



Society's Secret Crime. Thomas Baum's *Kalte Hände* in the context of contemporary incest dramas

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In January 2003 the New South Wales Education Department's Board of Studies took the extraordinary decision to ban Jan Smiley's novel *A Thousand Acres* from the secondary school syllabus for final year Advanced English students on the ground that its theme, incest, could adversely affect students who themselves might have been victims of incestuous abuse. It was feared that the text might reactivate repressed traumatic experiences. Undoubtedly, Smiley's text could indeed cause such repressed memories to re-surface but that should not necessarily be seen negatively if it means an end to years of denial and causes the victim to seek help in order to resolve the trauma associated with it. Maintaining the secrecy will help neither the victim nor society at large; on the contrary, it will give refuge to the perpetrator. The removal of the novel because of its "possible psychological harm to students," as reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (10 January 2003), is bewildering in view of the greater psychological and emotional harm students would have experienced while being abused. But apparently it is easier to deal with the lesser of two problems: to ban a book that exposes and examines society's secret crime rather than to get society to confront its own trauma, the high incidence of incest abuse and the regrettable apathy and complacency on its part to address this issue. Smiley's text, like the plays discussed below, attempts to break through the walls of silence and secrecy that surround this social evil, and aims to promote public discussion and force society to re-examine some of its cherished beliefs and concepts.

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Jane Smiley's multi-layered novel, a modern variation of Shakespeare's *King Lear*, chronicles the decline and ultimate disintegration of a patriarchal rural family and their thousand-acre farm in Zebulon County, Iowa. Its central theme, the disclosure of father-daughter incest, serves as a focus for the exploration of patriarchal power and the repressive mechanisms which restrict and exploit women. The head of the family, Larry Cook, a highly respected member of the local community, is in reality a brutal family tyrant who not only considers it his right to rule over the women in his family but who has repeatedly sexually abused two of his three daughters, Ginny and Rose. The story is told by Ginny, the eldest of the three daughters. While her sister Rose openly rebels against her father because he subjected her to years of abuse, Ginny has repressed her experiences of sexual assault. She is reticent, compliant, and forever trying to be the peacemaker, until it comes to an open conflict between the daughters and the father, whose behaviour became increasingly erratic after he signed over his farm to his daughters. During a violent storm scene, reminiscent of *King Lear*, the father unleashes his fury and denounces his daughters. This confrontation becomes the catalyst for the re-emergence of long repressed memories. After years of denial Ginny finally gives voice to her traumatic experiences: "And so my father came to me and had intercourse with me in the middle of the night".¹ The death of the father a short time later brings little solace to the victims because the effects of the abuse continue long after his death; both daughters have, in fact, been permanently scarred. In the end Ginny tries to emancipate herself from the world of the father as she leaves the farm and the farming community behind in search of a new life and a new self.

Although incest has existed throughout the ages it is only in recent times that it has been more widely acknowledged and discussed. The media has certainly helped to raise public awareness of it but regrettably its reports are also often sensationalised² and, in any case, give us mostly only glimpses of the heinous crime. Incest is "a phenomenon of epic proportions",³ yet we only ever get to see the "tip of the iceberg".⁴ The public is offered frightening statistics,⁵ but these do not usually reveal the whole human tragedy. For a brief period the public seems to awaken from



its apathy and voices its indignation and incredulity; however, more often it adheres steadfastly to the false notions and popular misconceptions about incest, which are firmly rooted in its consciousness and not easily dispelled. The popular view appears to be that incest happens only in families which are impoverished or living in isolated rural areas. Yet scientific data proves otherwise: it is a crime which occurs in all strata of society, irrespective of professional or social standing, religious affiliation or socio-economic conditions.⁶ Neither is the widespread belief correct that the perpetrators must be some kind of deviants or perverts.⁷ They appear as average citizens and are often pillars of the community; they are “not monsters but what they do is monstrous”.⁸ What they have in common is an excessive desire to prove their masculinity and assert their male supremacy by means of sex.⁹ Another common fallacy is that the female victims have made it all up, that their incestuous abuse is merely a fantasy, a view based largely on the teachings of Freud. One of the most pernicious misconceptions is the cultural construct of the “Lolita” syndrome: the young girl as a temptress whose behaviour is responsible for leading men astray.¹⁰ This construct is, in turn, underpinned by the biblical story of Lot and his daughters (Genesis 19, 30-37), a paradigm which similarly helped significantly in shaping society’s stereotypical view of incest and its causes:

The moral of the story: 1) Father-daughter incest is not necessarily reprehensible. 2) The father is not to blame because the daughter herself wanted it. 3) The father is not to blame because he did not know what he was doing. These three tenets of the story find their echo today in the self-justification attempts of incestuous fathers, in the public’s defensive attitude, and in scientific theories.¹¹

Contemporary culture reinforces such gender stereotypes with images which actively promote the early sexualization of girls and their bodies. It goes without saying that such myths distort both the reasons for incestuous abuse as well as the question of culpability.

Banning a work like Smiley’s at a time when the discourse about incest is slowly evolving is both regressive and short sighted. The possible risk of harm to students is significantly smaller than the educative function



the text could have. Both this novel, as well as the incest plays analysed further down, set out to deconstruct the myth of the family as a safe and nurturing environment. The nuclear family, whose sanctity is codified in religion, in law and in socio-political doctrines is also often the "school", where patriarchal mores of society are learned and internalised: the suppression of women and the propagation of male supremacy.¹² This male-defined world gives men economic, physical and, most importantly, sexual power over women. Women are marginalised and exploited, expected to fulfil their assigned roles in the kitchen and the bedroom.¹³ While all children are taught to be obedient and unquestioningly to respect parental authority, girls in particular are trained to follow their mothers' tradition of subjugation. Their moral imperative is to be dutiful, deferential and self-denying.¹⁴ Some sociologists and feminists have argued that the family structure not only makes incest possible but also actually engenders it because of its inherent power relationships.¹⁵ The greater the degree of male dominance, the greater the likelihood of victimisation and exploitation of female family members. Particularly vulnerable are the most defenceless of all, the daughters.

The similarities of the familial behaviour patterns in all the texts analysed here suggest that these portrayals of sexual abuse are paradigmatic for any patriarchal society. They all tell the same story – the abuse and exploitation of girls and the subjugation of women within the family – and depict the mechanisms used to achieve this. A powerful message indeed.

