READING CONFESSIONAL PLAYS:
BRIAN FRIEL’S *DANCING AT LUGHNASA*,
DAVID HENRY HWANG’S *M. BUTTERFLY*,
AND PETER SHAFFER’S *AMADEUS*
AS DRAMATIC MONOLOGUES

BY

MISS IRISA CHANSIRI

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH
LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
FACULTY OF LIBERAL ARTS
THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY
ACADEMIC YEAR 2015
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THESIS

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ENTITLED

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DANCING AT LUGNASHA, DAVID HENRY HWANG’S M. BUTTERFLY,
AND PETER SHAFFER’S AMADEUS AS DRAMATIC MONOLOGUES

was approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Literature

on January 14, 2016

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ABSTRACT

A confessional mode of writing has long appeared in the world of literature in forms of poetry, prose, and also, drama. Typically, confessional writing endows the reader with a sense that they are experiencing the truth about the author. Michel Foucault offers an interesting and ground-breaking insight into a confession in his influential *The History of Sexuality* which is suitable to approach confessional writing. According to Foucault, a confession is a ritual process to produce a discourse of truth about oneself or a self-definition of a person who articulates a confession under influence of an authority. Basically, the critical perceptions towards confessional writing are on ground of Christian practice and humanist manifestation. A Christian confesses as a sinner to seek God’s forgiveness and salvation according to his religious principles as St. Augustine wrote his *Confessions* while Romantic activists used a confession to challenge the authority as Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Confessions* shows. However, today, the notions of authority, truth, and representation evolve. The religious and humanist views might no longer be functional to approach confessional writing. How, thus, can we approach and understand the confessional writing of our time? Therefore, the poetic technique that unravels the thought behind the first person narrative, dramatic monologue, is adapted
and applied in order to read modern confessional writing in Brian Friel’s *Dancing at Lughnasa*, Peter Shaffer’s *Amadeus*, and David Henry Hwang’s *M. Butterfly*. These plays are selected for the study because the protagonists do not present their confessions with a religious aim. Moreover, the fact that they are fictional confessional writing makes the dramatic monologue reading more effective than the actual confessional writing because the contexts necessary for the reading are available within the texts. The dramatic monologue reading of these selected plays will illuminate the ulterior motives behinds the modern confession and offer a new insight into the modern confessional writing.

**Keywords:** Foucault, modern, confession, writing, drama
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my thesis advisor and my brilliant mentor, Dr. Prassaree Kramer whose encouragement and dedication are entirely indispensable for the making of this thesis. I am deeply grateful to Assoc. Prof. Chusak Pattarakulvanit for his typical way of encouragement, wonderful insights, and constructive comments that are so inspiring to my study. I greatly appreciate the valuable encouragement and comments of Assist. Prof. Dr. Sivaporn Nakhachai. I am also grateful to Ajarn Jeffrey Kramer for his generous assistance.

Most importantly, I am profoundly grateful to my mother for her love, ceaseless encouragement, and invincible faith in me. Without this wonderful woman, I would never come this far. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to Sarut Ratanavijit who is always by my side with his loving support. Million thanks to Pavinee Ouanphoklang for her warm hugs and heartwarming encouragement. I am indebted to Weerapol Chotikaparaklan’s amazing support. I appreciate the encouragement from my Chansiri family. I am sincerely thankful to my graduate buddy, Salisa Musikachai. Many thanks to my graduate classmates: Pasita Thongcheur and Nijwadee Silkoon and my seniors: Kamonlaporn Sirisophon and Patcharaporng Nangsue for their wonderful support and valuable friendship.

Miss Irisa Chansiri
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

“The truthful confession was inscribed at the heart of the procedures of individualization by power.”

Michel Foucault

“We judge what is said by the character of the speaker, by the person to whom he speaks, and by the occasion.”

S.S. Curry

Confessional Play

A confessional mode of writing which revolves around “the revelation by an author of events or feelings which normally are discreetly concealed” (Beckson & Ganz, 1960, p. 33) has long appeared in the literary sphere. In 400 C.AD, St. Augustine wrote his *Confessions* in which he “recounts his youthful sins and his persistent temptation, confesses his faith and avows God’s glory” (Gill, 2006, pp. 4-5). The confessional tone can be found in the Romantic literature. C. Pipoş notes in “The First Confessional Poets”: “The poets of confession, despite their self-destructive feelings, created a poetry that vibrates with the English Romantic poetry” (2012, p. 78). Pipoş further illuminates the critical stance by alluding to William Wordsworth’s *The Prelude*:

However, this is how in the poem *The Prelude*, also called his autobiographical poem, Wordsworth confesses to the reader “I look about; and should the chosen guide/ Be nothing better than a wandering cloud,/ I cannot miss my way. I breathe again!/ Trances of thought and mountings of the mind/Come fast upon me: it is shaken off,/That burthen of my own unnatural self,/The heavy weight of many a weary day/Not mine, and such as were not made for me.” (Wordsworth, 2008).

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Wordsworth uses the same themes that confessional poets love: life, sadness, lack of adaptation, uncertainty, drawing the world described in detail by the poets of modernity. (p. 79).

In addition to the glimpse of the confessional tone in Wordsworth’s poetry, a confessional form of writing also manifested itself during the Romantic period in Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Confessions* (1782) and Thomas De Quincey’s *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1800).

Later in 1959, the term ‘confessional’ was officially applied to poetry by M.L. Rosenthal in the review of Robert Lowell’s collection of poems, *Life Studies*; “Because of the way Lowell brought his private humiliation, suffering, and psychological problems into the poems of *Life Studies*, the word ‘confessional’ seemed appropriate” (as cited in Greene, 2012, p. 296). According to Rosenthal, “Lowell removes the mask. His speaker is unequivocally himself, and it is hard not to think of *Life Studies* as a series of personal confidences, rather shameful, that one is honor-bound not to reveal” (1991, p. 109). From then on, ‘confessional’ is used to define the movement in American poetry in which the poets as the speaking ‘I’ explore their own transgressions such as a moral defect, a mental illness, a family problem, and a sexual impropriety to produce the poems that are “highly emotional in tone, autobiographical in content, and narrative in structure” (Beach, 2003, p. 155). Ultimately, ‘confessional’ refers to a form of writing which features the first person narrator or the speaking ‘I’ in dialogue with the implied listener and centres on the narrator’s transgression.

The confessional mode of writing is not only limited to prose and poetry but also secures its place within the dramatic sphere. In the preface to Strindberg’s *Plays of Confession and Therapy*, Walter Johnson applies the term ‘confessional’ to August Strindberg’s Damascus series: “The Damascus plays are confessional in the sense that Strindberg presents detailed testimony about his own life and personality, his own record of a rebel, and his ultimate conversion and reluctant submission” (1979, p. 5). Strindberg is well known for his utilization of his own experiences as material for his writing. Thus, despite its lack of an autobiographical tone, the term ‘confessional’ is still applicable to Strindberg’s plays in the sense that the series derives from the indecent experiences of the author who is an implied narrator of the
stories. Besides Strindberg’s plays, Tennessee Williams’s *The Glass Menageries* is another exemplar of the confessional play. Several critics and scholars note “the confessional framework” (Lui, 2002, p. 5) of Williams’s play and many of them detect the similarities between Tom and Williams himself. Among these critics is Roger Boxill who defines Williams’s play as a “gentle confessional work” (2007, p. 60) and notes William’s real-life allusions in the play,

The play is cradled in the playwright’s recall of the Depression years when he worked in the warehouse of the International Shoe Company by day and wrote by night. The faded belle as doting mother derives from Miss Edwina. The absent father who fell in love with long distance alludes to C.C. during his happy days as a Delta drummer. Rose Williams’s short-lived business studies, disappointing relationships and withdrawal from life inform the character of Laura as the predestined spinster with a lost love. Even the title refers to the collection of little glass animals that Rose and Tom kept in her room in St Louis, tiny figurines that came to represent for him all the softest emotions that belong to the remembrance of things past. (p. 60).

According to Thomas P. Adler, the recollection of the past of the narrator, Tom Wingfield, which occurs in the present turns the play into “confession of guilt” (1998, p. 39). Similar to the case of Strindberg’s *To Damascus* series, *The Glass Menageries* is confessional in that it originates from Williams’s experience of guilt. Moreover, what makes the play more noticeably and typically confessional is the fact that the narrator, the speaking ‘I’, directly addresses the audience and recounts his sin of abandonment resulted from “his failure to put other before self” (p. 42). The confessional play is not different from the confessional poetry and prose except that it unfolds in a form of a dramatic performance. Similar to other forms of confessional writing, the confessional play centres on the narrator’s record of a transgression, private humiliation, or a shameful secret.

Typically, confessional writing convinces the readers that they are reading a truthful account about the author as indicated by that several critics categorise confessional writing as a sub-genre of autobiography. Christopher Beach defines the confessional poetry as “highly emotional in tone, autobiographical in content
and narrative in structure” (2003, p. 155). Susan Radstone observes, “Rather, literary theory has tended to assimilate the confession within the broader category of autobiography. One effect of this has been to elide confessional autobiography’s relations with other modes of literary fictional confession” (2007, p. 27). Delese Wear and Therese Jones consider St. Augustine’s *Confessions* “The first autobiography proper of Western Europe” in which Augustine narrates “his life story” (2010, p. 218). Roland Green states that some critics regard confessional writing as “naïve autobiographical utterances and often as literal forms of therapeutic catharsis unmediated by aesthetic consideration” (2012, p. 296).

The confession and its autobiographical truthfulness are perceptively explored by Michel Foucault in *History of Sexuality* (1990). Although Foucault studies confession in terms of a method to produce truth on sexuality, his general concept of confession is applicable to all forms of confession in all times and places. Foucault believes that what we regard as truth is, in fact, a discourse which is believed to be truth and confession is “one of the West’s most highly valued techniques for producing truth” (Foucault, 1990, p. 59). Moreover, as the discourse of truth produced by confession concerned with an individual who articulates it, such discourse of truth becomes an autobiographical truth or a self-definition:

For a long time, the individual was vouched for by the reference of others and the demonstration of his ties to the commonweal (family, allegiance, protection); then he was authenticated by the discourse of truth he was able or obliged to pronounce concerning himself. The truthful confession was inscribed at the heart of the procedures of individualization by power. (pp. 58-59).

However, the discourse of truth is not freely articulated but it is constructed under an influence of a set of standards or rules created by an authority which might be a sovereign, a religious founder, a government, etc. as Foucault explains,

The obligation to confess is now relayed through so many different points, is so deeply ingrained in us, that we no longer perceive it as the effect of a power that constrains us; on the contrary, it seems to us that truth, lodged in our most secret nature, “demand” only to surface; that if it fails to do so, this is because a constraint holds it in place, the violence of
a power weighs it down, and it can finally be articulated only at the price of a kind of liberation. Confession frees, but power reduces one to silence; truth does not belong to the order of power, but shares an original affinity with freedom: traditional themes in philosophy, which a “political history of truth” would have to overturn by showing that truth is not by nature free—nor error servile—but that its production is thoroughly imbued with relations of power. The confession is an example of this. (1990, p. 60).

Confession which is one of the reliable methods to produce truth or precisely, the self-definition is thoroughly influenced by the authority. Most basically, a person must refer to the authority’s rule in regard to what to confess. The authority sets a standard to determine that which action considered a transgression to confess. In Christian confession, the authority determines the time to confess and evaluate confession. In legal confession, the authority evaluates confession and prescribes a penance. From Foucault’s perception, it can be said that even the least truthful confession—e.g. a confession of a mistake which the confessant did not commit—is also under the operation of the power relationship between the authority and its subject because the very notion of the ‘mistake’ that a person confesses is determined by the authority.

