alleges to have been the sins of the flesh in her case. How does the death of Wamala come about? Tinka claims that Wamala has what she calls a 'bitch' when she says: "I'm going to kill that bitch of yours, I warn you" (p.26). This alarms Wamala who wonders what Tinka's problem is. Tinka responds: "She's making all of us suffer" (p.26). Tinka's insinuation that Wamala has what Nyakake later refers to as "our other mamas" (p.77) regularly causes violence in the family (whose obvious impact on the children's lives cannot be overemphasized). Wamala has not been shown in any scene carousing with women, an explanation that perhaps these 'other mamas' Nyakake is talking about could have been constructed by Tinka in a bid to justify her bitterness. This 'other mamas' business has the potential of breaking families besides motivating them to adopt the same (Kaija talks of retaliating against his father): "If he goes on hitting you, one day he'll have to settle it with me. (*Emphatically*): One day he will" (p.68). Kaija is apparently mad at his father's battering of his mother. Tinka ultimately kills Wamala which results in Tinka's arrest. This murder could be interpreted as a portal through which their children would realize peace of mind just like Lovborg's death foreruns Hedda's suicide and Tesman's subsequent freedom. The Wamala children's lives have been characterized by want, both of physiological and emotional satisfaction. By pushing him out of the picture, Wamala's death could help his children enjoy their childhood and probably grow up into dependable adults. Compared to Hedda's plot of Lovborg's death which could help Mr. Tesman obtain his appointment as a university professor (and perhaps enable him find an emotionally mature woman for a spouse in the wake of Hedda's suicide), Wamala's death sets his children free. This justification is a reverberation of Morrison's (1987) *Beloved*, which tells the story of Sethe, an ex-slave haunted by memories and by the ghost of her daughter, Beloved, whom she had killed as an infant to prevent her from living as a slave. Whether the deaths of Wamala and Hedda would haunt their spouses is a matter of conjecture. These deaths function as a metaphor for the actual departure (read via separation or divorce in the case of marriage), from one's life, of those who bring about little meaning/success. Nora's decision to leave her husband in *A Doll's House* could belong here. These ironies (deaths resulting in social change) could bring about transformation of society (Brecht, 1948).

The fourth marker of success insofar as family identity is concerned is forgiveness. This is the glue that cements members of the family together. While Stella and Wak want forgiveness and togetherness (functions of love) to prevail, Odie wants hate and polarity to determine the future of this form of identity. The audience would have interacted, in reality, with characters who appear similar or closely related to Odie. Are there benefits associated with Odie's preferred schism in his family? What would probably have happened to Wak

had Stella agreed with Odie's opinion about standing in solidarity with him, as siblings borne of the same mother, in a bid to eject Wak from the family equation? This article argues that ultra-mother's 'wombism' could be compared to ultra-clanism, ultra-tribalism, ultra-nationalism, and even ultra-racism, all of which are ideological concepts that do not necessarily bring about material benefits. When humans succumb to such extreme utopian identity, a potential nihilist attractor, the basic tenets of humanity such as the Christian mantra of doing unto others what one would have others do unto oneself lose meaning. Equally, the live and let live that King (1965) alludes to when he says that humans must all learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools becomes a pipe dream! Odie's philosophy, if replicated in reality, would lead to untold injustices, violence and death!

Since search or quest for identity often involves a healing process, writers or their characters ultimately come to terms with who they are or who they want to become. Stella's words might thus shed some light on who of her two brothers is telling the truth in their altercation in *Shreds of Tenderness*: "Forgive him, Wak. Please, Wak, I beg you, forgive him. It's true the mental condition, believe me. It is true about him at Butabika Mental Hospital ..." (p.85). Could Odie's behaviour be motivated by this mental condition which he himself confesses: "There's a bloody dent underneath this cap and three months at the mental" (p.82). Odie could be capitalizing on this 'insanity' to commit what might be exonerated in both civil and criminal law. Would his condition have been quoted in his defence had he for instance been able to kill Wak? Would Stella have cited this insanity had that unfortunate eventuality (Odie murdering Wak) been possible? This relationship could probably be read as a case of someone being malicious while in power, but when someone else takes over, he does not necessarily avenge the ills committed against him. It is akin to the Christian grand narrative of heaping coals of fire on one's head. Wak and Stella ensure their family is successful by preferring forgiveness and unity to hate and division. Brecht's (1948) pleasure in finding that society is changeable is thus demonstrated here by Wak because his treatment of his brother is the change that would help create a new society.