Before we turn our attention to the stage presentations of incest it is necessary to be more specific about the meaning and use of the term. Incest is not easy to define and there are quite a number of researchers who feel that the term is too broad and imprecise to describe adequately the nature of the relationship.¹⁶ Certainly a distinction ought to be made between abusive and non-abusive incest. An example of the latter would be the union between mutually consenting adult siblings, which has frequently been idealised and romanticised in literature as a kind of true love, particularly during the Romantic period and the early nineteenth century.¹⁷ There are some sociologists who contend that in any definition of incest a distinction should also be made between consanguinal and affinal



incest.¹⁸ It is difficult to see why this should be so because, irrespective of the type of relatedness, the victims may experience the same abuse and trauma.¹⁹ Elizabeth Ward in her persuasively argued study goes even a step further. She suggests that the term incest be abandoned altogether because it does not truly reflect the dynamics of the situation, namely that the girl is sexually abused by a male family member, most often the father. Consequently, she proposes "Father-Daughter rape" as a more appropriate term.²⁰ Yet this more narrowly defined concept is also problematical. While it is true that incest often includes rape there are many other forms of incestuous abuse which do not. The term rape has a range of linguistic and legal meanings, which, if used, would, as a result, exclude some other forms of incestuous behaviour, and thus incest. Therefore I would suggest that we do not need a new term but a better definition of what constitutes incest. The law has a differentiated scale for incest (as it has for rape) but the legal distinctions are, for the purposes of this study, not an issue. Incest is incest and the trauma experienced by the incest victim is not always in direct proportion to the degree of violation. Some victims who are subjugated to less severe forms of abuse nonetheless suffer serious and long-term consequences. Even if victims are not penetrated they feel defiled, humiliated and nearly always traumatised.²¹

Incest has traditionally been defined as sexual intercourse between blood relatives. It is now widely recognized that this definition is too restrictive. The expanded definition includes not only intercourse (i.e., vaginal, anal or oral penetration) but also other inappropriate sexual behaviour, such as exposure, fondling of breasts and genitals and oral-genital contact, and it is not restricted to consanguinal but includes affinal members of the extended family.²² One should add to these both direct and suggestive verbal propositions. Thus defined, in any of its forms, incest is taboo.

There is considerable conjecture on how the incest taboo came about (there is no unicausal explanation) or what its function is meant to be. However, a discussion of these various theories, be they psychological, social, biological or religious, goes far beyond the scope of the present study. Yet whatever its origin or function the occurrence of incest is widespread and, as most incest literature maintains, so is some kind of

incest taboo.²³ The prohibition of incest as well as its ability to shock and horrify may also account for its phenomenal impact as a literary theme which has fascinated writers from the early Greeks to the present day (as illustrated in the extensive surveys of this theme undertaken by Otto Rank and also Richard McCabe).²⁴

The controversy surrounding Smiley's novel is, of course, neither unique nor totally unexpected. Incest is a complex, difficult and potentially volatile subject, and the responses to its literary treatments have varied considerably, ranging from condemnation and public outcry to commendation and critical acclaim.

What produces such mixed reactions? To investigate this question I have chosen the following three plays which all depict the incestuous abuse of girls, albeit it in a different manner: Paula Vogel's *How I Learned To Drive*,²⁵ Inez van Dullemen's *Schrijf me in het zand* (*Write Me in the Sand*)²⁶ and Thomas Baum's *Kalte Hände* (*Cold Hands*).²⁷ In each case it is the code of secrecy – an integral part of incest abuse²⁸ – which determines to a large extent the action. As Vogel so aptly states at the very beginning of her play: "Sometimes to tell a secret, you first have to teach a lesson".²⁹ I have juxtaposed Baum's text with the other two plays in an attempt to illustrate by contrast and comparison the exploration and treatment of this theme. The emphasis of my examination will, however, be on Baum's play since it provoked the greatest outrage and seems to defy in many respects the dramatic conventions and the traditional literary presentations of incest.

Vogel, like her compatriot, Smiley, was awarded the prestigious Pulitzer Prize and her play *How I Learned to Drive* was not only highly acclaimed by the critics but also very popular with audiences, making it the most performed play in the US during 1998.³⁰ It is the story of a young girl's coming-of-age expressed through the metaphor of driving lessons provided by her uncle, lessons which go well beyond teaching her how to drive. These lessons along the back roads of what is now suburban Maryland soon stray into forbidden territory: the uncle's sexual desires for his young niece.

The play is a structurally complex memory play. The victim Li'l Bit,

now in her mid-thirties, is looking back on her incestuous experience, which began at age eleven when her uncle, while giving her driving lessons, sat her on his lap and fondled her breasts. Her non-chronological account zigzags across seven years of her teens. Growing up in a highly dysfunctional family, harassed and humiliated by her grandfather – a boorish and sex-oriented patriarch – and cruelly mocked by other family members and friends, the girl seeks refuge from their coarse and demeaning behaviour, particularly their lewd remarks about her well-developed breasts, and finds it in Uncle Peck, a willing helper and mentor. Yet his interest in her turns out to be far from selfless. In the highly charged environment of her family where discussions abound with sexual innuendo and family members are named for their genitalia – her own and her uncle's being a case in point – Uncle Peck seems to be different; he appears kind, courteous and considerate, but beneath this camouflage he is a predator who manipulates and seduces her. His strategy mirrors the guile and skill with which he hooks the fish on his fishing trips.³¹ He assures his young niece that “nothing is going to happen between us until you want it”, but then adds pointedly: “do you want something to happen”.³² He is suave and deceitful, and not averse to using moral blackmail to get his way. This kind uncle is also a pervert who photographs his young niece in suggestive *Playboy* style poses for his own sexual gratification.

In her characterisation of Uncle Peck Vogel has deliberately blurred the lines between incestuous villain and caring mentor. There is no doubt that he shows genuine affection for his niece but he also inappropriately eroticises it. As far as the reception of the play is concerned the critics overwhelmingly see him in a more positive light than he deserves. They highlight his winning personality and his engaging nature and, although fully aware that he is a child molester, there are some who describe him as a “likeable paedophile”.³³ A sad point of view indeed. Although there is a fair degree of ambiguity in Vogel's presentation her mostly sympathetic depiction of the incestuous abuser is largely responsible for this kind of reception. Yet the bottom line is clear: what he does is contemptible and inexcusable and should have landed him in jail. In an interview Vogel stated that the message of the play was not “that people who love us can



also do us great harm" but that "we can receive great love from people who harm us".³⁴ A risky undertaking, to say the least. Similarly controversial is her portrayal of the incest victim, which, as Vogel declared, was very much influenced by Nabokov's *Lolita*, her favourite book.³⁵ While she does not portray Li'l Bit altogether as a child seductress, she does show her complicity in the relationship and lets her take the initiative at times. There is no doubt that Li'l Bit – lonely, fatherless, vulnerable, but also sexually precocious – is attracted to her uncle and welcomes his attention. She cuddles up to him and kisses him, she lets him fondle her but then she withdraws, clearly unhappy if intimacies were to progress further. It is, of course, this kind of depiction which helps to give credence to the popular perception that such girls have brought the abuse on themselves by their flirtatious behaviour, a view that is confirmed by Peck's wife Mary, who herself is guilty of collusion. She knows about her husband's affair with her niece but thinks that Li'l Bit is at fault because she is manipulating him. However, irrespective of the degree to which Li'l Bit may have contributed to the incestuous relationship, it does not excuse the abuser because it is always the adult who determines the nature of the relationship and is therefore responsible for it.³⁶

Li'l Bit finally puts a stop to her uncle's ever-increasing obsession with her when, at age seventeen, she decides to break off her relationship with him and never sees him again. For her uncle this leads to self-destructive oblivion. He resumes drinking and his life quickly deteriorates after that. Seven years later he has lost everything: his driver's licence, his job, his wife – and his life. The play ends, unlike most other incest plays, on a positive note and gives us a kind of "happy ending" where the victim triumphs over her abuse and the "villain" is "punished". Li'l Bit is shown to be a survivor; she is resilient and ultimately able to forgive. By presenting her heroine in this way Vogel hoped that "the play (would be) cathartic for women who have been through this kind of experience, and make it possible for them like Li'l Bit, to move on".³⁷

As stated earlier, the reception of Vogel's play was generally favourable. But justifiably, there were also voices of dissent. Charles Spencer, in an English review, criticises the play for its "soft-centredness" and describes





it as "a play which ultimately lacks the courage to do full justice to its distressing subject matter".³⁸ It is certainly true that much is left unspoken in Vogel's play – such as the girl's vulnerability and hurt – and that the delicacy of Vogel's presentation tends to sanitise the brutal reality of incest abuse. Due to her restraint, discretion and ambivalence Vogel's play lacks some of the shock and horror evident in the other two plays discussed below. Vogel's drama undeniably examines the subject matter of incest in an unusual and original way. For some it will challenge their preconceived notions about incestuous abuse, for others it may confirm them; it depends largely on which side of the politically correct divide one stands.