The critical perspectives towards confessional writing are various. The most basic and primary approach is with recourse to religious confession. Confessional writing can be read as “a religious practice” which is “necessary for one’s spiritual salvation” (Gill, 2006, p. 5). In such case, the confessional writer writes his confessional story with hope for forgiveness and salvation similar to Saint Augustine who wrote his Confessions with the belief that “self-conscious reflection on and repentance for sin lead to conversion and incorporation within a Christian community” (Greene, 2012, p. 296). Besides the religious view towards confessional writing is the humanist perspective contributed by Jean Jacques Rousseau’s Confessions which underlines “the value and distinctiveness of the self and its stories” (Gill, 2006, p. 5). Rousseau did not write his confessional writing because he hoped for salvation. On the contrary, he confessed in order to “enact individual different rather than moral conformity” and “indict an inherently unjust society rather than take responsibility for error” (Greene, 2012, pp. 296-297). The beginning of the challenge against the authority—e.g. religion, sovereign, and state—in the name of freedom
inspired by the French Revolution might account for the formation and the perception of Rousseau’s confessional writing which was written during the Romantic period. However, as Jo Gill strikingly points out, “Where one-time cornerstones of confession (subjectivity, truth, authority, representation) are under question, as they are today, where does confessional writing and its study turn?” (2006. P. 8); the religious and humanist perspectives might not be an applicable explanation for the modern confessional writing nowadays. How, thus, can we practically approach and understand the thought behind the modern confessional writing?

**Dramatic Monologue**

The poetic technique that most subtly reveals the motivation behind the speaker’s utterance is the dramatic monologue. With its style of first person narration usually directed to a silent listener that retains an affinity with confessional writing that features autobiographical narration directed to an implied confessor and its contextual technique that typically enables the reader to understand the motivation behind the speaker’s utterance, the dramatic monologue can be an appropriate method to approach confessional writing and decipher the thought or the possible ulterior motive of the confessional writer.

The dramatic monologue is the poetry in which the lyrical “I” is not the poet but the fictional character who speaks “usually directly to a second person or to an imaginary audience” in “a critical moment of a specific situation, with the speaker’s words unintentionally providing a revelation of his character” (Richardson, 2005, p. 51). In other words, the dramatic monologue is a one-way conversation between a fictional speaker and his silent auditor within a certain circumstance which “reveals motives and character [of the speaker] [parenthesis added] by a flash to an awakened imagination” (Curry, 1908, p. 11).

This poetic form made its debut in the Victorian period with the poetry of Lord Alfred Tennyson and Robert Browning. Although the origin and development of the form are never definitely determined, many scholars notice the germ of the dramatic monologue in lyric poetry and drama. Browning himself also encouraged this assumption by claiming in the advertisement to *Dramatic Lyrics* in 1852 that his
poems are “dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary person not mine [emphasis added]” (as cited in Byron, 2003, p.35). Claud Howard is among the scholars who conceive the dramatic monologue as a lyric-drama hybrid. Howard notes that from the lyric poetry the dramatic monologue draws its short length and self-expressive narration, and from drama it draws the dramatic elements which can be seen in “its portrayal of individuals on such occasions (a dramatic situation) [parenthesis added], or rather by having them reveal their own motives and characters at a flash” (1910, p. 6).

The joining of drama and lyric poetry, the development, and the perfection of the dramatic monologue resulted from changes in the principal world view which occurred during the transition from the Romantic to the Victorian periods. Instead of seeking for the absolute truth through the subjective experience as the Romantics did, the Victorians turned to explore the relative truth through various positions and contexts. The influence of sociology, the turn from being subjective to objective in poetry, the rapidity and diversity of life, and the passion for democracy of the Victorian period were, according to Howard, responsible for the perfection of the dramatic monologue (1910, p.28). Similar to Howard, Robert Langbaum also advocates the conclusion that the dramatic monologue was developed from the dominant genre of writing in the Romantic age as a reaction against the Romantic spirit: “The standard account of the dramatic monologue is that Browning and Tennyson conceive it as a reaction against the romantic confessional style” (1957, p.79). Being wounded by the severe criticism that they revealed too much about themselves in their early works, Tennyson and Browning turned to develop a new style of writing: the dramatic monologue. However, the resemblance in the poetic form between the two dramatic monologue poets must take more than a coincidence. The Victorians, who according to Langbaum belong to “an empiricist and relativist age, an age which has come to consider value as an evolving thing dependent upon the changing individual and social requirement of the historical process” (pp.107-108), found a way to explore versions of truth in the form of the dramatic monologue. In addition to Howard and Langbaum, Glennis Byron noted the change in principal world views as encouraging the emergence of the dramatic monologue. According to Byron, the Victorians are different from the Romantics who searched for truths
through their subjective experiences in that they conceived contexts as being essential to the perception of truth. The Victorians believed that “there are truths and judgment offered, but these are placed within their historical context and therefore, shown to be relative, the product of a particular age” (2003, p. 34).

Under the influence of the principal world views of the Victorian period, the dramatic monologue emerged as the poetic form that communicates its message through its relation with its contexts as S.S. Curry states in his influential *Browning and the Dramatic Monologue: Nature and Interpretation of an Overlooked Form of Literature*: “We judge what is said by the character of the speaker, by the person to whom he speaks, and by the occasion” (1908, p. 25). The dramatic monologue communicates its message or reveals the ulterior motive, character, and world view of the speaking “I” without his intention by encouraging the reader to contemplate the unfolding monologue in relation to its contexts: typically the occasion, the speaker, and the auditor. The first context, the occasion, as referred to in the dramatic monologue reading is “a critical moment of a specific situation” (Richardson, 2005, p. 51) during which the monologue is unfolded. The occasion is essential to an understanding of the dramatic monologue, as S.S. Curry points out:

> The point, then, is, that a reader or interpreter must conceive the speaker as occupying a definite place, and when this is done, the position will determine somewhat the feeling and the expression. Difference in situation causes many differences in action and in voice modulations. (p. 71).

Another context which the dramatic monologue leads the reader to contemplate in relation to the utterance is the speaker, especially in term of his character. To understand the message of the dramatic monologue, the reader has to “decide who the speaker is, what is his character, and the specific attitude of his mind” which can be deciphered from his unfolding utterance that is “stated from one point of view and with the force of an individual life” (pp.15-16). The character and attitude of the speaker is indispensible for the dramatic monologue reading because “Whenever a man speaks, we look into his character, into the living, natural language which are unconscious witnesses of the depth of his earnestness and sincerity” (p. 20). The last context which is typically important to the understanding of the dramatic monologue
is the auditor. Despite the fact that the auditor in the dramatic monologue is always silent, his relation to the speaker suggested by the unfolding monologue is necessary to the understanding of the poem’s meaning. The interrelation between the utterance and the audience in terms of their relationship with the speaker reveals “the spirit, the dramatic force, and even thought of the poem” (p. 35).

As the antithesis of the Romantics who advocated the individual experience as the source of truth through lyrical poetry, the Victorians explored the relative truth generated from various positions and contexts with the dramatic monologue. The comparison between the works of William Wordsworth such as “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” and Browning’s “My Last Duchess” may clarify the above difference. In “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud”, Wordsworth speaks as himself and expresses his subjective experience of a peaceful feeling among nature which brings happiness and tranquillity. By contrast, Browning assumes the persona of the duke who unintentionally expresses his cruel and egotistic natures through the interactions between his account of the last duchess’s portrait and the surrounding contexts: namely, the arrangement of a dowry with the envoy of his prospective bride, the envoy and his relation to the duke, and also the character of the duke himself. In his critical analysis of “My Last Duchess”, Robert Langbaum states,

It is important that the duke tells the story of his kind and generous last duchess to, of all people, the envoy from his prospective duchess. It is important that he tells his story while showing off to the envoy the artistic merits of a portrait of the last duchess. It is above all important that the duke carries off his outrageous indiscretion, proceeding triumphantly in the end downstairs to conclude arrangements for the dowry. All this is important not only as content but also as form, because it establishes a relation between the duke on one hand, and the portrait and the envoy on the other, which determines the reader’s relation to the duke and therefore to the poem—which determines, in other words, the poem’s meaning. (pp. 82-83).

Langbaum encourages the reader to contemplate the duke’s utterance in relation to the surrounding contexts before making judgment that is “relative, limited in applicability to the particular conditions of the case” (p.107). The duke tells the story of the
portrait of his last duchess to the envoy with his usual high-handed aristocratic manner as if he is showing off one of his favourite artistic collections. However, the interplay between the duke’s account about his last duchess’s portrait and its contexts reveals his attempt to use the story of his last wife as an anecdotal warning to his next duchess so as to exert power over her.

Three Confessional Plays as Dramatic Monologues

The selected plays in this study are Brian Friel’s *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990), David Henry Hwang’s *M. Butterfly* (1988), and Peter Shaffer’s *Amadeus* (1979). These plays are confessional in the sense that they all feature the narrator who reveals his transgression in a form of a play as a protagonist. The dramatic monologue will be used to read these modern confessional writings because the plays are appropriate in both the dimensions of content and method. In the dimension of content, the plays are evidently not religious confessions because all confessional narrators do not confess with hope for salvation and forgiveness. So, they are appropriate to the exploration of the motivation behind confessional writing of our time when our views towards the authority such as a religious institution are evolved. As for the dimension of method, because the three plays are fictional confessional writing, the contexts necessary to the dramatic monologue reading are definitely and certainly provided within the texts. Therefore, the dramatic monologue reading aimed to find out the new mode of confessional writing will work more solidly and practically with these fictional confessional writings than the actual confessional writing that still needs the biographical research on contexts which might be indefinite and disputable.

The first play in this study is Brian Friel’s *Dancing at Lughnasa*. The play is considered to be the most autobiographical play of Friel because the Mundy sisters in the play are reminiscent of his mother’s family, “those five brave Glenties women” (Friel, 1990, the foreword) and Agnes and Rose are similar to his two aunts who met their tragic end in London. Despite these real-life resemblance, Friel has nothing in common with his protagonist who made what he claims to be a self-serving escape from his home: “and when my time came to go away, in the selfish way of
young men I was happy to escape” (p. 71). With his revelation of the selfish departure, the critics note the confessional tone of Michael’s dramatic narration and compare him with Tom Wingfield, the narrator from Tennessee Williams’s *The Glass Menagerie* which is the prototype of the confessional play. Helen Lojek marks Michael as an “unreliable” man who “is (like Tennessee Williams’s Tom before him) happy to escape the women in his life” (2006, p. 85). Prapassaree Kramer goes further in outlining the confessional framework of the play: “Michael the narrator—as well as Michael the child—identifies himself with the outsiders, ultimately confessing [emphasis added] that he escaped as soon as he could” and his leaving is “a self-serving escape” (2000, p. 172).

However, a close contemplation of Michael’s confessional account reveals that his departure is not selfish but on the contrary, self-sacrificing. Michael’s confessional play retraces his living condition in his hometown, Ballybeg, Donegal, Ireland. During the 1936 Lughnasa festival, Michael as an illegitimate child experienced ominous recognition of his obligation to leave generated by the oppression of the Catholic community and the menacing approach of the modern industrialisation. From Michael’s account about his living condition at his home, it becomes clear that as an illegitimate child who was never accepted by the parochial society; Michael had to leave home so as to avoid bringing a financial burden to the family and thus, his departure was self-sacrificing not selfish. Probably, Michael’s confession of his selfish abandonment of the family is not with a religious aim because he did not truly commit the sin he confesses. As he did not commit the sin, he must not confess it out for God’s forgiveness and salvation. Through the dramatic monologue reading that encourages the contemplation of Michael’s confessional play in relation to the three specific contexts, Michael’s confession that he is a selfish member of the family is revealed to be imbued with his wish to show that despite his illegitimacy which made the society inconsiderately stigmatize him and force him to leave his family, he is a member of the Mundys who could help to relieve the family’s financial burden.