The obstacles one must overcome during this journey thus demand profound sensibility, reconciliation, forgiveness, honesty, being one another's keeper, a deep understanding of one another's situations, self-denial, death, among others, to succeed as a family. These traits have been collectively designated love in this article. Interestingly, those who exude it do not necessarily share blood genealogy.

1.4.2 Determinants of a failed family

Gerson and Torres (2017) contend that the history of the family is a history of changing patterns which result from the interplay of shifting social conditions, contested ideals and people's attempts to build their lives amid the constraints of their time and place. In the nineteenth century, Henry David Thoreau wrote that "the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation" because they spend too much time worrying about money, material goods, and worldly achievement. Here, David Mamet tells of twentieth-century desperate men who resort to desperate measures because they are part of the system of "corporate slavery" (The Corporation for Public Broadcasting, 2004). Do the characters in the selected plays think achievement and financial success are so important to them that they overlook family-friendly attributes that are invaluable? Cut-throat competition for dominance and material possessions, this article argues, coupled with selfishness, betrayal, egotism, greed, irresponsible parenthood, murder, licentiousness, suicide, constant fights between spouses and siblings, and indifference are a sure recipe for family failure not only in the selected plays but also in contemporary society.

Perhaps indifference and condescension are the greatest precursors of all the indicators of families doomed to failure. These combined constitute the first determinant of family failure observed in all the six selected plays. Both men and women exude these. Taken as metaphors for decisions made by leaders of larger groups of people (tribes, nations, and

even world leaders), certain decisions leaders make return to haunt humanity later on. How do subsequent generations pay for the 'sins' of their progenitors? Helmer accuses Nora in *A Doll's House* of being irresponsible saying Nora's trait is congenital: "All your father's fundamental irresponsibility has been passed on to you. No religion, no morals, no sense of duty . . . This is my punishment for turning a blind eye to what he did. I did it for your sake – and this is how you repay me" (p.166). He does not however state the form of irresponsibility he had ignored in Nora's father. Her decision to take a loan from Krogstad without Helmer's consent perhaps informs his ranting. Nora has taken good care of both her husband and her children. She has saved her husband's life, however disagreeable her modus operandi might sound to Helmer. Noteworthy thus is not only her selflessness but her profound responsibility in the eyes of the audience. Is it condign for a couple to come to a roundtable for the first time in eight years because of a crisis as Nora wonders (*A Doll's House*, p.169)? Helmer's indifference and condescension result in the failure of his family. He only orders her around without giving her a chance to be heard. Evident here is the fact that change might not be easy to realize in a family where genuine and regular arguments insofar as conflict resolution is concerned do not exist. Brecht (1948) emphasizes that pleasure in drama should be found in finding that society is changeable. Helmer's egocentricism and indifference would thus cause the audience to take a new look at reality in order to change their own lives.

Indifference and condescension are expressed through infidelity in family relationships, and this has deadly consequences as revealed in *A Doll's House*. Harking back to Helmer's belief that lies can infect and contaminate the whole home, Dr. Rank's spinal consumption is seen as a glaring vindication of this belief. Just like Oswald Alving's father in *Ghosts*, Dr. Rank's father, according to Nora, "was a disgusting creature, who kept a string of mistresses and all that sort of thing. And, you see, that's why his health has been so poor ever since he was a child" (p.130). This kind of lifestyle ends up hurting the innocent, the yet-to-be-born. What does the doctor himself feel? He says: "I am dying, after all . . . Fancy having to pay like this for someone else's sins. There's no justice in it, is there? And yet one way or another every family seems to suffer from some kind of implacable retribution" (p.138). Dr. Rank understands that he has to die for his "father's carefree army days" (p.138). Does this happen in real life, a case in which a parent's infidelity results in untold pain for their children? Certainly. Brecht's (1948) insistence that his typical play is not just meant to provoke the audience into thinking about the play, but nudge them into reforming society by challenging common ideologies comes into effect here. This article argues that men and women of good conscience ought to join hands in fighting behaviours that hurt posterity.