Also highly successful was Inez van Dullemen's play *Schrijf me in het zand* (*Write Me in the Sand*) which, despite the fact that it deals with the intensely confronting subject matter of father-daughter incest, was listed among the most performed plays in German speaking countries in the 1992/93 theatre season³⁹ and continues to be performed regularly by theatres catering for young people. (The latter is particularly interesting in view of the censorship of Smiley's novel.)

Van Dullemen's play which had its première in Amsterdam in 1989 treats the subject matter of incest with great sensitivity and circumspection and provides a perceptive and convincing analysis of the intra familial dynamics that lead to this terrible tragedy.

The play is a challenging and sobering depiction of a father's sexual abuse of his twelve-year-old daughter Anne; at the same time it is a moving account of the daughter's pain and vulnerability. In a wider context it is a critique of patriarchal society and its institutions, which facilitate the oppression and exploitation of women and which remain oblivious to the female victim's plight. It challenges society to re-examine the issue of incest but also its shameful complacency towards this crime.

This text too is a skilfully structured memory play. Scenes depicting past situations combine with those in the present, illuminating and elucidating each other. They centre on the re-appearance of Anne, now long dead, as a stage character and the re-enactment of key episodes of her life. The various fragments are then pieced together like a puzzle by her younger sister Judith, ultimately revealing the full picture of her sister's tragedy.



Anne has committed suicide and Judith has returned to her parental home to find out why. As she is helping her mother to clear out the house – due to her father's confinement to a wheelchair her parents are about to move to more suitable premises – she comes upon a note hidden in her sister's rag doll, a diary and letters that her sister had never posted. Embarking on a painful journey into the past Judith reconstructs from the fragmented strands of memories the story of her sister's abuse, her emotional turmoil, her anguish and despair and her increasing sense of worthlessness. Anne had wanted to tell her sister about the harrowing experiences she had suffered at the hands of her predatory father but at the time found it difficult to do so. Shocked by her father's betrayal and the violation of her body, and puzzled by her body's responses she had become more and more resentful of her own body and tried to mutilate herself. As a young girl she had always wanted to be a magician and by some magic spell make herself disappear. Now she wishes the lower part of her body to be dead but realises that that would not protect her either because "one can also have sex with the dead".⁴⁰ For years her father has used her like a sex doll for his own gratification, she was his possession to do with as he pleased.⁴¹ The father is an authoritarian, racist bully who preaches law and order and advocates war as the best way of counteracting the loose morals of today's young generation. Though he is professionally successful, he suffers from a deep-seated inferiority complex, especially as far as women are concerned. To compensate for this he uses sex as the most appropriate means of asserting his masculinity and his patriarchal power. He has been married twice; his present wife, totally dependent on him, is expected to fulfil all of her husband's desires, which include participation in his bizarre sex games. As his wife turns away from him he uses her alleged frigidity as a justification for his incestuous relationship with his daughter and shamelessly plays her off against his wife. As Judith slowly begins to understand her sister's terrible trauma – why she was committed to a psychiatric clinic, what effect the electroshock therapy had on her and why she finally had ended it all by killing herself – she also becomes increasingly suspicious about the role her mother had played in this.

In a climactic scene she confronts her mother and accuses her of



indifference and cowardice, of having ignored and tolerated the abuse of her daughter for years. At first the mother denies any knowledge of the abuse, she then tries to trivialise it, at the same time defending her behaviour by claiming that her silence was designed to maintain the family's respectability and protect it from public humiliation and condemnation. In reality her complicity was an attempt to cope with her own disempowerment and victimisation. This emphasis on the mother tends to shift the audience's focus away from the predator although he is the one who is primarily responsible.

And it is on her father on whom Judith pronounces her final judgement. Undaunted by his attempts to blur the truth she confronts him head-on: "You went to bed with your own daughter? For years? Ever since she was a small child?"⁴² and condemns him for his hypocrisy and dishonesty, for his manipulative and sexually exploitative behaviour. The father feebly tries to excuse the sexual relationship with his daughter by saying that it is a practice quite acceptable in other cultures, that, in any case, a male must have access to more than one woman to satisfy his uncontrollable sexual urges, and, moreover, that Anne had acted flirtatiously and thus initiated the abuse, a statement which perpetuates one of the most popular myths of why incest occurs.

At the end, Judith, who herself is pregnant, promises her as yet unborn child, that, should she be a girl, she will prepare her better for the potential dangers that may come from within the family and the male family members in particular. Disillusioned and disgusted she turns away from her parental home, vowing never to return. Like the disposal of the old toys and old clothes at the beginning of the play the concept of the nuclear family as a safe haven and loving environment has now similarly been disposed of.

While Vogel and van Dullemen both follow to a large extent traditional dramatic conventions in the way they present their controversial subject matter Baum flies in the face of it. Vogel distances her audience by staging those scenes which depict inappropriate behaviour in a representational manner. Here the audience does not directly witness the abuse of an eleven year old girl, they see the abuse happening to the character in





her older appearance: that is, Li'l Bit as a mature woman is looking back and re-enacting the experiences of her younger self. The conventions are maintained; the shocking reality is not actually seen in its physical presence. The impact is nonetheless there but in making these scenes less confrontational Vogel has made concessions to the audience's sensibilities. Likewise in van Dullemen's play the scenes depicting incest are not direct, they too are recollections and re-enactments of past events, albeit different in their configuration and structure. Even though they are confrontational and shocking the incest abuse is presented through the distancing perspective of memory. It may also be that the horror of incest is made more "palatable" because it is viewed through the sympathetic eyes of the younger sister. In neither play is there even a hint of voyeurism. Although van Dullemen's incest scenes are more vivid and detailed than Vogel's both approach their subject with great delicacy and discretion, unlike Baum, whose play is arguably the most chilling and explicit exposé of father-daughter incest in German speaking drama. It centres on three members of the Lehner family: the mother Daniela, the father Heinz, and their 12-year-old daughter, Silvia. The father has been committing incest with Silvia for the last three years.

While the plays by Vogel and van Dullemen were both a critical and popular success, Baum's text provoked intense and sustained controversy, particularly at its première in Bielefeld in 1990 where some feminist groups demanded that the play be withdrawn. Many in the audience found the realism of the play too crass and confronting,⁴³ especially the scenes depicting the sexual violation of the twelve-year-old girl. They were stunned by the gross carnality, violence and coercion; they were horrified by the revelation of the intimate and brutal details of the abuse. (Some objected even more scathingly to the highly realistic stage presentation). Baum justified the blunt realism on the grounds that he wanted the audience to see the naked truth, to see the squalid and perverse practices of child sexual abuse⁴⁴ in an attempt to jolt the audience out of its apathy and complacency.