The second selected play in the study is David Henry Hwang’s magnificent play, *M. Butterfly*. This controversial play of the incredible concealment of sexual identity is based on the news item about the French diplomat, Monsieur
Bouriscot, and his Chinese lover, Mr. Shi, whom he believed to be a woman and passed on classified information to for more than twenty-five years. From the scandalous case, Hwang wrote the play from the French diplomat’s point of view. From his cell, Rene Gallimard, the former French diplomat, directly addresses the audience and presents the story of his incredible love for the Chinese man who was the incarnation of his fantasy woman, Madame Butterfly, the Western world’s beloved heroine from Giacomo Puccini’s *Madame Butterfly*. As Gallimard’s story involves the scandalous and pathetic love for the man who personified Madame Butterfly, his narration is generally recognized as a confessional play. In the theatre review for New York Time, Leah D. Frank refers to Gallimard’s recollection as “his self-confession narration” (1992, para. 5). Cecilia Hsueh Chen Lui compares Gallimard with Tom Wingfield from *The Glass Menagerie* which is an exemplar of the confessional play: “we may read the play as Gallimard’s confessional monologue before death. The confessional framework is akin to the memory of Tom in Tennessee Williams’s *The Glass Menagerie*” (2002, p.5).

However, Gallimard’s confessional play is constantly interfered by his recognition of truth that Song never performed Butterfly outside the stage at the German ambassador’s house in Beijing where he first met him. Thus, Gallimard’s confession that he loved Song because Song played Butterfly in their clandestine love relationship is challenged. Similar to Michael Evans who confesses to commit a sin of abandonment while actually his departure from home was self-sacrificing, Gallimard confesses an Orientalist love for a Chinese man who never played Madame Butterfly. Therefore, his confession is similar to Michael’s in the sense that he did not truly commit the crime he confesses so his confession is not aimed for religious purification and forgiveness. Among the critics of *M. Butterfly*, John Brockway Schmor seems to be the only one who offers an interesting observation about Gallimard’s intention in confessing his shameful mistake: “As Hwang’s erstwhile protagonist confesses, however, it becomes clear that there is a fatal tension building between the self he cynically constructs for the audience to consumption and the dislocated interior void of identity” (1994, p. 166). Schmor’s observation suggests the possibility that Gallimard might use his confession to re-construct his identity and in the light of the dramatic monologue reading, his critical stance is proved to be
convincing and feasible. With its typical function in revealing the motivation behind the speaker’s utterance, the dramatic monologue reveals that Gallimard’s confession results from his attempt to negate homosexuality and confirm his heterosexual preference.

*Amadeus* by Peter Shaffer is chosen as the final play in this study. Being inspired by the unproven rumour that Antonio Salieri, Mozart’s senior contemporary, might be involved with Mozart’s premature death, Shaffer decided to bring the rivalry between the two composers onto stage. *Amadeus* is structured as a play within a play with the incidents during 1823 Vienna as the outer frame of the play and Salieri’s last composition entitled *The Death of Mozart, or, Did I Do It?* is the play within the play in which the main action of the play takes place. The similarity between the play’s title and Mozart’s middle name might be noted. However, the very fact that the play revolves around Salieri’s dramatic revelation—that he caused Mozart untimely death because God unjustly bestowed His love upon Mozart whom Salieri regards as immoral and unworthy—suggests that the title of the play which means “God’s Love” in Latin refers to Salieri’s interpretation of God’s Love. As Salieri’s composition, which is the central story of the play, is the revelation of murder; *Amadeus* is generally noted as a confessional play. David Galens and Elizabeth Thomason claims that “The play is structured like a deathbed confession” (2001, p. 7). Similar to Galens and Thomason, Dennis A. Klein notes that, Salieri “confesses to having contributed to Mozart’s early death through his petty dealings to ruin him professionally and financially” (1983, p. 31).

Similar to the two previous confessional plays, Salieri’s confessional composition is not inspired by the hope for Christian salvation. However, unlike Michael’s and Gallimard’s confessions which are not religious because they did not truly commit the transgressions they confess; Salieri’s confession is not religious because he clearly proclaims that he does not confess because he desires for forgiveness but he confesses to immortalise his name as Saint of Mediocrities who killed Mozart, the unworthy genius to get revenge on God’s injustice. Therefore, in this play, the dramatic monologue is not used to probe for the motivation behind the confessional play like in the two previous plays. The dramatic monologue reading of Salieri’s confessional composition goes beyond the reading of the above plays, in
which the reading reveals the protagonist’s attempts to use confessions to revise their self-definitions, to the undermining of the revision of self-definition by revealing Salieri as a villain against his intention to construct himself as the heroic Saint of Mediocrities with his confessional composition.

In all three plays, the protagonists’ confessional stances are evidently not religious confessions. Through the dramatic monologue reading, Friel’s Michael Evans and Hwang’s Rene Gallimard are revealed to use their confessions to revise their self-definition: from the unacceptable illegitimate child to the family member with ability to help the family and from the homosexual suspect to the heterosexual white man respectively. Moreover, in the light of dramatic monologue, the revision of self-definition through a confession of Shaffer’s Antonio Salieri is scrutinized and undermined. The dramatic monologue reading, thus, is not only proved to be applicable to the exploration of the motives behind the modern confessional writings that are no longer limited to religious salvation but also, appropriate to verify the modern confessions which might no longer be manifestations of shameful self-definitions but formations of more desirable ones.
“...and when my time came to go away, in the selfish way of young men I was happy to escape”

Michael Evans (Act2, 71)

CHAPTER 2
CONFESSION AS A MANIFESTATION OF KINSHIP: READING MICHAEL EVANS’S CONFESSIONAL PLAY IN BRIAN FRIEL’S DANCING AT LUGHNASA AS A DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE

The play which sentimentally looks back to 1930s Ireland, Dancing at Lughnasa made its first debut at Dublin Abbey Theatre in 1990. It is the first play of Brian Friel that was performed outside the Field Day Theatre at Derry in Ireland. According to the account given by his fellow Irish playwright, Thomas Kilroy, the story of the play was partly inspired by Friel’s two aunts who passed away in destitution in London,

It was Thatcher’s London. As we came down to the Embankment [...] the homeless were settling down for the night and Irish accents came out of the darkness. [Friel] turned and said to me that he had had two aunts who ended up like that. [...] [H]e told me the story of himself as a young man setting off for London to search for the two aunts who had left Donegal years before. What he found was destitution. I made the obvious, if cold remark that he would simply have to write play about them. (As cited in Lojek, 2006, p. 79).

The two aunts became Agnes and Rose whose miserable lives in London are briefly referred to in contrast to the Mundys’ golden moment during the 1936 Lughnasa festival in the nostalgic narration of Michael Evans, the narrator and the protagonist of the play. This real-life element and his foreword to the published version of the play: “In memory of those five brave Glenties Women” (Friel, 1990) account for an autobiographical acknowledgement of the play. However, despite these biographical sources of inspiration, there is no other resemblance between Friel and his protagonist
who ran away from his suffocating and impoverished family. Therefore, the play should be read, according to Helen Lojek, as “neither autobiography nor documentary, but a drama that explores complex issues in the lives of invented characters” (p. 79).

_Dancing at Lughnasa_ is generally recognized as a memory play with a framing narrative device that leads the audience to perceive a dramatic occurrence as a flashback. Friel has already adopted this writing style in his other plays such as _The Love of Case McGuire, Faith Healer_ and _The Freedom of the City_. _Dancing at Lughnasa_ opens with Michael standing alone in a pool of light while other characters assume several positions in the opening tableau:

_Around the stage and at a distance from MICHAEL the other characters stand motionless in formal tableau. MAGGIE is at the kitchen window (right). CHRIS is at the front door. KATE at extreme stage right. ROSE and GERRY sit on the garden seat. JACK stands beside Rose. AGNES is upstage left. They hold these positions while MICHAEL talks to the audience._ (Friel, 1990, p. 1).

The tableau can be read as a summarizing image similar to a photograph that contains its own story. All the characters that take their positions outside the house are those who left the house or died while the characters who are in the house like Kate, Maggie, and Chris remained in Donegal until their end. The dissolution of the family is, thus, implicitly introduced since the curtain is raised. Through his narration which is unfolded in a form of a play, Michael Evans, the protagonist of the play leads the audience to experience the time of the Lughnasa festival in 1936 when he experienced a sense of foreboding of his leaving which was eventually proved true by what Michael claims to be his selfish abandonment of his mother and two desperate aunts: “and when my time came to go away, in the selfish way of young men I was happy to escape” (p.71).

The narrative structure of the play and the fate of the Mundys are reminiscent of another play which also retains its prominent position of typical memory play. “Like Tennessee Williams’s _The Glass Menagerie_”, Helen Lojek posits, “_Dancing at Lughnasa_ is a memory play” (2006, p. 80). Williams’s masterpiece is categorized as a memory play because “the play occurs within his
(Tom Wingfield, the narrator’s) [parenthesis added] memory” (Adler, 1998, p. 38). However, there is another characteristic in the narrative structure that The Glass Menagerie (1944) shares with Dancing at Lughnasa. Several critics note a confessional framework in Williams’s famous play in parallel with its memory framework. For example: while alluding to The Glass Menageries as “this memory play” (p. 63), Roger Boxill (1987) also refers to the play within the same discussion as “this gentle confessional work” (p. 60). Thomas P. Adler connects the confessional framework with the memory framework of the play,

As narrator in the present stage time, Tom seems compelled endlessly to relive the past “in order to forget” that past (Scheye, 207), and so the act of remembering becomes either confession of guilt, [emphasis added] exorcism of the guilty past by “excessive reliving” (Parker, “Circle”, 133), or transmuting it into art through “the creation of the play” (T. King, 85). (1998, p. 39).

Similar to The Glass Menageries, the confessional framework in Dancing at Lughnasa is detected although implicitly and Michael Evans is recognised as a selfish family member similar to Tom Wingfield according to his confession. Helen Lojek expresses in her essay, “Dancing at Lughnasa and the unfinished revolution” that

There are no reliable men in this world. Unfaithful husbands, unsympathetic or renegade priest and men eager to marry younger women surround them. Even Michael, who remembers the sisters with love and admiration, is (like Tennessee Williams’s Tom before him) happy to escape the women in his life. (2006, pp. 85-86).

Similar to Lojek, Prapassaree Kramer observes, “Michael the narrator—as well as Michael the child—identifies himself with the outsiders, ultimately confessing [emphasis added] that he escaped as soon as he could” (2000, p. 172). She also observes that Michael is similar to Tom Wingfield in Glass Menagerie in that Michael made “a self-serving escape” from his family (p. 172). The above critical stance outlines the confessional framework of the play because it realises the narrator’s revelation of his shameful action. With the confession that he left his family out of his own selfishness, Michael is recognised as a selfish family member similar to Tom Wingfield who self-servingly left his mother and sister to their fate.
However, a close contemplation of Michael’s confessional narration reveals that Michael’s departure is different from Tom’s and he is not a selfish family member at all. Tom made a self-serving escape to pursue the writing career outside the suffocating family which obstructed his creativity. On the contrary, Michael does not clearly mention the purpose of his leaving and probably a career goal may not be on his mind. While Michael confesses that he selfishly abandoned his family, his account about his living condition at his hometown, Ballybeg, indicates his necessity to leave. Several incidents happening during the 1936 Lughnasa festival, a kind of Irish harvest celebration, generated a sense of uneasiness in Michael and thus, give credence to the fact that his departure is a self-sacrifice.

And even though I was only a child of seven at the time I know I had a sense of unease, some awareness of a widening breach between what seemed to be and what was, of things changing too quickly before my eyes, of becoming what they ought not to be. That may have been because Uncle Jack hadn’t turned out at all like the resplendent figure in my head. Or maybe because I had witnessed Marconi’s voodoo derange those kind, sensible women and transform them into shrieking strangers. Or maybe it was because during those Lughnasa weeks of 1936 we were visited on two occasions by my father, Gerry Evans, and for the first time in my life I had a chance to observe him. (Friel, 1990, p. 2).