Helmer and Dr. Rank's father in *A Doll's House* are not different from Captain Alving and Pastor Manders in *Ghosts* who conspire to transform predictability into plausibility using misogynistic religious arguments. Self-interest is their main object. Helena had regained her freedom by leaving her husband, the late Captain Alving, but Pastor Manders, having conducted Helena's and Alving's wedding, later, convinced Helena to return to the man who "was just as dissolute when he died as he had been all his life" (p.49). He tells Helena: "it was vouchsafed for me to lead you back to the path of duty – and home to your rightful husband" (p.47). He had thus made her return to the life of misery for nineteen years. Helena had briefly tasted freedom, having mustered courage to leave her abusive husband, but later Manders became to her what Fromm (1942) calls a mechanism of escape. She thus escaped from her freedom by returning to her husband, a debacle that crystallized her sentiment about his philandering resulting in her revelation of what ailed young Mr. Oswald Alving. Similarly, in *Hedda Gabler*, Hedda treats all the members of Tesman's family with condescension. She has just gotten married to George Tesman who has been living with Auntie Julia (Miss Tesman), besides Auntie Rina (who is ailing) and Berte (the maid). Hedda's arrogance seems to be at play when she refuses to refer to Miss Tesman as Auntie Julia

(the name George calls Miss Tesman with a sense of fondness). Hedda tells George: “If you like I’ll try to call her Aunt, all right? But that’s the best I can do” (p.16). George is not amused by this. He reminds her of her latest identity: “It’s that now you’re one of the family” p.16). Hedda seems unconcerned. She shrugs it off: “I can’t see what ...” (p.16). Her sneering attitude toward George’s family and friends, coupled with her blurred sense of judgment, ultimately leads to her suicide.

Closely related to this is Wamala in *The Burdens*. His assumed superior intellectual mien makes him hold his wife with contempt and even dismisses her efforts at fending for the family. He wants Tinka to pay obeisance to him so he could feel he is the head of the house, “not a door-mat for every bastard to wipe his shoes on” (p.35). He feels that a man deserves respect from a woman whether that man is poor or not. This stereotype reechoes Pastor Manders’ misogyny in *Ghosts*. Clear and enduring here is the fact that respect must be earned, not just demanded on a sexist platform. As a force of reaction, Wamala reminds the audience of the common ideology Brecht (1948) wants to change in order to transform society. Besides, Berewa in *Black Mamba* condescendingly tells Namuddu that she sits like “a little rat waiting to be fed all the time” (p.3). He then quips that he is fed up with her. This supposedly makes Namuddu believe that they can indeed obtain money from Prof. Coarx by engaging in a ménage à trois. Berewa’s arrogance echoes Odie’s in *Shreds of Tenderness* whose actions would make the audience reevaluate their perception of what siblings are supposed to mean to one another. His sexist-laden orders to Stella not to shout: “I hate it when people shout, particularly women – sister or no sister. Keep that in your head, Stella” (p.6) portends ill for family unity. He comes out in the play as a know-all who desires to have all. The change Brecht (1930) envisages is thus aimed at overturning this arrogance (a huge anti-family trait) for the sake of realizing transformation in society.

Second, drunkenness/alcohol abuse as a trait which revolves around the selected plays has a negative traction on the institution of the family. Drunkenness in this article is emblemized by abusive consumption of substances not only in the selected works but also in real life situations which often results in a blurred sense of judgment. Besides harming the health of the abuser, it too harms that of their family resulting in constrained family identity. Commitment by family members may vary when it comes to maintaining certain enactments of family identity. This depends both on personal meanings and scripted, rule-like social behaviors (Bielby, 1992). Such enactments include financial and moral support to one another among family members. How does drunkenness erode commitment to family values in the selected plays? In *Ghosts*, Engs is painted as a man who has his own family. This is besides belonging to the Alvings family as has been seen earlier. How does he become a family man of his own? Engstrand is approached in the wake of Johanna’s conception and subsequent birth of Regina, and persuaded to marry Johanna. This becomes the basis upon which he founds a family. He lives with Johanna (who dies later) prompting Regina to shift from home in order to live with Madam Alving. Unlike Capt. Alving who is described as a dissolute person, Engstrand is just painted as a man who drinks alcohol though the extent to which he does it is not clearly indicated in the work. When Regina accuses him of calling her a “**Fi donc**” (p.23), Engstrand defends himself saying he cannot remember using such a dirty word: “Well, that was only when I’d had a drink or two . . . the snares of this world are manifold, Regina –” (p.23).