Yet the attempt to make visible on stage what is normally hidden behind the wall of collective silence is in itself a contentious issue.





Throughout its literary treatment dramatists have sometimes expressed the subject matter of incest overtly, sometimes obliquely, some have depicted it with frankness, others with restraint and circumspection. The stage presentations of highly sensitive or confronting issues, such as extreme acts of violence or explicit depiction of sexuality, have always been problematical.⁴⁵ Social norms of propriety and decorum mean that such acts are usually suppressed on stage or are conveyed only indirectly. Traditional aesthetics, for instance Horace in his *Ars Poetica*, state that brutal acts should not be acted out on stage but conveyed verbally by the stage characters.⁴⁶ As the history of drama shows it was largely the latter which was frequently used to bypass what otherwise might have been considered by the audience as grossly offensive, indecent or unacceptable. While it is true that in modern literature the depiction of sexual or incestuous themes has become increasingly more graphic⁴⁷ the question remains: what degree of realism is acceptable, or when does it become offensive? (In this context one must, of course, be mindful of the difference between the private reception of a narrative text and the public character of a dramatic performance).⁴⁸

Baum reproduces reality as he sees it, unflinchingly and candidly. But the theatre is a public forum and the questions as to the degree of realism in both the dramatic text and its stage presentation is a legitimate one. While the audience expects that certain dramatic conventions are observed it also knows before attending a performance that a topic like this will challenge their notions of propriety and that it may be traumatic for some members of the audience. Nonetheless, if the scenes are too confronting the audience may feel scandalised or decide to stay away. Needless to say, the latter would be counterproductive to the playwright's intentions. Baum undoubtedly is treading a fine line as to what degree of realism is necessary or when it becomes offensive or exploitative. The reaction of some feminist groups is understandable in the light of feminist ideology. A number of feminist critics have argued against realism (on stage) because they consider it incompatible with the concept of feminism. Jill Dolan labels it "a conservative force that reproduces and reinforces dominant cultural relations" and maintains that embedded in it are "oppressive



representational strategies".⁴⁹ Two other criticisms levelled at Baum were, firstly, that the author as a male could not do justice to the topic, a contention that is difficult to maintain in view of the fact that most incest plays in the past have been written by men⁵⁰ – among them some of the best known in world literature – and, secondly, that he does not give his female characters enough space in the play and that he overemphasises the figure of the father. It is true that Baum's play concentrates primarily on the father's story; he has the power and thus takes up most of the space. Although the female members of the family are not voiceless, what they have to say is not given much weight by the overbearing and self-opinionated father.

The very opening scene of the play, the breakfast ritual, portrays the quintessential characteristics and tensions in the intra familial relationships. It is a ritual to which every family member is expected to submit, and attendance is obligatory as is made clear to the daughter. The breakfast ritual shows not only the all powerful influence of the father but also the roles ascribed to the other family members: the passive, economically dependent wife and the reluctant but ultimately obedient and submissive daughter. He asserts the primacy of his needs: the correctly set table, the correctly cooked egg, the right shirt. He adheres to a rigid routine in his behaviour, his attitudes and opinions. By means of his verbosity he asserts his position and drones out any opposition. He frequently lectures the other family members or issues commands (as is evident by the preponderance of imperatives in his speech) and he resents any backchat. In a family where language is used to enforce submission by means of intimidation and bullying there is little, if any, communication. This domination by the father means that the mother as well as her relationship with her daughter fade into the background.

Baum's primary concerns are characterisation (i.e., he has a profound interest in the psychology of the perpetrator) and social attitudes to incest. The figures in his play are on the one hand products of his imagination but at the same time they resemble real life case histories; it is this "authenticity" which underscores the play's social function. Its social relevance meant that in the public arena, as well as in subsequent



reviews and interviews, the parameters of debate shifted away from the drama as an aesthetic product to its "authenticity" as a real life story. Yet this is a work of fiction and it ought to be judged also by aesthetic criteria, something, which the present study attempts to rectify.

The source for Baum's play was on the one hand a horrendous incident of child sexual abuse in Upper Austria and on the other hand an incident of incest abuse while Baum was working as a teacher in Linz.⁵¹ This was then further underpinned by a thorough research of case studies and investigative literature dealing with the subject matter which means that his characters, particularly the perpetrator and the victim, fairly much conform to current scientific psychological or clinical profiles. The perpetrator is not some socially or economically disadvantaged deviant but a well respected member of the local and church community. Heinz Lehner is a teacher. Outwardly he appears as a competent, strong, successful man but beneath this exterior he is cruel, egotistical, authoritarian, manipulative, and pathologically jealous. However, he is also plagued by deep-seated feelings of insecurity and self-doubt (as evidenced by his discussions with the Headmaster in Scene 7). He ruthlessly exercises his power, which is inherently his by virtue of the patriarchal family structure, but also because he holds a highly regarded position outside the family, a position that represents knowledge and which gives him control. He uses this to impose his will on both his wife and their daughter; he "teaches" them (true to his profession) to be subservient and to acknowledge male supremacy, he denies them any space to develop their own identities. His daughter is expected to respect and obey him unquestioningly. He ignores her pleas, her protests, and her revulsion when he sexually forces himself on her. Even when, contrary to parental deference, she explicitly says "no" he disregards this by convincing himself that "no" actually means "yes", a common enough perception in patriarchal society. He humiliates and belittles his wife's views and actions and rides rough-shod over her emotional turmoil following the revelation by the Doctor that Silvia has been raped and that, as a result, she is now pregnant. Like a king (his name Heinz symbolically alludes to that)⁵² he rules unimpeded by any interference, living proof of the cultural notion that a man's home is his castle.⁵³



In order to indulge in his incestuous aberrations he uses a multitude of strategies to make his daughter submit to his demands. He enforces her compliance by blackmailing her that he will reveal their relationship to the mother and that, as a consequence, she would be thrown out by her: "When she finds out/ what her precious little hussy/ has been up to and how she's carried on/ and that with her own father/ My dear that won't be/ much fun for you/ She'll probably/ throw you out" (CH 119). This contributes to Silvia's disinclination to seek help from the only person who may be able to assist her and therefore she becomes even more isolated. In addition, he threatens violence: "Do you see/ this hand/ Look/ at it/ Has it ever/ beaten you/ Watch out/ Be on/ your guard/ Black and blue/ that's/ a promise" (CH 168f), or worse, he may even turn the gun on her and her mother: "I'm warning you/ Don't go/ too far" (CH 163). His threat to shoot is real on the one hand, as Baum himself stated,⁵⁴ but on the other, as part of his hunting fantasies ("I would/ hunt with a passion" [CH 112]), it is also symbolic of his relationship with his daughter: she is "fair game" in his eyes. Needless to say, pointing a gun at her is also a phallic gesture which reinforces this notion. He makes her feel responsible if, as a result of disclosure, he were sent to prison and exposed to public humiliation and condemnation: "one word too loud/ then it is finished/ then it is over/ They'll nail/ your father/ to the cross/ Beat him/ till he's bloody/ battered and sore" (CH 168). He tries to bribe her by offering rewards, trying to purchase her sexual consent as one "buys" a prostitute: "I give you presents/ reward you/ Slip you pocket money/ And you/ you get/ impudent" (CH 115). He attempts to make her a confidant, make her feel like a grown-up woman with whom he can share a secret: "I thought/ you were/ big/ a grown-up/ a mature/ woman/ to be taken seriously" (CH 179). He tells her that he loves her and that such a relationship is natural, at other times he informs her that he is giving her sex education. Not surprisingly, this list comprises just about all the usual strategies and arguments perpetrators use, as is evident from case studies on incest.⁵⁵