Back to that time, Michael’s sense of unease was triggered by several incidents that truly make him recognise the difficulties and problems of his social status in Ballybeg for the first time in his life. Being born to unwed parents in a pious Catholic community, Michael found no way to struggle against poverty caused by the Modern Industrialisation and thus, became a living burden of the impoverish family.

Since his birth, Michael’s life in his hometown was not perfect because his illegitimacy made him a misfit of the community. The small town called Ballybeg of County Donegal, Ireland where his family belongs to was a pious Catholic parish. Therefore, his birth which did not result from “what Pope Pius XI considered to be the holy sacrament of matrimony” (Friel, 1990, p. 63) was regarded with reproach from the community as Michael recaptures his Aunt Kate said, “you’re home in Donegal now and much as we cherish love-children here they are not exactly the norm” (p.
In the time of 1936 Lughnasa festival, Michael came to recognise that his unfavourable status would never be alleviated because the heroic uncle whom he had been regarded as his saviour turned out to be a degenerated outcast and his father was an irresponsible dreamer who had a legitimate family elsewhere. Michael’s Uncle Jack had been a missionary at Africa for more than forty years and retained a favourable position in both the family and the Donegal community because of his mission. Before he came back Jack was regarded and treated as the family’s patriarch. According to Michael’s remembrance, as a priest, Jack was an embodiment of the Catholic spirit:

They pored over his occasional letters. They prayed every night for him and for his lepers and for the success of his mission. They scraped and saved for him—six pence here, a shilling there—sacrifices they made willingly, joyously, so that they would have a little money to send him at Christmas and for his birthday. And every so often when a story would appear in Donegal Enquirer about ‘our own leper priest’, as they called him—because Ballybeg was proud of him the whole of Donegal was proud of him. (pp. 8-9).

Before meeting Jack, Michael had visualized his uncle as a perfect idol, “I expected—well, I suppose, the hero from a schoolboy’s book. Once I had seen a photograph of him radiant and splendid in his officer’s uniform” (Friel, 1990, p. 8). “But if he was a hero to me” Michael recounts, “he was a hero and a saint to my mother and to my aunts” (Friel, 1990, p. 8). Jack had been regarded by the family as the perfect representative of the Catholic spirit and anticipated as the saviour of the family’s reputation, “And it (Jack’s reputation as a missionary in Africa) [parenthesis added] must helped my aunts to bear the shame Mother brought on the household by having me—as it was called then—out of wedlock” (p. 8). However, Jack who was sent back from his mission in Africa did not turn out to be what he had been expected to be. He was, according to Michael, “shrunken and jaundiced with malaria” (p. 2) and his mind was occupied by African pagan belief. He was no longer the pride of the family and the community. Therefore, he could not help to improve Michael unfavourable status in the eyes of the Catholic community.
Besides his uncle was not his saviour, his father could not help to rectify his illegitimacy. Michael’s memory of his conversation with his mother and Aunt Maggie after observing his father indicates his discouraging impression of his father. After Gerry left, Michael had a conversation with his mother concerning with his father,

CHRIS: Well. Now you’ve had a good look at him. What do you think of him? Do you remember him?

BOY: (Bored) I never see him before.

CHRIS: Shhh. Yes, you did; five or six times. You’ve forgotten. And he saw you at the foot of the lane. He thinks you’ve got very big. And he thinks you’re handsome! . . .

CHRIS: I’ll tell you a secret. The others aren’t to know. He has got a great new job! And he’s wonderful at it!

BOY: What does he do?

CHRIS: Shhh. And he has bought a bicycle for you—a black bike—a man’s bike and he’s going to bring it with him the next time he comes.

(She suddenly embraces him and hugs him.)

BOY: Is he coming back soon?

CHRIS: (Eyes closed) Maybe—maybe. Yes! Yes, he is!

BOY: How soon?

CHRIS: Next week—the week after—soon—soon—soon!. . .

(Friel, 1990, p. 36)

The dialogue shows that Michael’s first impression of his father was rather disheartening for him. From that first impression, Michael might begin to realise that he could not expect anything from his father who seemed to have no decent job and no serious intention to take responsibility of Chris and Michael. Michael’s feeling of despair generated by his impression of his father who came to visit during 1936 Lughnasa might be further aggravated during his conversation with Aunt Maggie,

MAGGIE: Your daddy has bought you a bicycle?

BOY: He told me today. He bought it in Kilkenny. So there!

(Her manner changes. She returns to the table.)
MAGGIE: (Softly) Your daddy told you that?

BOY: Ask him yourself. It’s coming next week. It’s a black bike—a man’s bike.

MAGGIE: Aren’t you the lucky boy? (p. 44).

Nesta Jones observes that during the chit-chat between Maggie and Michael, “Maggie’s jokey manner changes when he talks of the bike his daddy has brought him. She knows all about Gerry Evans’s promises. Might he keep this one or will the child be hurt?” (2000, p. 178). Maggie’s manner might trigger a sense of unease in Michael’s mind as her expression of sympathy indicated that there must be something wrong about his father and his promise of bicycle. What was evident to Michael was that his father did not come to stay and perform his paternal duty to him. As he came to visit Chris and Michael, he was about to quit a Gramophone salesman job to work as a dispatch rider for the International Brigade in Spain. Having a legitimate family elsewhere, Gerry did not have an intention to marry Chris and legitimise Michael. Nesta Jones well summarizes that Gerry was a salesman who has “a double life, one at home and another on the road” (2000, p.172). Evidently, Chris and Michael are parts of his another life on the road as the truth turned out years later,

Sometime in the mid-fifties I got a letter from a tiny village in the south of Wales; a curt note from a young man of my own age and also called Michael Evans. He had found my name and address among the belonging of his father, Gerry Evans. He introduced himself as my half-brother and he wanted me to know that Gerry Evans, the father we shared, had died peacefully I the family home the previous week. Throughout his final illness he was nursed by his wife and his three grown children who all lived and worked in the village. (Friel, 1990, p. 61).

Therefore, Gerry could not marry Chris and perform his paternal duty to Michael. Michael recounts that every time he visited, Gerry always “proposed (a marriage) to Mother and promised me a new bike” (p. 61). Nonetheless, the proposal and promise was never fulfilled and thus, Michael was never a legitimate child.

In addition to the fact that his unfavourable status would never be remedied or put into a more socially acceptable light, during the 1936 August, Michael also came to witness the heartless marginalisation of the unorthodox misfit
by the Christian society. Michael’s degenerated uncle, Jack, served as an unsettling example of a life he would have if he had chosen to stay at home because Jack’s paganism is analogous to Michael’s illegitimacy in terms of a transgression against Catholicism. As Jack who had been a Catholic priest was totally corrupted by African paganism, he became an outcast of the society and a burden of the family. The Christian authority and community ostracised Jack as Michael recaptures Kate’s disturbing question: “why has he (the parish priest) [Parenthesis added] never come out to visit Father Jack?” (Friel, 1990, pp. 35-36). Jack was marginalized by the Catholic community of Ballybeg until his end: “In fact he never said Mass again. And the neighbours stopped enquiring about him. And his name never again appeared in the Donegal Enquirer. And of course there was never a civic reception with bands and flags and speeches” (p. 60). Until his death, Jack lived day by day with nothing to do as demonstrated by Michael’s remembrance, “I see that forlorn figure of Father Jack shuffling from room to room as if he were searching for something but couldn’t remember what” (p. 2). He became the living burden of the family as part of the family income mainly earned by Kate had to be spent for his medicine. The social marginalisation was not only limited to Jack but also extended to Kate, his sister as well. The parish priest eventually dismissed Kate from her job at school and according to Michael, “that had more to do with Father Jack than with falling numbers” (p. 41) of the students. As Michael’s illegitimacy was considered incompatible with the Catholicism of the parish, he would be probably marginalised and deprived of financial opportunity by the Ballybeg society judging by the fact that his degenerated uncle was marginalised and even Kate who was indirectly involved with unorthodox transgression was also ostracised by the society.

In addition to his unacceptable social status which was hopeless to be rectified and the oppression of the Catholicism upon the life of the unorthodox misfit, Michael’s hard living condition at his hometown was further aggravated by the arrival of Modernisation that accompanied Industrialisation. At the beginning of the Lughnasa month, the Mundys welcomed their “first wireless set” which was called “Marconi” (Friel, 1990, p. 1) after the brand name emblazoned on it. In Michael’s memory, he perceived Marconi with a feeling of “awe” towards its “magic” (p. 2) that brought music from Dublin into their home. Their possession of a radio clearly
signifies the invasion of the modernization into the homely country life as Nesta Jones suggests, “Marconi is also a nod towards modernity and an important link with the outside world” (2000, p. 167). Together with the radio, the modern innovation that made the old country home, as Gerry complimented, “very posh” (Friel, 1990, p. 32) was the industrial revolution that replaced a cottage industry with factories. Agnes and Rose lost their gloves knitting jobs because as Michael recounts, “the Industrial Revolution had finally caught up with Ballybeg” (p. 59) and the gloves factory was established in Donegal where Ballybeg was a part. Despite the knitting agent’s advice that they should apply for a job at the factory; Michael’s aunts, Agnes and Rose, chose to leave home. Michael believes that one of the reasons for their decision to leave was Agnes’s recognition “that Rose wouldn’t have got work there (the factory) [parenthesis added] anyway” (p. 59) for she did not have a normal level of intelligence. The two women had to leave so as to avoid being an economic burden to the family as Agnes’s note read, “We are gone for good. This is best for all. Do not try to find us” (p. 60). The fate of his two aunts, especially Rose, could serve to foreshadow Michael’s life. While his Aunt Rose was deprived of her career opportunity because of her mental defect, Michael would be deprived of any prospects of life in Ballybeg because of his illegitimacy. Even though there had been no industrialisation, Michael had not had much chance and choice to get a job because he was marginalised by the society. The coming of the modern industrial revolution represented by the arrival of Marconi and the glove factory which took away the old way of life and the agricultural mode of production would further reduce Michael’s financial opportunity. His chance and choice for a job would be reduced almost to zero and thus, he would be a living burden of the family.

As implied by his account about the conclusion of the lives of those who remained in Ballybeg after Agnes’s and Rose’s departure and Uncle Jack’s death, Michael does not mention about what he did to support the Mundys during almost ten years before his departure while his mother took a job in the gloves factory, Kate taught Austin Morgan’s children, and Maggie did all the housework. Probably, during the hard time in Ballybeg, Michael could not find any decent job due to the prejudice against his unacceptable status similar to his Uncle Jack who lived as an outcast until his end. Therefore, he, similar to Agnes and Rose, eventually chose to
leave for the family’s good. Twenty-five years after the leaving of his two aunts, Michael attempted to find them in London and discovered that “Agnes was dead and Rose was dying in a hospice for the destitution in Southwark” (Friel, 1990, p. 60). Michael’s attempt to find his aunts who sacrificed themselves by leaving home to ensure the family’s survival implicitly reflects that he shares the same self-sacrificing mentality with his two aunts.

From Michael’s account about his living condition in Ballybeg during the 1936 Lughnasa festival, his departure is not considered a self-serving escape but a self-sacrificing action. His confessional narration, thus, is not aimed for forgiveness or salvation for his sin of abandonment as a religious confession because he did not commit a sin he confesses. So, what is the motivation behind his confession of such a sin and passing himself off as a selfish member of the Mundy family? One possible and practical way to probe into Michael’s ulterior motive in confessing a selfish abandonment of his family is reading the play through the dramatic monologue technique. In the light of the dramatic monologue which typically encourages the reader to contemplate the first person narration in relation to its contexts: typically the occasion, the speaker, and the auditor; Michael’s ulterior motivation hidden behind his revelation of his misbehaviour becomes evident.