Apart from revealing that the bottle affected his relationship with his daughter, Engstrand blames Johanna for giving herself airs and tending to elevate the late Capt. Alving above Engstrand saying “he was a Chamberlain!” (p.23) Poor Engstrand is forced to defend himself: “when your mother started making a scene, and I had to find some way of getting even with her” (p.23). Could Engstrand have engaged in verbal, and perhaps physical violence against his wife? Regina blames her father for having accelerated her mother’s journey to the grave: “Poor Mother, you certainly drove her to an early grave” (p.24). This accusation points to what could be construed as Engstrand’s unbecoming behaviour, how-

ever blurred that behaviour might be in the drama. Thus in terms of family identity, Engstrand could most probably have been an irresponsible husband. Reading drunkenness as a family breaker therefore gives the audience a chance to question this sad reality in order to create their own reality (Brecht, 1930) that would be pro-family.

Engstrand can be compared to Wamala in *The Burdens*. The family in *The Burdens* is riddled with untold challenges. The Wamalas have a litany of issues they are grappling with. Their financial position as a family has effectively consigned them to pauperism. The children's basics like a doctor and medicine for Nyakake (pp.4-5), a bed for Kaija (p.2, 5), and school fees for Kaija (p.5) have not been catered for. Wamala, the family's patriarch, has resorted to drunkenness as an antidote for the psychological pressure this financial situation has put him in as a family man: "I drink and drug myself against depression and frustration" (p.25). Tinka on her part now sells *enguli* to meet the most essential needs of her family. This situation has created a huge sense of hostility between Wamala and Tinka. Each is busy fighting to win the children over to their side which has negatively impacted the children. Kaija tells his mother that he and Nyakake are a huge burden to her (Tinka). Tinka on her part responds that it is indeed Wamala who is the burden. Kaija also wonders whether it is true that Tinka always "dragged him down... kept pulling him down and down. A millstone round his neck, he says. A big burden" (pp.4 ... 5). These counter-accusations between Tinka and Wamala probably cause their children untold psychological problems, or rather, depression. Wamala's drunkenness and subsequent irresponsibility thus lead to the breakup of his family. The suffering this family is going through could nudge the audience into doing what could potentially transform society. Finally, drunkenness ruins not only the lives of Captain Alving in *Ghosts* and Dr. Rank's father in *A Doll's House* (both of whom pass down deadly congenital infections to their sons Oswald Alving and Dr. Rank respectively) and Wamala in *The Burdens* but also that of writer Eilert Lovborg whose death leaves the lives of his partner, Mrs. Elvsted, and his children in dire straits. Brecht (1948) calls this the pleasure of suffering, the aftermath of which is possible transformation of society.

Third, sexual license and/or cheating has ruinous capacity on the success of families not only in the selected plays but also in real life. License can both be physical and emotional. Its effects on family identity are profound. Closely related to this is the way the Alving family in *Ghosts* treats the subject of lying. Capt. Alving is said to have "had his way with the girl (Johanna), and the affair had its consequences" (p.51). One of the consequences the affair had had was the birth of Regina. This effectively made Regina Oswald's sister. Having been lured by a three hundred dollars transaction, Engstrand married Johanna, the second consequence of the late Capt. Alving's reckless action. This is a deliberate distortion of reality, nay, outright lying. According to Engstrand, the money was not meant to be a bribe: "So Johanna and I agreed that the money should go towards the child's upbringing – and so it did, and I can account for every penny of it" (p.67). He thus raises Regina as his own daughter. Fortunately, Regina escapes the congenital disease that afflicts her biological (paternal) brother Oswald. Why is it not acceptable in the society of *Ghosts* for Capt. Alving to marry Johanna in addition to Helena and have both of them adopt the title Mrs. Alving? Is it impossible because of legal impediments? Is it impossible because of the societal perception/concept of marriage existing at the period (perhaps in Norway) when *Ghosts* was conceived? Would this have been treated differently were the Alvings to exist in a different part of the world?

Both the Alvings and Engstrand resonate Hawthorne's (1850) adulterous Puritan Hester Prynne who faithfully (or is it loyally?) refuses to reveal her child's (Pearl's) father. Hester prefers to go to prison than make a clean breast of her adulterous relationship. Stigmatization of perceived sinners in this period of history in New England (17th century American Puritan Society) appears to have been overwhelming. This system, probably similar to the one in *Ghosts*, is unarguably debilitating to the innocent children such as Pearl and Regina (who is now recognized as Regina Engstrand instead of Regina Alving).