The question why he resorts to incest is far more difficult to answer. The most common cliché for the occurrence of incest is that the wife is



withholding sex from her husband,⁵⁶ a view also put forward by Heinz. He claims his wife to be frigid and indifferent to his sexual desires. He sees a satisfactory sexual relationship with his wife as his conjugal right and evidence of his maleness. Yet even if Daniela had withdrawn as her husband claims: "Because she either squeezes/ her legs together/ or she says/ she is tired" (CH 92) – though she gives another explanation for their marital problems: "Try to remember/ Focus your mind/ which evening/ last week/ were you/ at home" (CH 92) – could the explanation for this not be that she had done so because of his sexual behaviour; that is, the way he may have treated her during sex. An indication of this may well be the way he treats his daughter in their sexual encounters. He does after all compare them, accusing both of them of being "frigid." Sex, as we know from his sexual relationship with his daughter, is brutal, quick, ugly and totally self-centred (which is surely ironic in view of his statement that he wants to teach his daughter the art of lovemaking). However, even if his allegations were correct it would not give him the right or excuse to sleep with his daughter. The passage above implies that because he is denied sex with his wife he has turned to his daughter as a substitute. It is unfortunate that Baum has introduced this aspect into the play because it only further obfuscates the real reasons for the husband's incestuous behaviour.

The daughter is lonely, vulnerable, helplessly at the mercy of her father's onslaught. In vain she attempts to find a solution to what turns out to be in the end an irresolvable dilemma. On the one hand she desperately wants the abuse to end, on the other she does not want the family to disintegrate because, despite the sexual abuse, it is the only family she has got. She pleads despairingly: "I don't want/ to be alone/ Mummy/ we've got to/ stay together" (CH 163f). Consequently she goes along, albeit under duress, with perpetuating the story that she was raped and made pregnant by a "stranger" rather than revealing the identity of the real culprit.

It is significant that it is the daughter who tries to uphold the value system of right and wrong whereas her father obliterates and confuses these distinctions by his actions. The father who behaves in a strange way towards her has in fact become a "stranger", he insists on being her



“lover” yet at the same time he is still her father. He continues to overstep and ignore the boundaries, refusing to accept that filial love, to honour and obey one’s parents, cannot be translated into erotic equivalents. She knows it is wrong for her father to have sex with her and therefore she desperately tries to avoid situations where she would be alone with him. She feels particularly threatened when her mother is absent: “No Mummy/ please stay here/ stay with me” (CH 96). On several occasions she attempts to repel her father, she expresses her disgust and repulsion about performing sex acts with him, she tells him that it is making her physically ill: “I feel sick/ I’ll throw up” (CH 117) but all to no avail. The power constellation makes it impossible for her to resist his advances and eventually she has no alternative but to submit. Silvia has kept the abuse secret for years and continues to do so throughout the play. She makes an extraordinary sacrifice; she continues to endure the abuse in order to protect her parents: her father from public condemnation and prosecution, her mother from the truth that the person she is married to is an incest perpetrator.

The general perception is that mothers are usually colluding, allowing, either consciously or unconsciously, the incestuous abuse to take place.⁵⁷ That is certainly the case in van Dullemen’s and Vogel’s plays, but not so in Baum’s. Here the mother seems quite unaware. She is lost in a morass of lies and subterfuge; she desperately seeks clarification and explanations as she tries to restore order and balance into the familial relationship. It is not until Scene 8 – at the dinner table – that she is probably beginning to understand the real facts, though by not asking the central question she shows that she is shying away from the magnitude of the problem and its potential repercussions. She says to her husband: “I have a question/ for you” (CH 161) but that question is never put. What would the affect be on her if she found out what her husband has done to their daughter? The audience can only guess because Baum does not go down that path. What is more difficult to understand, however, is why, prior to this, she appears to have not even an inkling of what has been going on right under her nose and that she has remained oblivious for so long to the repeated sexual exploitation of her daughter. (Not only has the incest been going



on for three years now but it has also sometimes taken place up to three times a day). It is also interesting to note that, in the discussions in Scene 8, even though she is confused by her husband's ranting and walking an emotional tightrope, she has not picked up any vibes or signs. It is true that her daughter does not tell her directly what has happened but she does try to do so in various other ways, for instance when she inverts the facts by saying: "Mummy Daddy never / came into my room" (CH 158). Surely a strange thing to say, unless it is meant to say: "Daddy came into my room". In addition there are many other non-verbal clues which were there for her to see and decipher: the loss of appetite (the daughter is disinclined to have breakfast), the bed-wetting, the semen-stained sheets (even though water was poured over them), plus the fact that her daughter locks herself in the bathroom when she has a shower, also, that she is withdrawn and moody (mistakenly interpreted as a sign of pubescence) and reluctant to be alone with her father. Furthermore, when she is informed by the Doctor about her daughter's rape and pregnancy she is also told that her daughter has had repeated intercourse which means, as the mother correctly concludes, that her daughter must have known her assailant: "Then she must know him" (CH 129). Yet the mother continues to believe that it was a stranger or possibly a neighbour who assaulted her daughter. The fact is, "that sexual abuse by a stranger is usually a once only event, whereas incest occurs repeatedly over a long period because of (the perpetrator's) unlimited access".⁵⁸ On the other hand why would the mother suspect something of which she appears to have no knowledge? Like the pupils who have been told by their misguided teacher that the danger only lurks outside (Scene 5) she too has been conditioned to believe precisely that. Her daughter, of course, knows differently. It could, however, also be that her not knowing is, subconsciously, a form of self-protection because knowledge would require her to act and that could threaten the foundation of her life and her family. Some incest researchers see the mother's inaction as a survival mechanism.⁵⁹

In many ways the discussions in Scene 8 – where family relationships are severely put to the test and where the truth is possibly but a step away – could be seen as the core of the play. The mother is in a precarious limbo



as the bottom appears to be falling out of her world. There is confusion; many questions are going around in her mind, each one demanding an answer. She feels that something is not right but she cannot pin it down. Only towards the end of that scene does the horrific truth perhaps dawn on her: "There is something/ I don't know about/ There is something/ being kept from me/ There's a secret/ which laughs at me/ from every corner/ of the room" (CH 164). She is pondering the implications of what she may now begin to suspect: it puts a question mark on her choice of spouse; in addition there is uncertainty of what to do next. There is fear of violent retaliation (her husband's propensity to violence has already been mentioned); there is the fear of the loss of financial security; there is the fear of the community's stigmatisation of the family and the fear of the potential disintegration of the family unit. But in the midst of the family turmoil there is also a poignant moment when, during the "flower game": "What flower would you like to be?" (CH 159), the daughter attempts to establish an intimate moment with her mother, hoping that she may instinctively understand her dilemma without her having to spell it out. Silvia wants to share her suffering with her mother, but she does not want the fall-out that would inevitably go with it.