The first context that has much to do with the true meaning of the dramatic monologue through its interplay with the utterance is the occasion. The occasion as being referred to in the dramatic monologue reading is the specific situation during which the utterance is unfolded. Almost at the first glimpse of Dancing at Lughnasa, the occasion is introduced by the stage direction: “When the play opens MICHAEL is standing downstage left in a pool of light. The rest of the stage is in darkness. Immediately MICHAEL begins speaking, slowly bring up the lights on the rest of the stage” (Friel, 1990, p. 1). Standing alone detached from other characters in the tableau, Michael begins his narration, “When I cast my mind back to that summer of 1936 different kinds of memories offer themselves to me” (p.1). The occasion during which Michael unfolds his confessional narration is when he is retracing his life during the summer of 1936 La Lughnasa festival. In that time, he came to face the truth that his living in his hometown would be full of difficulty and
he would become a living burden of the family because his illegitimacy made him a social misfit who would be deprived of any career prospects in Ballybeg parish.

The occasion is essential to the deciphering of the true meaning of the dramatic monologue or the real motivation behind the speaker’s utterance as Claud Howard shows in his critical insight into Robert Browning’s “The Patriot”. According to Howard, the occasion of this dramatic monologue is “when the patriot is going to his execution” (1910, p. 3) and during this occasion, the patriot “recalls the incident one year ago, —when he was a worshiped hero” (p. 3). The interplay between the occasion and the utterance, thus, illuminates that the patriot speaks with recognition of “the fickleness of popular opinion” (p. 3). The interplay between Michael’s confession and the occasion in which he chooses to confess his selfish abandonment works in the same way with that in “The Patriot”. As he is about to tell the story of the 1936 summer, he must be induced to recall the hurtful recognition that because of his illegitimacy, he had to leave home in order to avoid bringing an economic burden to the family as he could not find any prospect in the hometown. In this very specific occasion, Michael might experience a feeling of bitterness against the prejudice towards his illegitimacy that previously made Balleybeg ostracise him and deprive him of a career opportunity regardless to the fact that he was also one of the Mundy family members who could help the family financial status. Thus, his confession that he is a selfish family member who left his family in poverty might be a plea for sympathy. Despite his unorthodox origin, he is still a family member who has a duty to support the family.

Michael’s intention to use the confession to proclaim that he is also a Mundy family member previously suggested by the interplay between his confession and the occasion is further reinforced by the interplay between his confessional utterance and another context which the dramatic monologue typically encourages the reader to contemplate in relation to the unfolding utterance. Besides the occasion, the context which is typically indispensable for the dramatic monologue reading is the speaker. Apparently, the speaker in Dancing at Lughnasa is Michael Evans who, as Friel describes in his characters note, is a young man and a narrator of the play. Michael is an illegitimate son of Gerry Evans and Christina Mundy who made, what he confesses to be, a selfish escape from a suffocating milieu and poverty of his
family. Moreover, as S.S. Curry states, the context of the speaker is not limited only to the general background of the speaker provided by the author but it is also concerned with the speaker’s desire, worldview, and typical character which can be learned from his utterance which is “stated from one point of view” and endowed with “the force of an individual life” (1908, p. 16). Therefore, in Dancing at Lughnasa, the typical character and specific attitude of Michael Evans can be learned through the way he unfolds his confessional play.

In his narration, Michael presents himself as a legitimate child whose status as a part of the family was overlooked with his invisible younger self while at the same time, portrays himself as being accepted by the members of the Mundy family through several of his visualization of the incidents in which he did not directly experience. Through the ways he unfolds his confessional recollection, Michael is shown to be traumatized by the recognition that he is stigmatised by the society as the family misfit because of his illegitimacy and at the same time, preoccupied with a desire to define himself as a part of the family. As a result, the interplay between his typical character and his confession illuminates that Michael accepts his selfishness in order to demonstrate his kinship with the Mundy.

Michael Evans is illegitimate and he does not attempt to conceal this undeniable fact. In his confessional narration, Michael expresses his traumatic awareness that the society was blinded to the fact that he was a family member because of prejudice against his illegitimacy with the character of the invisible boy who, for almost throughout the play, occupies the space outside the house which is a traditional symbol of a family. One of the most astonishing elements in Dancing at Lughnasa besides the spectacular dancing scene of the five sisters is the invisible boy. In his confessional narration which takes a form of a play, Michael makes his younger self, the seven years old boy Michael invisible. The invisible boy is first introduced into the play through the first scene of conversation between the boy and his Aunt Maggie,

*The convention must now be established that the (imaginary) BOY MICHAEL is working at the kite materials lying on the ground. No dialogue with the BOY MICHAEL must ever be addressed directly to the adult MICHAEL, the narrator. Here, for example, MAGGIE has her*
back to the narrator. MICHAEL responds to MAGGIE in his ordinary narrator’s voice. MAGGIE enters the garden from the back of the house. (Friel, 1990, p.7).

The seven-year-old Michael is unseen by the audience but his presence is manifested by his conversation with other characters through the normal adult voice of Michael, the narrator. The other characters regard the boy as a normal tangible person and talk directly to this invisible boy. This portrayal indicates that the fact that the young boy Michael is one of the Mundy family members was unseen by the society outside. Michael does not only make his younger self invisible but he also disallows the boy Michael and the elements related to the boy to trespass into the house. As his confessional play is set within the family space, the boy Michael cannot exist in a tangible form nor can he occupy the domestic space because the society never recognises him as the family part. Almost throughout the play, the invisible boy never enters the house especially the kitchen which is considered to be the headquarters of the family where nearly all the actions in the play occur. The only time that the boy Michael made an intrusion into the family sphere is in the beginning of the second act.

The dialogue between Michael and Maggie indicates that the boy was writing to Santa Claus asking for a bell for his bicycle which his father promised to give. His brief presence in the kitchen was ended by Maggie’s suggestion, “Now away and write to Santa some other time. On a day like this you should be out running about the fields like a young calf” (p. 45). On the one hand, Maggie’s advice might be her intention to protect her nephew from disappointment by suggesting other activities to distract him from his father’s promise that would never be fulfilled but, on the other hand, her suggestion symbolically implies Michael’s perception of his status. Because the boy Michael is not a legitimate child who traditionally belongs to the family, he should not stay in the house and was free from all conventional obligations like a calf.

The dramatization of the young Michael as an invisible boy which is the coup de théâtre of this play does not only symbolize the recognition of the young Michael that he did not socially belong to the family but also makes the audience forget that sometimes, the boy Michael did not actually witness certain incidents and such incidents are the imaginative creations of the adult Michael to highlight certain issues. Michael’s confessional play retraces his living condition during August 1936
that was aggravated to the point that his stay at home would be impossible. However, a close examination of the play reveals that our protagonist did not participate in all incidents which he vividly describes. Prapassaree Kramer also notices this problem in Michael’s narration which is evidently manifested in the five sisters’ dance scene,

\[\ldots\] this scene may be accepted as a “second-hand memory;” that is, it may represent Michael’s memory of what he was told by those who did participate. But while unwitnessed dialogue might be accepted by the audience as representing what the narrator has later learned from one of the speakers, we can hardly imagine the detailed descriptions of movement and facial expression that constitute the Lughnasa dance being passed down from one of the participants to Michael. (2000, p.176).

Actually, there are some incidents that he observed from a distance and portrays them either from his impressions of the participants and the events as the above dancing scene or from the participants’ accounts and his impressions of the participants. Also, there are some incidents which he did not witness but learned from the participants and portrays them from their accounts and his impressions of them. Moreover, there are some other incidents which he did not witness nor learn from the participants but portrays them from his impressions of the participants. Among the incidents that Michael did not directly participate but visualises and puts into his narration are the incidents in which he was accepted by the Mundys as one of them despite his illegitimacy. These incidents might encourage his confession of selfish escape: he is a part of the family and he is selfish to leave them. Nonetheless, as these incidents are revealed to be his visualisation, his insertion of them into his confessional narration becomes an indication of his preoccupation with a wish to include himself as a part of the family.

The first visualization of Michael concerns the conversations among the Mundy members in which he was mentioned with love and care. After the bacchanalian dance, Maggie found that Michael disappeared from the garden where he had been working with his kite,

\[\text{MAGGIE: Yes, miss. (At window) Where’s Michael, Chrissie?} \]
\[\text{CHRIS: Working at those kites, isn’t he?} \]
\[\text{MAGGIE: He’s not there. He’s gone.} \]
CHRIS: He won’t go far.
MAGGIE: He was there ten minutes ago.
CHRIS: He’ll be all right.
MAGGIE: But if he goes down to the old well— (Friel, 1990, p.23).

Probably, Michael might flee from the dance which he regarded as a dance of the Meanad that turned the “kind, sensible women” into “shrieking strangers” (p. 2).

Michael did not observe the conversation between his mother and Aunt Maggie. He evidently portrays the conversation from his impressions of the participants or their accounts related to him somehow afterward. Nonetheless, the way he visualises Maggie as being worried about him and puts this visualisation into his narration indicates his attempt to show that he was regarded with love and care as one of the family. The Mundy sisters’ love and approval for their nephew also shines through another conversation visualized by Michael,

KATE: …D’you know what he’s at out there? Did you see,
Christina? Making two kites!
CHRIS: Some kites he’ll make.
KATE: All by himself. No help from anybody.
AGNES: You always said he was talented, Kate.
KATE: No question about that. And very mature for his years.
CHRIS: Very cheeky for his years.
ROSE: I think he’s beautiful, Chris. I wish he was mine. (p. 10)

The above conversation clearly indicates Michael’s absence from the scene so he did not witness it by himself but he invents and inserts the dialogues into his recollection. In this conversation, Michael is shown to be loved and approved by his aunts who spoke about him with love and care especially by Kate who, as a matriarchal authority, strictly took care that everyone in the family did not transgress their Catholic dogma. Michael’s visualization of this conversation, thus, reflects his wish to demonstrate that he was accepted as one of the family members despite his unchristian illegitimacy.

Michael’s wish to be accepted as a part of the family is also illuminated in his visualization of the incidents concerning with his parents. Gerry’s dialogue with Chris during their chit-chat at his first visit, “Don’t turn round; but he’s watching us
from behind that bush” (Friel, 1990, p.29) and “He’s still watching us. He thinks we don’t see him. I wouldn’t mind talking to him” (p.31) indicates that Michael was a distant observer of the occurrences both inside and outside the house. Hearing the music from Marconi, Gerry took Chris in his arm and they danced together. Their dance was witnessed by Kate, Maggie, and Agnes from the kitchen’s window. Kate, the matriarch of the family who strongly disapproved of Gerry’s visits surprisingly expressed her compliment to the couple, “They dance so well together. They’re such a beautiful couple” (p.33). Considering the fact that Michael was observing his parents from a distance outside the kitchen, he could not have heard Kate’s words. Also, Michael perceives Kate as a pious and proper woman who strongly opposed to his father as indicated in his portrayal of her reaction to Gerry’s visit,

KATE: How dare Mr Evan show his face here,
MAGGIE: He wants to see his son, doesn’t he?
KATE: There’s no welcome for that creature here. . .
MAGGIE: We’ll have to give him his tea.
KATE: I don’t see why we should. (p. 24).

Kate’s expression of compliment towards Gerry and Chris is, thus, considered out of Kate’s character to the point that it is impossible to believe that Kate articulated such expression toward the couple. His presentation of his visualisation of Kate’s words of approval reflects his wish to be accepted as a part of the Mundys. As Kate, the matriarch of this Catholic family, approved of his parents’ relationship, she implicitly expressed her approval of Michael’s status and accepted him as a member of the family. Moreover, although he can see his parents, Michael could not hear exactly what they were saying. Therefore, he could not have heard his father’s marriage proposal,

GERRY: Do you know the words?
CHRIS: I never know any words.
GERRY: Neither do I. Doesn’t matter. This is more important. (Pause.)
Marry me, Chrissie. (Pause.) Are you listening to me?
CHRIS: I hear you.
GERRY: Will you marry me when I come back in two weeks?
CHRIS: I don’t think so, Gerry. (p.33).
Gerry’s proposal to Chris, although being denied, was fulfilled by his dance with Chris during his second visit as described by Michael at the end of Act 1.