What would have happened to Johanna had she not been sexually violated by the late Capt. Alving? Could she have ended up as Engstrand's wife? What if the arrangement to have her married off to Engstrand had not worked as had been envisaged, would Johanna have raised Regina alone? Probably. This happens in the world of reality. In the event that the social justice mechanisms available turn a blind eye to this injustice, the poor women raise their children alone. The lying here (Capt. Alving both in engaging in coitus with Johanna and distorting the truth about it), perpetrated in conjunction with both Mrs. Alving and Jacob Engstrand, ultimately leads to the disintegration of the Alving's family. Thus, Jakob Engstrand's actions temporarily sustain social order but perpetuate lies, vindicating Nietzsche's (1873) observation that "men do not flee from being deceived as much as being damaged by deception: what they hate at this stage is basically not the deception but the bad, hostile consequences of certain kinds of deceptions" (Nietzsche, 1873, p.2). Even the man of the cloth, Pastor Manders, thrives on lying. This this kind of lying does not bear fruit for what lies hidden ultimately comes to the surface. Lying thus has a profound bearing on family identity in *Ghosts*. The questions in this paragraph have the potential for disorganizing the common ideologies in society according to Brecht (1948) so that society can be constructed anew.

Similarly, lying is witnessed in *Black Mamba* where Berewa has resorted to have his wife earn money for him through unorthodox means. The society he lives in does not approve of this *modus operandi*. Berewa and Namuddu are introduced to the audience as a family, the duo being husband and wife who are childless. Does this fact tell the audience something about the Berewa-Namuddu marriage? The couple are introduced as currently living in Prof. Coarx's abode, Berewa as the professor's house help and Namuddu as the professor's current paid sex partner. The two could be said to be a family with Prof. Coarx as things stand at the opening of the drama. Berewa is ecstatic about the huge amount of cash that Prof. Coarx has paid Namuddu for just one night: "A hundred shillings! I must bank it straightaway" (p.1). Namuddu is equally excited: "I couldn't believe my eyes when he gave it to me" (p.1). Wrangling incessantly over the way the money should be used, Namuddu says that she wants a beautiful dress for Christmas and other things that would make her look like Namatta (a rich prostitute) while Berewa, with his catchphrase ("I believe in prosperity and good life" (p.2, 3, 9, 10, and 75) wants to keep the money himself. Namuddu complains about this affair. She reminds Berewa that her parents gave her to him alone: "My parents gave me to you, not to anybody else" (p.4). Berewa on his part counters: "You are too virtuous for these hungry times, I must confess" (p.4). This ironic state of affairs functions as the force that pulls the couple apart. Berewa reclines on Namuddu's past misadventures:

But if you are going to replace that house which you burnt down carelessly, and if we are ever to refill that kraal which we emptied when your father was sick, we can't afford to be ourselves. . . . And there is that colossal amount of money which we lavished on your brother's education (p.4).

Berewa's argument gives three reasons he believes Namuddu ought to engage in sex for pay with the professor in order to earn him (Berewa) what might be interpreted as some form of compensation. He reiterates this later when Namuddu threatens to leave him: "And the cows that I bought you with? My house that you burnt down? The money I spent on your brother? Where are they?" (p.51) Berewa introduces a new dimension to his earlier ranting: dowry. He says he had bought her! Does marriage involve one spouse buying another? Presume it were so, what are the likely consequences of one spouse claiming to have bought another? Would Berewa have thought of selling Namuddu for sex had the idea of the many heads of cattle he claims he used to buy Namuddu not have been lingering on his mind? Would he still have contemplated selling her had he not paid such exorbitant dowry as he

claims? Berewa's misogynistic attitude toward Namuddu thus introduces another angle from which absurdity is painted in this drama (aside from selling her for sex). Berewa however assures Namuddu that "As soon as the situation is under control, we can be ourselves again" (p.5). Does one put on morality depending on the situation they find themselves in? Jung (2013) has called these shifts in one's personality to suit various occasions, persona. Berewa emerges as archetypically morally fluid. He bends the arc of his moral life in order to gain financially. Predictably, this helps his case in the short term but fails to stand the test of time. What can the audience learn from Berewa's attitude towards marriage in relationship with finances? The Berewa family thus appears to be representative of a dysfunctional family, a situation that would make the audience rethink common ideologies in order to realize the change that Brecht (1948) has written about in his theory by reading the irony in the lives of the Berewas represented in Berewa's barren idea of engaging in a *ménage à trois*.