There is no one else in the family Silvia can turn to and there are only limited options outside the family. Running away is not an answer either, because at her age, with no place for her to go to, she would, ironically, be seen as being "exposed to moral danger" and therefore placed in care. Silvia becomes increasingly isolated and abandoned. She is doubly betrayed, not only by the father who abuses her but also by the social and professional institutions, which fail to support her. Baum's play shows that society, as exemplified in its representatives from school, church and the medical profession – all of whom are nameless and stylised rather than individual characters – fails to understand the nature of the crime or is reluctant to intervene. Silence, the response of the victim and her family, is also the response of society as is shown by the professionals who could and should have dealt with this problem. Baum's text makes clear that their responses were inept in each instance. Admittedly, the Doctor and the Principal did not know that it was incest, though on the



evidence before them they should have been suspicious. The Priest on the other hand (Scene 6) to whom Silvia turns to seek guidance and assistance and from whom she seeks absolution as she confesses her "sins" not only shows himself incapable of dealing with the problem appropriately; more worrying is the fact that he appears to be, at least momentarily, titillated by her detailed account. The Priest cannot believe that the father could possibly have done what his daughter accuses him of. He knows the father (at least he thinks he does); he is a highly respected public figure and a valued member of the church community (he sings in the church choir). Despite the girl's feeling of guilt and shame, despair and suffering, he offers her (and himself) "comforting" psychological platitudes based on Freud's Oedipus Complex and dismisses her confession of incest as the wild fantasy of an adolescent girl, which is very much the same strategy that Freud used when he developed his seduction theory. The daughter is not heard because what she says does not fit the image society has constructed for itself.

The Doctor behaves equally inappropriately. During a routine medical examination she discovers that Silvia is pregnant and that there has been severe physical damage to her vagina by repeated brutal intercourse: "Consequently I examined her/ more thoroughly/ Her vagina/ I have to tell you/ that inside/ really/ she indicates considerable abuse" (CH 124). The Doctor is shocked and calls Silvia's mother to report her findings. However, the Doctor does not, as the law requires, proceed with a mandatory report and rather foolishly leaves everything in the hands of the parents, and thus, admittedly unbeknown to her, of the person who is abusing the girl. The Doctor is confronted with fairly obvious symptoms of incest but it appears that she resorts to denial mechanisms, preferring to believe that it was an unknown stranger. The school Silvia attends, similarly, does not know how to deal with this situation. It not only almost breaks the rules of confidentiality of the victim's identity but it perpetuates the misinformation about "stranger danger": do not speak to strange men, do not accept gifts from them, beware of strangers in the park (Scene 5). But as the statistical evidence⁶⁰ and the literary works analysed here clearly reveal, in most cases it is not the stranger who molests girls





or assaults them but a male member of the family.

Incest thrives on silence and secrecy. There is a strong sense of not revealing secrets in order to protect both the perpetrator's identity and the family's standing in the community. While in the play the family secret presumably stays intact (depending on the actions of the mother in Scene 9) the secret is made public on stage. The play proceeds in a manner of forensic detection. The word "detective inspector", or its misspelling referred to early in the play (*CH* 105), is a pointer to the nature of the story: it is much like a detective story. Even though the audience knows both the crime and the offender almost from the beginning, further information comes to light in the course of the play about the attendant details and complexities of the interpersonal relationships. The suspense arises from the question of whether the secret will ultimately also be revealed within the fictional world of the play and what consequences, if any, this may entail. I shall come back to this point a little later.

The father's incestuous obsession is a personal disease that leads to a contamination of the family relationships and confines the female members both emotionally and spatially to a "prison". Here the father rules unimpededly and determines the boundaries within which everyone is permitted to function while he himself feels free to ignore the boundaries. Within the crippling confinement of the house there is no escape for the daughter; she is not even safe in her own room, let alone in her own bed because her father invades it at will: "Hiding/ is useless/ I'll/ get/ you/ Silvia/ anywhere/ Anywhere" (*CH* 119). Silvia has no privacy, no space of her own. When, in an attempt to seek refuge from his predatory intentions, she locks herself in her room, he demands that the doors remain open because, as he insists, this is "an open house" (*CH* 110). This house is anything but "an open house"; the open doors just make his access easier.

The spatial invasion is symbolic of the violation of her body and mind, neither of which she can claim as her own. The penetration of her body is the ultimate invasion of her privacy and defilement of her dignity. She seeks a space where she can feel safe from his advances. It is only in the very last scene of the play that she is given a chance, at least





to some extent, to escape her father's domination in a utopian vision that promises release. Both wife and daughter are imprisoned within the four walls of the house. Any outside contact is severely limited. Because of the father's insane jealousy and possessiveness the daughter is not permitted to associate with her peers, especially not "predatory young males", or develop relationships outside the house. He strictly regulates her time and she virtually has to account for where she has been for every minute of the day. If she dawdles on her way home from school she is severely reprimanded. He even checks her underwear for semen stains. It is, of course, highly ironic that the father restricts his daughter's access to her peers for fear of sexual improprieties, to safe-guard her virtue and reputation and protect her from teenage pregnancy, when it is he who violates her and makes her pregnant. It is not the daughter's potential encounters with her schoolmates that threaten the family's reputation but the father's abuse of his own daughter.

Similarly, the mother is locked into a domestic prison. Any attempt on her part to assert her own identity and create a space for herself is challenged by her husband. She succinctly sums up her failed endeavours: "With you/ I've got/ no room/ to move" (CH 90).

The thematic import of the play is re-enforced by its finely balanced structure, an aspect that has largely been ignored in the literature dealing with Baum's play because, due to the nature of the subject matter, critical and public discussions have concentrated mainly on the social relevance of the text. Where any references to the play's artistic merits are made at all they tend to be often negative as in the following review of the play's Swiss premiere in Zurich: "From a literary point of view this text is not interesting ... the subject matter is more important to the author than any artistic considerations".⁶¹ Yet, contrary to the criticism made here Baum's play is in fact a skilfully structured and linguistically finely honed text. The story progresses in a linear succession but the scenes are cyclical and symmetrical with a climactic moment in Scene 9 (as far as the action goes) where the mother walks out of the house, leaving open the question of what the future holds. There are no comforting solutions here as there are in Vogel's play.



Baum's drama is divided into three private scenes (Scenes 1, 2 and 3) at the beginning and three private scenes (Scenes 8, 9, and 10) at the end, framing the four public scenes in the middle. The spatial arrangements of the scenes, shifting between private and public scenes, as well as the structure all have a specific thematic function: the private scenes, where the abuse occurs, depict an interior isolated from the outside world; they convey the impression of suffocating confinement and hopelessness from which there is little chance of escape. The public scenes illustrate that the walls around the family unit are re-enforced by those which society has constructed.

The first of the private scenes (Scene 1) shows the family tensions at the breakfast table, this is counterbalanced by the first of the private scenes in the latter part of the play (Scene 8), the dinner table discussion where the now heightened tensions bring the family unit close to collapse. Similarly, Scenes 2 and 3 are linked, albeit inversely, with Scenes 9 and 10: Scene 2 consists largely of an interior monologue of the father, Scene 3 depicts the sexual violation; the comparable scenes are Scene 9, portraying the sexual violation and Scene 10, the daughter's interior monologue. The four public scenes are also symmetrically structured. Scenes 4 and 7 show that both of society's representatives, the Doctor and School Principal, are aware of some of the facts but not all: they know of the rape but not that it is incestuous nor that the father is the offender. Both prefer to believe that only a stranger could have committed such evils, even though some of the facts would suggest otherwise. The Teacher in Scene 5, by contrast, has very little knowledge; she has had no parental contact, and she acts purely on hearsay and perpetuates the myth of "stranger danger." The Priest in Scene 6, however, knows all of the facts but nonetheless behaves like everyone else. The public scenes make clear society's complicity in maintaining the secret, irrespective of whether there is little, partial or full knowledge of the crime. The daughter tries to break down the walls of silence when she confides in the Priest but fails, with the result that she remains locked in the private world where the abuse continues unabated. The mother literally walks out of the "prison" in Scene 9, as her daughter is being raped in her bedroom, but the question remains open whether she will take appropriate action to end the abuse. Will she seek outside



intervention? We only hear the mother's footsteps and then the closing of the door. This spatially hidden action, which is conveyed acoustically, not only creates suspense by stirring the audience's imagination but, since this is the only time that Baum employs this device in the play, it draws attention to the climactic nature of the action. Walking out of the door is a momentous decision – but what is the decision?