. . .he did come back in a couple of weeks as he said he would. And although my mother and he didn’t go through a conventional form of marriage, once more they danced together, witnessed by the unseen sisters. And this time it was a dance without music; just there, in ritual circles round and round that square and then down the lane and back up again; slowly, formally, with easy deliberation. (p.42).

The dialogue and the dance are evidently invented and portrayed through Michael’s perception and thus, his presentation of both visualised incidents demonstrate his wish to be regarded as a part of the family. Gerry’s proposal and the ritual dance described by Michael as a formal ritual like a wedding dance witnessed by the sisters can substitute for their conventional marriage so Michael was not entirely illegitimate and thus, he was not the misfit in the eyes of his family.

Apart from the above incidents, Michael also imaginatively reproduces Jack’s accounts about a pagan way of life in Ryanga, the remote village in Uganda, which serves as an alternative way of life in which he would be conventionally accepted as a part of the family despite his illegitimacy. Jack returns from his mission at Ryanga profoundly influenced by a pagan belief which was severely in conflict with Catholicism of the family and community. One of Jack’s unorthodox ideas that Michael chooses to imaginatively recapture is the story of a “love-child” (Friel, 1990, p. 40), a term which the Ryangan villagers used to define a child who was not born from the principal wife. After Jack related about his pagan way of life in Africa to his sisters, he inquired about his nephew and such enquiry led to the question about Michael’s father. After acknowledging that Michael was born out of wedlock, Jack resolved to define his nephew as a love-child and approvingly expressed, “the more love-children you have, the more fortunate your household is thought to be” (p.41). Jack’s enquiry after Michael, despite a little mistake, points to the boy’s absence. Thus, Michael evidently invents this conversation in which his illegitimacy was regarded with favour. Besides the story of a desirable love-child, Michael also visualizes Jack’s account about the polygamous family which was quite a norm in
Ryanga: “And what’s so efficient about the system is that the husband and his wives and his children make a small commune where everybody helps everybody else and cares for them. I am completely in favour of it” (p. 63). In other communities like Ryanga, a man could have more than one principle wife and children born from other wives were not considered undesirable outcomes of a transgression against “the holy sacrament of matrimony” (p.63). On the contrary, they were regarded with love and accepted as the family members who could benefit the household with their responsibilities. Evidently, Michael did not directly witness both of Jack’s accounts and it is impossible to imagine one of the sisters related these unorthodox accounts to Michael judging from the pious Catholic atmosphere under the Mundy roof. Thus, Michael probably invents the accounts himself. Jack’s accounts about a love-child and a polygamous family which are visualized and presented by Michael, therefore, reflect Michael’s attempt to show that the illegitimacy is only socially constructed. If he were born in Uganda or some other polygamous communities, he would have been welcomed and accepted as a rightful part of the family.

Finally, Michael makes very illogical visualisation of his mother’s calling. During the family’s gathering in the garden, Chris constantly called after her son: “Michael! Where are you? We need some turf brought in! [emphasis added]” (Friel, 1990, p. 61), Nobody can vanish quicker than that Michael fellow when you need him [emphasis added]” (p. 62), “Where’s that Michael’s fellow got to? Michael! He hears me rightly, you know. I’m sure he’s joking about out there somewhere, watching us. Michael!” (p.68), and finally, “Michael! He always vanished when there’s work to be done [emphasis added]” (p. 70). Chris’s calling is the evidence of the fact that Michael was not there to see and hear his mother’s calling. Michael probably creates the incident and inserts it into his narration to demonstrate his sense of belonging to the family as the callings indicate that he was needed to help the housework as one of the family members.

Similar to the duke in Robert Browning’s “My Last Duchess”, the prototype of the dramatic monologue, who reveals himself as being egocentric and materialistic through the way he tells the story behind the portrait of his last duchess, Michael shows himself as being traumatized by the fact that his involvement with the family was ignored by the Ballybeg society and at the same time, preoccupied with a
wish to demonstrate himself as a part of the Mundys through the way he unfolds his confessional narration. The interplay between the speaker’s typical character and his utterance contributes to the understanding of his ulterior motive behind his narration which is the true message of the dramatic monologue. In Browning’s, the duke’s narration is revealed to be his intention to exert his power over his future bride through the interplay between the duke who is the speaker and the story of the portrait of his last duchess whom he resolved to murder and preserved only her beauty—which he believes rightfully belong to him—within the hanging frame. Not different from the case of Browning’s duke, the interplay between Michael’s confession that he is the selfish family member and his typical character explicates the motivation behind the confession. Michael believes that the Ballybeg community overlooked his involvement with the Mundys because of the prejudice against his illegitimacy and at the same time, he desires to demonstrate that he is a family member. Therefore, the confession that he is a selfish family member might be his attempt to demonstrate his tie to the family showing that despite the fact that he is illegitimate, he is still the member of the Mundy family although a selfish one.

Michael’s intention to reassert his identity as a part of the family with his confessional play is also emphasized by the interrelation between his confession and the last context which the dramatic monologue reading typically takes into consideration. Besides the occasion and the speaker, another context that the dramatic monologue reading cannot overlook is the auditor. The auditor in the dramatic monologue can assume any form. He can be the speaker’s imaginative creation, the speaker’s own self, or a real tangible person. The aspect of the audience which is essential to the deciphering of the true message of the dramatic monologue is their relationship with the speaker which can be extracted from the way the speaker talks with his audience. At the beginning of the play, Michael makes his debut on stage and as the stage direction says, “talks to the audience” (Friel, 1990, p.1). The live audience of Dancing at Lughnasa is, thus, designated as Michael’s auditors. From the way Michael unfolds his narration to the audience, it becomes evident that Michael and his audience share the same worldview.

Presumably, the auditor has a clear concept that a son—a socially acceptable one—must be born to parents that went through a sacramental ceremony of
marriage. A child that does not fit into this concept is considered to be an illegitimate child or a bastard by society especially by the Catholic community that values “the holy sacrament of matrimony” (Friel, 1990, p. 63). In his narration, Michael recounts that “And it (Uncle Jack’s priestly mission in Africa) [parenthesis added] must help my aunts to bear shame Mother brought on the household by having me—as it was called then—out of wedlock” (p. 9). Apparently, his utterance seems to be a casual account about his status. However, a close examination suggests that the audience to whom the utterance is directed has no difficulty to understand why Michael’s origin is considered to be a shame to the Catholic family like the Mundys. On the contrary, the idea that being born from unwed parents is shameful might be alienated to the villagers in Ryanga, the Islamic society, or the ancient Thais.

Michael’s auditors do not only perceive a position of an illegitimate son in society in the same way that Michael does but they also acknowledge the bond of the family and the commitment of the family member. After a brief summary of the fates of his family members who remained at Ballybeg until their end, Michael confesses that he “was happy to escape” his mother and his two desperate aunts “in a selfish way of young men [emphasis added]” (Friel, 1990, p. 71). The fact that the act of leaving family members—especially female relatives—to strive for their lives is selfish might be incomprehensible to people in some other societies whose worldviews and values are different from those of Michael and his audience. However, from Michael’s narration, the audience is assumed to be familiar with the idea that to leave a family in poverty and difficulty is selfish because such action violates the family commitment.

The clear conception of the audience is necessary for the dramatic monologue reading. In Browning’s “My Last Duchess”, as the duke shows off his last duchess’s portrait to the envoy of his prospect bride, the story of the portrait is revealed to be inspired by the duke’s attempt to exercise his power over his future bride through her envoy. Similar to the duke, Michael’s motivation in confessing his selfish abandonment of his mother and aunts is revealed by the interplay between the uttering confession and his audience in term of Michael’s relation to them. Michael is aware of his audience’s perception of an illegitimate child and their acknowledgement of the family commitment. As he is illegitimate, the audience might naturally
segregate him from a traditional son and overlook the fact that he is a part of his family. At the same time, this audience is also fully aware that leaving a family is a violation against the family commitment which all family members must fulfil. As a result, with his confession, the audience will constantly regard him as a selfish family member because only a family member can violate the family commitment and come to be regarded as being selfish. As Michael confesses to this audience, he manifests his intention to remind them of the overlooked fact that despite his illegitimacy, he is still the member of the Mundy family although a selfish one.

The dramatic monologue reading of *Dancing at Lughnasa* offers a new possible view toward Michael Evans’s confessional play which is obviously not a religious confession in the sense that he does not confess to seek God’s forgiveness and salvation. Michael is different from Tom Wingfield in *Glass Menagerie* because Michael did not truly leave his family out of his own selfish desire to pursue a career of a writer outside the suffocating atmosphere of his home. On the contrary, Michael had to leave home because the prejudice against his illegitimacy would turn him into the burden of the family. With the dramatic monologue reading that encourages the readers to contemplate a speaker’s utterance in relation to its contexts, Michael’s confession is revealed to be his attempt to demonstrate that he is still a part of the Mundy family despite his unchristian illegitimacy that made the Ballybeg community ignored the fact that he had to relieve his family’s financial burden and deprived him of financial opportunity and eventually, forced him to make a self-sacrificing departure from home. He did not commit the same wrongdoing as Tom’s but he confesses such wrongdoing because he wants to show that he is not different from Tom who is conventionally accepted as a part of the Wingfield. The dramatic monologue reading of Michael’s confessional play in *Dancing at Lughnasa* indicates that a confession as a discourse of truth about one’s self can be used to assert a desirable self-definition as Michael who wants to highlight his identity as a family member with his confession.
CHAPTER 3
CONFESSION AS AFFIRMATION OF HETEROSEXUALITY:
READING RENE GALLIMARD’S CONFESSIONAL PLAY
IN DAVID HENRY HWANG’S M. BUTTERFLY
AS A DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE

“Alone in this cell, I sit night after night, watching our story play through my head, always searching for a new ending, one which redeems my honor, where she returns at last to my arms.”

(Rene Gallimard, Act 1, Scene 3)

With its seemingly incredible plot and the alluring shadow of Giacomo Puccini’s Madame Butterfly, David Henry Hwang’s most popular and controversial play, M. Butterfly, debuted on 10 February 1988 at the National Theatre, Washington, DC. Its later premier on Broadway at Eugene O’ Neil Theatre on 20 March brought about the great success as well as the critical attention in regards to the issues of colonialism, sexism, and Orientalism which the playwright put into the limelight. Hwang himself came to be one of the most prominent Asian-American playwrights in the theatrical arena of America as Jeremy Gerard best captures:

David Henry Hwang—barely 30 and haunted by spirits often of his own invention—is riding on the hyphen into mainstream American theatre as few Asian-Americans have before him. For the young playwright, the Broadway opening next Sunday of his M. Butterfly represents a breath taking leap. (1999, p. 151).

The success of M. Butterfly is also testified by its achievements of the Tony for best drama, the Outer Critics Circle Award for best Broadway play, the John Gassner Award for best American play, and the Drama Desk Award for best new play for the 1987-1988 Season. Moreover, Hwang himself was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize from this dramatic creation.
The playwright got an inspiration for his masterpiece from a piece of news in *the New York Times* dated May 11, 1986 which is also attached to the theatrical program and the published version of the play.

A former French diplomat and a Chinese opera singer have been sentenced to six years in jail for spying for China after a two-day trial that traced a story of clandestine love and mistaken sexual identity….Mr. Bouriscot was accused of passing information to China after he fell in love with Mr. Shi, whom he believed for twenty years to be a woman. (Hwang, 1989, “Playwright’s Note”).