Four, unhealthy sibling rivalry in *Shreds of Tenderness* threatens to tear down families. This rivalry mirrors societies across the world where avarice results in conflicts that turn into clan, tribal, national and international wars. Odie is determined to inherit his late father's estate (becoming the source of this unhealthy rivalry) to the exclusion of his half-brother Wak. He comes out as being sadistic and hateful. Besides exuding unmatched hate for his brother, Odie aspires to exercise absolute control over everybody around him, notwithstanding family relations. He tells Stella that she is as dangerous as her brother. One would be forgiven to think that Odie and Wak are not siblings as Odie wants the audience to believe. He calls Wak a "Bloody deserter" (p.8), "a traitor" (p.9), "a bloody unforgivable traitor" (p.9). Stella wonders how Odie would say this to "a brother you haven't seen for years" (p.8). His torture of termites is an indirect warning/threat to Wak. He warns Stella not to use their relationship to defend Wak: "Don't bank on this kith and kin nonsense. It doesn't work with me. Just mind your own business" (p.11). Odie here is keen on pursuing power, totally disregarding family. When Stella says Wak is "our brother" (p.13), Odie responds: "Stepbrother" (p.13) insisting that "The uterus rules the world, not any bloody ..." (p.13). But both Odie and Stella reveal too that their brother Wak was brought up by their mother: "Our mother – who brought him up since ..." (17). This reveals the closeness these siblings are supposed to enjoy because their words point to the fact that they all were raised by one mother. Odie is looking for the lowest common denominator to displace Wak from his rightful place. This probably happens in reality whereby humans use minor or little differences among themselves to discriminate and perhaps dispossess their fellow humans. The audience thus has an opportunity to view reality alternatively in order to recreate it as Brecht (1930) advocates in his theory.

In an attempt to understand the motive behind his brother's dangerous and grasping behaviour, Wak asks: "Why did you do it, man? Me, your brother. Same father, one mother, almost. Sucked the same breasts you did at least, do you remember? Her love and tenderness and care. Why did you do it, Odie?" (p.134) Wak is trying to establish the reason Odie had sold him out to the SRB. Wak later on reveals that former SRB spies were being rounded up prompting Odie to say that he is ready to serve his term and keep his dignity (p.134). This final statement implicates Odie in spying against his brother, an act of betrayal. This is emblematic of society's betrayals: siblings, colleagues, community leaders, national leaders, and even world leaders. But, is Wak's magnanimity a guarantee of future family unity? Should crimes such as Odie's be forgiven, just like that, without putting in place appropriate deterrent mechanisms for the repeat of such crimes? This article argues that repeat of such crimes is a real possibility. The audience however have to relate this position with historical realities in various nations to vindicate or dispel it. There are cases in Africa for instance where some rulers perpetrated crimes against their own people during their first term in office, and got away with them, only for them to repeat the same crimes when given a chance to rule again. Similarly, there are cases where a father has done this, gotten away with it, only for his son to take over in the event of the father's demise, and still per-

petuate the father's evil legacy! Everybody ought, therefore, to be prepared for such an eventuality. This drama, from the Odie-Wak relationship, ends up liberating both Wak and Odie. This liberation would diffuse across society at large through the audience who would find it meaningful. Brecht's (1948) concept of liberation would thus come into play here.

The fifth and last hindrance to family success as far as family identity is concerned is violence (domestic fights between spouses and siblings, murder and suicide). These are observed in the selected plays: *Hedda Gabler*, *The Burdens*, *Black Mamba*, and *Shreds of Tenderness*. Hedda, in *Hedda Gabler*, causes Lovborg's death besides committing suicide herself. Her actions not only destroy Lovborg's and Elvsted's family but George Tesman's. Similarly, domestic violence causes the Wamalas profound distress in *The Burdens*. The regular fights between Wamala and Tinka, both verbally and physically, ultimately result in the murder of Wamala. Their children's upbringing is now in the hands of the strangers at the orphanage as Tinka is consigned to jail. Verbal fights and threats of physical violence also populate *Black Mamba*. Their consequences can only be conjectured via association. The idea that war disintegrates not just individual families, but, by extension, society at large seems to be apparent in the selected plays. When Stella (playing the role of a male refugee in *Shreds of Tenderness*) wonders what would happen to his family, wife and four children, Wak (also acting a male refugee) replies: "Some of us had to leave them behind, brother. They'll be okay for now, don't worry. Will join you later" (p.114). Refugees thus suffer profound pain in the wake of family disintegration. This enactment of the refugee situation by Wak and Stella elicits a sense of guilt in Odie who says: "Why are you tormenting me, Wak? Must I go down on my knees to convince you I am sorry? Genuinely sorry?" (p.118) Upon realizing the impact of their enactment of the refugee situation on Odie, Wak decides to forfeit his entitlement to the family inheritance: "And this house, Odie, this house, the Nile Apartment and whatever other properties father owned, keep them. You deserve them. You held the fort, you and Stella. Keep them. I have no need for them" (p.118). This act of magnanimity functions as a metaphor for self-sacrifice for the sake of the family's common good. Family identity in this case symbolizes national identity so that Wak represents a national hero who forfeits personal gain for the sake of the nation. Reality is thus reconstructed to bring about change in society as Brecht (1930) envisages.