This scene, more than any other, grossly offended audiences. Many felt that the explicit rape scene was demeaning and humiliating to the victim, that it was voyeuristic and gratuitous because it did not add to the import of the play. Yet contrary to such perceptions the repetition of the sexual abuse serves an important function: it clearly illustrates, firstly that this rape would not have happened if one of the professionals, be it Doctor, Priest, or School Principal, had intervened, and secondly, that the abuse is not going to cease of its own accord. The father is incapable of stopping; for him it is an addiction, as he states: "With force/ virtually/ it drags me/ from my bed/ into the cold/ I have to come to you/ I have to Silvia" (CH 176). Indeed, if anything, he has become even more reckless and determined to pursue his perverted cravings as shown by the fact that he does so even though his daughter is pregnant and his wife is in the house. The family unit is incapable of solving the problem as Scene 8 has shown. The only way to put a stop to it is by outside intervention but that too would require more resolve than that shown by the public representatives in the earlier scenes.

There is no doubt that this scene is one of the most abhorrent in the play as it describes in graphic detail how the daughter is brutalised by the father. During intercourse he literally suffocates any of her protests by putting a pillow over her head, nearly choking her. He uses his physical size and strength to subdue her, ignoring her pleas: "You are/ so heavy/ Leave me alone/ Leave me alone/ Please/ Go away" (CH 170f), and at the same time he repeatedly assures himself that his daughter is mad with lust. The violent penetration of her body as well as the actions and verbal imperatives that accompany the rape are proof of his brutal aggression and determination to assert his supremacy. However, this scene also leads to some self-knowledge. The father is now capable of seeing what



he has done. As a result he expresses feelings of self-recrimination and guilt: "I am/ guilty/ guilty" (CH 180). However, the continuation of the sexual abuse invalidates his self-recrimination and shows his inability to come to terms with his personal guilt. There certainly is no repentance or contrition. Both the fear of disclosure, coupled with public condemnation, and his incestuous obsession are far greater emotions. His self-knowledge is the awareness of his addiction and that without external intervention he cannot rid himself of it, yet he persists in it, choosing it over morality and social taboos. Equally shallow is his argument that the incest taboo is an unnatural external restriction on one's desires and feelings, imposed arbitrarily by society, and consequently that breaking such a taboo is an assertion of one's freedom. This pseudo amoral individualism is nothing more than an outrageous self-justification for what he is doing.

So where can the daughter go from here? She is deeply traumatised with wounds to her body and her mind. She is in a liminal state: she wants to escape the abusive environment of her family and she is yearning for a secure, happy and safe world where she can be herself, where she can perhaps establish a new self. The fragmented nature of her existence is shown in the first part of Scene 10 where in her discourse she is both subject and object of her thoughts and emotions as she adopts her father's role and language and uses physical violence on her doll but at the same time identifies with its helplessness. While such feelings of helplessness frequently lead to self-destructive behaviour Silvia does not mutilate herself (as other incest victims do in the belief that their body will therefore be less attractive and that the incest might, as a consequence, stop). Instead she symbolically cuts the doll, her surrogate self.

Given the reality of the adult world, which is exploitative and abusive, she can visualize an escape into a more harmonious and secure environment only in the form of a fairy tale. As she embarks on an inner journey she regresses into the fantasy world of her childhood where she will seek refuge from her despair, her suffering and her loneliness. Her dream is imbued with the magic thinking of the fairy tale, a magic white horse will come to rescue her from her torment, it will change evil into good, and take her from the "man-made" world into the never-never land



of the animal kingdom where lions, monkeys and squirrels will be her playmates. Even though the symbolic significance of these animals varies markedly, depending on the context in which they occur, they are all meant to be positive; they are to be seen as helpers. In an interview Baum stated that he was thinking of a horse that could fly,⁶² perhaps a mythical creature like Pegasus which stands for purity and innocence and has the capacity to defeat evil as evidenced by Bellerophon who, while riding Pegasus, is able to overcome Chimera, the Monster that has been terrifying the land. The lion symbolises strength and the ability to keep evil forces at bay (in the same way as it guards sacred buildings it will protect this utopia from the intrusion of evil). The squirrel represents deftness, dexterity and agility while the monkey is a prankster whose tomfoolery can overcome bleakness and misery. These animal attributes signify some of the qualities Silvia will need in order to have a chance at all in real life. If this were to become a journey to a new life and possibly a new identity then it is still far away in the distant future. But one could also interpret the final scene quite differently. Since the dream of a white horse is also frequently seen as an omen of death⁶³ it could mean that Silvia, in an attempt to extricate herself, is contemplating death, death as the final liberator. But Baum said such an interpretation would be contrary to his intentions: "I wasn't thinking of death because I very much want this girl to go on living and have a better life than she has had so far".⁶⁴

The play is open-ended and leaves many of the questions unanswered: What will Silvia's fate be? What will her mother do? What is going to happen to Silvia's unborn child? Baum once said that it was not his function to provide answers; the audience has to find these themselves.⁶⁵ What the play makes clear, however, is that the vicious circle of abuse will continue unless there is some intervention.

There are moral, legal, social and religious injunctions which prohibit incestuous behaviour, and society certainly has the means to enforce them; the question that remains in the end is whether society is willing to do so or whether it will continue to turn a blind eye to sexual abuse. That is the question that Baum leaves the audience to ponder on.