Hwang admitted in the interview with John Louis DiGaetani that at first, he reacted to the news with disbelief: “Of course, I had the same reactions as everybody else—how could it have happened?” (1989, p. 143). Later, when he carefully contemplated the story for his dramatization, Hwang came to an insight that such mistaken of identity is not absolutely impossible: “But then on some level it seemed natural to me that it should have happened, that given the degree of misperception generally between East and West and between men and women” (p. 143). Mr. Bernard Bouriscot, according to Hwang, “probably thought he had found Madame Butterfly” (Hwang, 1989, p. 95) the enchanting heroine from Puccini’s world famous opera which has long been nurtured the Western fantasy of a submissive Oriental mistress or the Orientalism that caused the French diplomat’s scandalous downfall. Madame Butterfly or Cio Cio San is a Japanese geisha who falls in love with an American Navy Captain named Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton. After being abandoned by her Western lover, Butterfly resolves to commit suicide claiming “To die with honour/ When one can no longer live with honour” (Puccini, 1907, p. 63). Therefore, Butterfly becomes an ideal image which is, as Douglas Kerr expresses, “clearly a wish-projection of what Western male imagination supposed an Oriental woman might be like—beautiful, exotic, loving, yielding and not binding, giving all and demanding nothing” (1999, p. 160).

With an inspiration from the scandal of Mr. Bouriscot and his insight into the Western Orientalism which is effectively advocated by Puccini’s popular opera, Hwang chose to dramatize the case through the Western man’s point of view in the form of the deconstructed version of Puccini’s *Madam Butterfly*: 
So my play attempts to deconstruct Puccini’s opera, in that the diplomat begins the play fantasizing that he’s Puccini’s character Pinkerton who’s finally found his Butterfly. By the end of the evening, though, he realizes that it’s he who is Butterfly, that the Frenchman was the one deluded by love. The Chinese spy who perpetrated that deception is therefore the real Pinkerton. One way to read the play is when we set out to degrade others, we only succeed in degrading ourselves. (Hwang, 1999, p. 156).

The story of *M. Butterfly* is unfolded in a form of the French man’s dramatic recollection. From his cell, the former French diplomat named Rene Gallimard recounts the series of events in his own life which led to his imprisonment. He is convicted of treason and regarded as a laughingstock of the society because he passed the classified information to the *male* Chinese spy who lived with him as his wife for almost twenty-five years.

Gallimard introduces himself as an insecure young boy. He is unattractive and lack confidence. From his childhood, Gallimard recounts that he was unpopular and marginalized by Western society:

> I’ve never been considered witty or clever. In fact, as a young boy, in an informal poll among my grammar school classmates, I was voted “least likely to be invited to a party.” It’s a title I managed to hold onto for many years. Despite some stiff competition. (Hwang, 1989, p. 2).

Knowing that he is unattractive, Gallimard developed a diffident personality and became discouraged from initiating a relationship with Western women as he says to his friend: “Marc, I can’t…I’m afraid they’ll say no—the girls. So I never ask” (p.8).

The sexual boldness of the Western women discouraged him and thus, he never experienced “the absolute power of man” (p. 32) while his playboy friend, “the self-confident Marc” who “embraces new ideas and people, especially women” (Wiegmann, 1999, p. 72) did. Due to his failure to exert his masculine power over the women in his Western world, Gallimard has cherished a profound fascination with the myth of the submissive and modest Oriental woman and her superior Western lover portrayed in Puccini’s *Madame Butterfly*. He wants to be the perfect Westerner and, his desire can be fulfilled only by assuming the role of Pinkerton. Gallimard reveals
that he is so attracted to Madame Butterfly who is “a feminine ideal” (Hwang, 1989, p. 5) with submissiveness, modesty, and self-sacrificing love for her Western lover,

We, who are not handsome, nor brave, nor powerful, yet somehow believe, like Pinkerton, that we deserve a Butterfly. She arrives with all her possession in the folds of her sleeves, lays them all out, for her man to do with as he pleases. Even her life itself—she bows her head as she whispers that she’s not even worth the hundred yen he paid for her. He’s already given too much, when we know he’s finally had to give nothing at all. (p. 10)

His dream for a docile and submissive woman seemed to become true when he arrived at Beijing with his wife and met Song Liling: “in a parlor at the German ambassador’s house, during the ‘Reign of a Hundred Flower,’ I first saw her…singing the death scene from Madame Butterfly” (p. 14). Being with Song, the Butterfly whom he believed to be his submissive mistress; he becomes “aggressive confident” (p. 38) in his Western man identity as evidenced in his speech,

As I stumbled out of the party, I saw it writing across the sky: There is no God. Or, no—say that there is God. But that God understands. Of course! God who creates Eve to serve Adam, who blesses Solomon with his harem but ties Jezebel to a burning bed—that God is a man. And he understands! At age thirty-nine, I was suddenly initiated into the way of the world. (p. 38).

Unfortunately, Song Liling, the Chinese opera diva whom he mistook for his Butterfly turned out to be the male Communist spy sent to exploit his love for diplomatic secret. Gallimard does not deny that back at Beijing, he has already known Song’s true sexual identity: “Did I not undress her because I knew, somewhere deep down, what I would find? Perhaps. Happiness is so rare that our mind can turn somersaults to protect it” (p. 60) and “Yes I do! I knew all the time somewhere that my happiness was temporary, my love a deception. But my mind kept the knowledge at bay. To make the wait bearable” (p. 88). The Orientalist fantasy of the superior white man and his inferior Oriental mistress which Song helped him construct was so endearing to Gallimard. Thus, he chose to overlook Song’s true sexual identity in order to maintain an illusion that he is a perfect Western man which was entirely sustained by
Song’s role of Madame Butterfly. More than twenty years later, Song’s espionage to which Gallimard acted as an accomplice was discovered and his blissful fantasy ended with the trial during which Song stripped himself naked and revealed his true identity. Gallimard has been imprisoned in jail while Song was sent back to his home. To the public, Gallimard constantly refuses to acknowledge the truth that his lover is a man as evident in the conversation of the three Parisian party-goers,

WOMAN: He still claims not to believe the truth.

MAN 1: What? Still? Even since the trial?

WOMAN: Yes. Isn’t it mad?

MAN 2 (Laughing): He says…it was dark…and she was very modest!

The trio break into laughter. (p. 3).

However, alone in his cell with the memory of his love relationship with Song Liling, the Chinese actor and spy whom he took as an incarnation of his fantasy woman, Madame Butterfly, Gallimard accepts that he is “a man who loved a woman created by a man” (p. 90). His love for Song who was an incarnation of his beloved fantasy that sustained the illusion that he is a perfect Westerner is the unconditional and self-sacrifice love like Butterfly’s,

And the truth demands a sacrifice. For mistakes made over the course of a life time. My mistakes were simple and absolute—the man I love was a cad, a bounder. He deserved nothing but a kick in the behind, and instead I gave him…all my love.

Yes—love. Why not admit it all? That was my undoing, wasn’t it? Love warped my judgment, blinded my eyes, rearranged the very lines on my face…until I could look in the mirror and see nothing but…a woman. (p. 92).

Gallimard accepts that because of love, he becomes the willing victim of Song who turned his own Occidental fantasy against him and exploited his love cruelly. In the finale of the play, with make-up, wig, and kimono, he declares: “It is 19__. And I have found her at last. In a prison on the outskirts of Paris. My name is Rene Gallimard—also known as Madame Butterfly” (p. 93) before committing a seppuku, the ritual suicide similar to Butterfly’s at the end of Puccini’s opera.
Because Gallimard’s narration apparently revolves around his “mistake” (p. 92): his morbid Orientalist love for the Chinese man who personified Madame Butterfly, some critics apply the term “confessional” to the play. In the theatre review for New York Time, Leah D. Frank refers to Gallimard’s recollection as “his self-confession narration” (1992, para. 5). Cecilia Hsueh Chen Lui compares Gallimard’s narration with one of the prototypes of a confessional play, “we may read the play as Gallimard’s confessional monologue before death. The confessional framework is akin to the memory of Tom in Tennessee Williams’s *The Glass Menagerie*” (2002, p.5). With his confession of his disgraceful love for Song, Gallimard is recognised as an extreme Orientalist. Despite the fact that his obsessive love was placed on the Chinese man, Gallimard is still regarded as a heterosexual white man because of his professed extremist Orientalism. Dorinne K. Kondo posits Gallimard as the willing victim of his own Orientalism, “In his obsession with the Perfect Oriental Woman, he truly remains the prisoner and the willing sacrificial victim of his Orientalist cultural clichés—a realm of ‘pure imagination’ indeed” (1990, p. 21). Similarly, Robert Skloot notes, “As a representative male Westerner [emphasis added], Gallimard killed himself to maintain the political image of the world he prefers, and it is likely that the gesture is to be received ironically rather than tragically in the context of the play’s political assumptions” (1999, p.158). The above critical stance indicates that Gallimard loves Song as Butterfly not as a man. Thus, he kills himself to prove such love and maintain the integrity of his beloved Orientalist fantasy.

However, a close examination of the play reveals that Gallimard might confess a mistake he did not really commit. He was not an extreme Orientalist because he did not love Song because of Song’s role of Madame Butterfly. Except for the first time Gallimard saw him, Song never played a role of Puccini’s submissive, demure heroine and Gallimard never appeared to be the real Pinkerton. During his lonely imprisonment, Gallimard always recalls his past with Song and at the time *M. Butterfly* unfolds, he is striving to control his shameful memory and use it to facilitate the construction of his confessional narration as the opening scene symbolically implies,

*Lights fade up to reveal Rene Gallimard, 65, in a prison cell. He wears a comfortable bathrobe, and looks old and tired. The sparsely*
furnished cell contains a wooden crate upon which sits a hot plate with a kettle, and a portable tape recorder. Gallimard sits on the crate staring at the recorder, a sad smile on his face.

Upstage Song, who appears as a beautiful woman in traditional Chinese garb, dances a traditional piece from the Peking Opera, surrounded by the percussive clatter of Chinese music.

Then, slowly, lights and sound cross-fade; the Chinese opera music dissolves into a Western opera, the “Love Duet” from Puccini’s Madame Butterfly. Song continues dancing, now to the Western accompaniment. Though her movement are the same, the different in music now gives them a balletic quality.

Gallimard rises, and turns upstage towards the figure of Song, who dances without acknowledging him. (p. 1).

The above beginning scene implies Gallimard’s attempt to fit the Chinese opera singer into Madame Butterfly. As the play proceeds, this attempt to compromise his memory of Song to his confession is constantly reflected through his attempt to control Song whom he summons into his narration. Nonetheless Song gradually slips out of his control and becomes the personification of the undesirable dimension of his memory which he wants to suppress,

GALLIMARD: You have to do what I say! I’m conjuring you up in my mind.

SONG: Rene, I’ve never done what you’ve said. What should it be any different in your mind? Now split—the story moves on, and I must change. (p. 78).

However, as the above dialogue shows, Gallimard’s struggle to take control is not successful. His narration is thoroughly infused with memories he wants to suppress especially, the fact that Song never played the role of Butterfly after the first time they met as Song revealed to Gallimard after show, “I will never do Butterfly again, Monsieur Gallimard” (p. 17). Before their affair, during their affair in Beijing, and throughout their relationship in Paris, Song did not play the role of a submissive Butterfly to reinforce Gallimard’s role as Pinkerton. On the contrary, he took roles of a strong, conservative, manipulative, Chinese lady to exploit Gallimard.
The moment he stepped out of the stage at the German ambassador’s house in Beijing, Song clearly demonstrated a total contrast between his role as a Chinese woman and the character of Madame Butterfly he played. He responded to Gallimard’s compliment of his role with arrogance,

**SONG:** Consider it this way: what would you say if a blonde homecoming queen fell in love with a short Japanese businessman? He treats her cruelly, then goes home for three years, during which time she prays to his picture and turns down marriage from a young Kennedy. Then, when she learns he has remarried, she kills herself. Now, I believe you would consider this girl to be a deranged idiot, correct? But because it’s an Oriental who kills herself for a Westerner—ah!—you find it beautiful. (Hwang, 1989, p. 17).

Song’s reaction evidently caused disappointment to Gallimard who has hoped to find a delicate Butterfly: “So much for protecting her in my big Western arms” (p. 18). The second encounter was not better for Gallimard as Song was not, in the least, similar to the modest Butterfly. Song appeared outspoken and enticed Gallimard with an affectionate implication,

**GALLIMARD:** But…that fascination is imperialist, or so you tell me.

**SONG:** Do you believe everything I tell you? Yes. It is always imperialist. But sometimes…sometimes, it is also mutual. Oh—this is my flat. (p. 22).