Interestingly, it can be observed from the foregoing analysis that those who hurt family relationships are mostly blood relatives. Odie (in *Shreds of Tenderness*) hurts his blood siblings Stella and Wak just like Dr. Rank's father and Captain Alving hurt their sons Dr. Rank and Oswald Alving in *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts* respectively. Both Tinka and Wamala, just like Torvald Helmer, because of their egos, hurt their children hurt in *The Burdens* and *A Doll's House* respectively. Blood alone cannot therefore determine family success as Garth Brooks' song "Thicker Than Blood" quoted at the beginning of this article states.

1.4.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, family identity in *A Doll's House* seems to possess a huge potential for bringing about Brecht's (1948) change to society. Nora's selfless action helped save the life of her husband; Anne-Marie's selfless action helped save both her daughter and raise Nora with love and concern; Mrs. Linde's selfless action has helped save the Helmers from possible indictment by volunteering to move in with Krogstad (p.155), the power of love being demonstrably evident here. These actions are comparable to those of Engstrand who saves both Capt. Alving and Pastor Manders in their hours of need in *Ghosts*, in his case money being the power that propels him into action. Their behaviours, however morally controllable they might seem, ensure the perpetuation of the family as an identity besides bringing about the stability of the lives of the members therein.

On her part, Stella does her best to make her brothers avoid murdering each other in *Shreds of Tenderness*; by emphasizing the essence of love and forgiveness in the perpetuation of a family. On the other hand, this article demonstrates that selfish actions have the poten-

tial for breaking families: Helmer refuses to see Nora's act of forgery not just as what helped save his life, but also what ensured his family thrived without unnecessary hitches for eight years. He has preferred to stand for his honour instead of standing for the woman who saved his life, the woman who has been slaving for eight years and repaying the loan which had enabled him receive that life-saving treatment! He is thus a static character, the only one so far among the major characters in *A Doll's House*. Helmer's action is therefore catalytic: It pushes Nora out of her marriage becoming Brustein's (1991) individual: a free person. The other characters who prefer their individuality in the selected works include Hedda in *Hedda Gabler*, Tinka in *The Burdens*, and Mrs. Alving in *Ghosts*.

This article also comes to the conclusion that money can drive family members into making or breaking their families. The arrangement arcanelly made between the Alving and Engstrand to have Johanna and Regina, in *Ghosts*, have someone to call husband and father respectively sustains family stability (this could be read, to borrow from Widdowson, as a metaphor for society's mechanism for ensuring stability in the family unit) while lack of money leads to the destruction of Wamala's family in *The Burdens*, just like it has done to the Tesman's in *Hedda Gabler*.

This article finally concludes that Berewa and Namuddu, in spite of their apparently happy ending in *Black Mamba*, have no children (a gesture of unpredictable posterity) which perhaps means their existence does not deserve to be perpetuated since their family identity revolves around themselves, and a few members of their extended families (read Namuddu's father and brother). Family identity in *Black Mamba* therefore presents a situation that will make the audience reconstruct society as Brecht (1930) envisages in his theory.

Being the quintessence of the human race and her civilization, the family as an identity becomes what Ibsen (2000) calls the pillar of society, the only institution that, if successful, can make humans avoid what Nietzsche calls "**bellum omni contra omnes** [war of all against all]" (Nietzsche, 1873, p.3). The overall picture emergent from this analysis, with copious support as presented, is that families stand, not because of blood kinship but because of the willingness by the members to work together toward the success of their shared interest/project. This pulling together for the success of the shared interest is a vindication of Brooks' (2002) take that love is thicker than blood.

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