Notes

- 1 Jane Smiley, *A Thousand Acres* (London: Flamingo, 1992), p. 280.
- 2 Josephine Rijnaarts, *Lots Töchter. Über den Vater-Tochter-Inzest* (München: dtv, 1991), p. 13.
- 3 Elizabeth Ward, *Father-Daughter Rape* (London: The Women's Press, 1984), p. 3.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 84.
- 5 The Dymrna House Editorial/Writers Collective estimates that "at least one in four girls and one in eleven boys has been sexually assaulted by the time they are 18 years of age." Furthermore that "between 90 and 97 % of child sexual assault offenders are men" and that "in 85% of cases, the sexual assault offender is known to the child." *Facing the Unthinkable* (Haberfield: Dymrna House Inc., 1990), p. 7.
- 6 Diana Russell, *The Secret Trauma. Incest in the Lives of Girls and Women* (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1986), p. 220f. See also Elizabeth Ward, *op. cit.*, p. 86f.
- 7 Josephine Rijnaarts, *op. cit.*, p. 146.
- 8 Sandra Butler, *Conspiracy of Silence. The Trauma of Incest* (San Francisco: Volcano Press Inc., 1978), p. 65. See also Josephine Rijnaarts, *op. cit.*, p. 240.
- 9 Elizabeth Ward, *op. cit.*, p. 193ff. See also Sandra Butler, *op. cit.*, p. 65 and p. 80.
- 10 Josephine Rijnaarts, *op. cit.*, p. 195ff and p. 205ff. See also Elizabeth Ward, *op. cit.*, p. 139.
- 11 Josephine Rijnaarts, *op. cit.*, p. 26. (My translation)
- 12 *Ibid.*, p.146f. See also Elizabeth Ward, *op. cit.*, p. 95ff.
- 13 Elizabeth Ward, *op. cit.*, p. 115.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 140. See also Sandra Butler *op. cit.*, p. 55.
- 15 Josephine Rijnaarts, *op. cit.*, p. 52. See also Elizabeth Ward, *op. cit.*, p. 94.
- 16 Elizabeth Ward, *op. cit.*, p. 78ff. See also Diana Russell *op. cit.*, p. 97.
- 17 Jean-Charles Seigneuret, *Dictionary of literary themes and motifs* (New York, Westport, London: Greenwood Press, 1988), pp. 649 – 65 (p. 661).
- 18 Edward Sagarin, "Incest: Problems of Definition and Frequency", in *The Journal of Sexual Research* (Vol.13, No 2, 1977), pp. 126-35 (p. 135).
- 19 Elizabeth Ward, *op. cit.*, p. 120. See also Diana Russell *op. cit.*, p. 232.
- 20 Elizabeth Ward, *op. cit.*, p. 78.
- 21 Diana Russell *op. cit.*, p. 47.
- 22 Susan Ray, 'Incest Survivors'. Review of the Literature <http://www.mirror.org/wayne.ray/review.html>.
- 23 Elisabeth Frenzel, *Motive der Weltliteratur* (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1976), p. 401.
- 24 Otto Rank, *Das Inzest-Motiv in Dichtung und Sage* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1974). See also Richard McCabe, *Incest, Drama and Nature's Law 1550 – 1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
- 25 Paula Vogel, *How I Learned To Drive* (New York: Dramatists Play Service Inc., 1997).
- 26 Inez van Dullemen, *Schrijf me in het zand*, translated by Monika The, *Schreib mich in den Sand* (Bremen: Litag Theaterverlag, 1991). Reprinted in *Theater Heute* (December 1991), pp. 39-48. All quotations come from this version; all English translations from this text are mine.
- 27 Thomas Baum, *Kalte Hände*, in *Querschläge* (Linz: Resistenz Verlag, 1995), pp. 67-157, translated by David Ritchie, Gertraud Ingeborg, and Udo Borgert, *Cold Hands*, in *New Anthology of Contemporary Austrian Folk Plays*, ed. Richard H. Lawson (Riverside, California: Ariadne Press, 1996), pp. 75 – 187. All further quotations from Baum's play are taken from this translation, hereafter cited as *CH* and the relevant page number.
- 28 Josephine Rijnaarts, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
- 29 Paula Vogel, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
- 30 Christopher Dyer, "Pulitzer Prize Play Premieres", in *The Mirror* (9 April 1999).

- 31 Christopher Bigsby, *Contemporary American Playwrights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 322.
- 32 Paula Vogel, op. cit., p. 23.
- 33 Linda J. P. Mahdesian, "Vogel's Pulitzer puts her career in overdrive", in *George Street Journal* 22 (24-30 April 1998).
- 34 Arthur Holmberg, "Through the eyes of *Lolita*." Interview with Paula Vogel on 31 August 1998 <http://www.amrep.org/past/drive/drive1.html>.
- 35 Christopher Bigsby, op. cit., p. 319.
- 36 Josephine Rijnaarts, op. cit., p. 52. See also Diana Russell op. cit., p. 45.
- 37 Carpenter Square Theatre, Oklahoma City. *Playbill for How I learned to Drive* http://www.carpentersquare.com/shows/show_learned_to_drive.html.
- 38 Charles Spencer, "Compelling drama let down by lamentable soft centre", in *The Daily Telegraph* (26 June 1998), p. 25.
- 39 Deutscher Bühnenverein (ed), *Wer spielt was? Werkstatistik des deutschen Bühnenvereins* (Köln: Mykenae Verlag, 1992/93), p. 242.
- 40 Inez van Dullemen, op. cit., p. 43.
- 41 Ibid., p. 47.
- 42 Ibid., p. 48.
- 43 The German, Austrian and Swiss premières all received mixed receptions. Both the German and Austrian productions were shown on TV in 1992 (WDR and ORF respectively) followed by audience or panel discussions in an attempt to elucidate the issues and justify the particular stage presentations. The introduction to the TV discussion of the Bielefeld production stated: "The Bielefeld Women's Refuge which cares for victims of sexual abuse demanded immediately after the première that the play be cancelled." See also Walter Deil, "Ein Balanceakt, ein schwieriger", in *Linzer Rundschau* (13 Februar 1992).
- 44 Udo Borgert, "Thomas Baum im Gespräch mit Udo Borgert", in *Modern Austrian Literature* (Vol. 29, No. 2, 1996), pp. 101 – 126 (p. 119).
- 45 Manfred Pfister, *The Theory and Analysis of Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 203. See also Viktor Zmegac, "Sprachliche Tabus und literarische Normen", in *Akten des VI. Internationalen Germanisten-Kongresses Basel 1980*, ed. Heinz Rupp & Hans-Gert Roloff (Bern, Frankfurt a. M., Las Vegas: Peter Lang, 1980), pp. 45-57 (p. 45ff).
- 46 Horace, "On the Art of Poetry", in: *Classical Literary Criticism*. Introduction and translation by T. S. Dorsch (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965), pp. 79-95 (ll. 179ff).
- 47 Cf. Otto Rank, op. cit., p. 605.
- 48 Manfred Pfister, op. cit., p. 203.
- 49 Jill Dolan, *The Feminist Spectator as Critic* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988), p. 84. See also Sue-Ellen Case, *Feminism and Theatre* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), p. 124.
- 50 Cf. Otto Rank's detailed study.
- 51 Udo Borgert, op. cit., p. 107.
- 52 Heinz is a derivative of Heinrich = Heimerich which means "heim" (home) and the Old High German "rihhi" = "Reich" (empire, realm) but it also denotes the person: Herrscher (ruler).
- 53 Cf. Sandra Butler, op. cit., p. 73. See also Elizabeth Ward, op. cit., p. 193.
- 54 Udo Borgert, op. cit., p. 115
- 55 Diana Russell op. cit., p. 229.
- 56 Josephine Rijnaarts, op. cit., p. 179ff. See also Elizabeth Ward, op. cit., p. 167ff as well as Sandra Butler, op. cit., p. 115.
- 57 Elizabeth Ward, op. cit., p. 163ff. See also Josephine Rijnaarts, op. cit., p. 159ff.
- 58 Elizabeth Ward, op. cit., p. 84.
- 59 Sandra Butler, op. cit., p. 120.



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- 60 Diana Russell op. cit., p. 219. See also Elizabeth Ward, op. cit., p. 5.
61 Cordina Caduff, (No title), in *Die Weltwoche*, 49 (5 December 1991), p. 65.
62 Udo Borgert, op. cit., p. 125.
63 J. E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 145.
64 Udo Borgert, op. cit., p. 125.
65 *Ibid.*, p. 115.