Although he flirted with Gallimard, he did not allow Gallimard into her flat. At this point, Song’s portrayal of his feminine persona was complete. He emerged as a strong conservative Chinese lady but at the same time, made Gallimard know by implication that he as a conservative girl trespassed the forbidden boundary for the love of him in order to seduce Gallimard. His call to Gallimard after the first time the French man attended his show clearly reflected the persona he wanted to put on knowing that Gallimard was searching for, “I waited until I saw the sun. That was as much discipline as I could manage for one night. Do you forgive me?” (p. 26). Also, even when Gallimard was in his flat, Song did not play Butterfly and submit to Gallimard’s power but kept the same persona. Contradictory to Gallimard’s commentary: “Did you hear the way she talked about Western women? Much
differently than the first night. She does—she feels inferior to them—and to me” (p. 31); Song did not conceive the persona he played as being inferior to the Westerners. On the contrary, he portrayed his feminine persona as being conservative and innocent in order to seduce Gallimard,

SONG: Please. Hard as I try to be modern, to speak like a man, to hold a Western woman’s strong face up to my own…in the end, I fail. A small, frightened heart beats too quickly and gives me away.
Monsieur Gallimard, I’m a Chinese girl. I’ve never…never invited a man up to my flat before. The forwardness of my actions makes my skin burn. (p. 31).

Moreover, unlike Butterfly who put her “total worth at less than sixty-six cent” (p. 10) to Pinkerton, Song did not easily surrender to Gallimard. Song rather played it cool with Gallimard’s experiment to test whether he “caught a butterfly who would writhe on a needle” (p. 32). Song had his feminine persona surrender to Gallimard after six weeks of his absence, “I can hind behind dignity no longer. What do you want? I have already given you my shame” (p. 35). In the guise of the Chinese girl whom Gallimard asked for love, Song pretended to stubbornly deny her feeling for Gallimard and postponed her surrender to emphasize her dignity and thus, accentuated the French man’s victory. Gallimard did not easily get Song as Pinkerton with his Butterfly. Song did not appear as his inferior who was ready to eat “out of his hand” (p. 6) but as a conservative lady who was so concerned with her dignity but daring to trespass the conventional boundary to love him.

After the surrender, Song and Gallimard continued their love affair and lived happily together in “a flat on the outskirt of Peking” during “a few stolen afternoons or evenings each week” (Hwang, 1989, p. 43). However, Song did not act as Butterfly but he still appeared strong, conservative and moreover, more assertive and manipulative. During the affair, Song was assigned by the Chinese Communist Party to glean the secret information from the French diplomat. To fulfil such assignment, Song in the guise of an Oriental mistress cannot be meek and obedient. So, he had to be obsequious and manipulative as evidenced in their dialogue,

GALLIMARD: Oh, Butterfly—you want me to bring my work home?
SONG: I want to know what you know. To be impressed by my man. It’s
not the particulars so much as the fact that you’re making decisions which change the shape of the world.

GALLIMARD: Not the world. At best, a small corner. (pp. 43-44).

Despite the fact that during the above dialogue, Song curled up at Gallimard’s feet and thus, seemed submissive; his gesture did not turn him to Madame Butterfly. Song’s gesture was his manipulative scheme to flatter Gallimard and attain secret information from him. Implicitly, Song was active while Gallimard was passive. Moreover and most importantly, Song was the one that was active during their sexual activities, “She would always have prepared a light snack and then, even so delicately, and only if I agreed, she would start to please me. With her hands, her mouth…too many ways to explain” (p. 49). Also, when Gallimard forcefully demanded to see Song naked, the Chinese actor did not submissively yielded to his demand nor softly pleaded for sympathy and understanding as Butterfly would have done. Unlike Butterfly, Song assertively and frankly confronted Gallimard,

SONG: I thought you understood my modesty. So you want me to what—strip? Like a big cowboy girl? Shiny pasties on my breasts? Shall I fling my kimono over my head and yell “ya-hoo” in the process? I thought you respected my shame!

GALLIMARD: I believe you gave me your shame many years ago.

SONG: Yes—and it is just like a white devil to use it against me. I can’t believe it. I thought myself so repulsed by the passive Oriental and the cruel white man. Now I see—we are always most revolted by the things hidden within us.

GALLIMARD: I just mean—

SONG: Yes?

GALLIMARD: --that it will remove the only barrier left between us.

SONG: No, Rene. Don’t couch your request in sweet words. Be yourself—a cad—and know that my love is enough, that I submit—submit to the worst you can give me. (Pause) Well, come. Stripe me. Whatever happens, know that you have willed it. Our love, in your hands. I’m helpless before my man. (pp. 59-60).
The gesture of surrender was, in fact, the challenge which was also proved to be effective as Gallimard did not dare to touch him. The differences between Butterfly and Song’s feminine persona as well as Gallimard and Pinkerton are manifested in the conversation between the French man and his Chinese mistress about their son. Evidently, it was Song who has a power to control and manipulate Gallimard who was willingly and submissively obeyed Song’s decision,

SONG: But he’s never going to live in the West, is he?

Pause.

GALLIMARD: That wasn’t my choice.
SONG: It is mine. And this is my promise to you: I will raise him, he will be our child, but he will never burden you outside of China. . . .
GALLIMARD: I’m serious.
SONG: So am I. His name is as I registered it. And he will never live in the West.

GALLIMARD (To us): It is possible that her stubbornness only made me want her more. That drawing back at the moment of my capitulation was the most brilliant strategy she could have chosen. It is possible. But it is also possible that by this point she could have said, could have done…anything and I would have adored her still. (p. 67).

Song did not act submissively as Madame Butterfly but he adopted a feminine persona which was conservative and assertive to manipulate Gallimard.

Even in Paris, Song still refused to play Butterfly and Gallimard appeared even more submissive and almost feminine like Butterfly himself. At his home, Gallimard was kept the shrine-like room for Song and heartily welcomed his Chinese mistress,

Gallimard takes Song’s hand. Silence.

GALLIMARD: Butterfly? I never doubted you’d return.
SONG: You hadn’t…forgotten.
GALLIMARD: Yes, actually, I’ve forgotten everything. My mind, you see—there wasn’t enough room in this hard head—not for the world and for you. No, there was only room for one. (Beat) Come, look.
See? Your bed has been waiting, with the Klimt poster you like, and—see? The xiang lu (incense burner) you gave me?

SONG: I...I don’t know what to say.


The scene underlines the reversal of the roles between Butterfly and Pinkerton and Song and Gallimard. Song’s testimony in the court scene shows that Song was even more manipulative and domineering than he was in the East. Gallimard seemed to be completely under his control and Song could manipulate both his personal life and career,

SONG:…But finally, at my urging [emphasis added], Rene got a job as a courier, handling sensitive documents. He’d photograph them for me, and I’d pass them on to the Chinese embassy.

JUDGE: Did he understand the extent of his activity?

SONG: He didn’t ask. He knew that I needed those documents, and that was enough. (p. 81).

Evidently, after the first time they met, Song Liling never played a role of Madame Butterfly again. On the contrary, he always portrayed his feminine persona, the Chinese opera actress, as a strong manipulative conservative lady.

As M. Butterfly proceeds, Gallimard who is attempting to manipulate his memory of past to the construction of his confessional composition is determined by his author as failed to cover the fact that Song was never his Butterfly and at the same time, he was never Pinkerton. He did not love Song because Song was the incarnation of his Orientalist fantasy. Therefore, Gallimard is not the extreme Orientalist as he confesses to be. Of all the critics who conceive the play as being confessional, John Brockway Schmor seems to be the only one who can see the discrepancy between Gallimard’s confession and his recollection of his past mistake and thus, offers an interesting insight:

Henry David Hwang’s M. Butterfly is governed by an ironic parody of sensationalistic “tell-all” tabloid confession from a character who believes himself to be a kind of celebrity. As Hwang’s erstwhile protagonist confesses, however, it becomes clear that there is a fatal
tension building between the self he cynically constructs for the audience to consumption and the dislocated interior void of identity. Hwang’s rather baroque construction can be read as subversively critical of a trend in the 1980s, evidently in celebrity politics and scandal, in which truth is reduced to one’s private conviction and a lie becomes merely one’s fantasy performed in public. Under such condition, any traditional onus of guilt or responsibility, the modern locus of motive, is dispersed or removed. (Admiral Poindexter’s marvelous phrase “plausible deniability” comes to mind.) The old tool for wresting power, confession, becomes a new tool for obfuscating the boundaries between fantasy and reality. (1994, p. 166).

Schmor conceives Gallimard’s confessional narration as his attempt to re-define himself in a certain way. To inspect Schmor’s assumption, the dramatic monologue which reveals the motivation of the authorial narrator is adapted as a reading method. In the light of the dramatic monologue reading, it becomes evident that Gallimard confesses to be an extreme Orientalist with his love for the man who personified Madame Butterfly to negate homosexual accusation and confirm heterosexual identity.

Generally, the dramatic monologue technique leads the reader to interpret the unfolding monologue in relation to three typical contexts. The first one is the occasion. In M. Butterfly, Rene Gallimard reveals his love for a man who was the incarnation of his Orientalist fantasy during his attempt to reaffirm his masculinity challenged by the fact that the object of his love is the male Communist spy sent by the party to glean secret information from him. The curtain is raised when Gallimard who after looking at Song dancing to the music of the “Love Duet” from Madame Butterfly introduces his present situation in a bitter sarcastic tone:

GALLIMARD: The limits of my cell are as such: four-and-a-half meters by five. There’s one window against the far wall; a door, very strong, to protect me from autograph hounds. I’m responsible for the tape recorder, the hot plate, and this charming coffee table.

When I want to eat, I’m marched off to the dining room—as hot, steaming soup appears on my plate. When I want to sleep, the light
bulb turns itself off—the work of fairies. It’s an enchanted space I occupy. The French—we know how to run a prison.

But to be honest, I’m not treated like an ordinary prisoner. Why? Because I’m a celebrity. You see, I make people laugh. (Hwang, 1989, p.2).

Gallimard is imprisoned for committing espionage. He sarcastically calls himself “a celebrity” (p. 2) because his crime is not a normal case of treason but it is also scandalous and rather ridiculous because he passed the classified information to his Chinese mistress who was actually a man in disguise. The misplaced affection brought about great humiliation and dishonour to the French man as it poses the unsettling questions concerning his heterosexual identity as evidenced in the conversation of three party goers which Gallimard visualizes and offers to us,

MAN1: So—what? He never touched her with his hands?
MAN2: Perhaps he did, and simply misidentified the equipment. A compelling case for sex education in the schools.
WOMAN: To protect the National Security—the Church can’t argue with that.
MAN1: That’s impossible! How could he not know?
MAN2: Simple ignorance.
MAN1: For twenty years?
MAN2: Time flies when you’re being stupid.
WOMAN: Well, I thought the French were ladies’ men.
MAN2: It seems Monsieur Gallimard was overly anxious to live up to his national reputation. (p. 3).

Evidently, Gallimard’s mistake poses a severe challenge to his heterosexual identity. As a French man, he is supposed to be a heterosexual man with expertise in ladies. However, Gallimard fails to live up to such national standard because he took a man as his mistress and thus, manifested homosexuality. Despite the fact that Gallimard insistently denies to the public that he never knew Song’s true sex, his denial is not convincingly believable. Considering that Gallimard and Song lived together as a man and a wife for more than twenty years and they also have a son, he must notice or at least suspect Song’s true sex through their sexual intercourse as Song suggests in
the court scene, “But what you’re thinking is. ‘Of course a wrist must’ve brushed…a hand hit…over twenty years!’” (p. 82). Song’s account implicitly confirmed the homosexual relationship. Thus, it is not unreasonable for the public to suspect that Gallimard is not a ladies’ man but he might have an inclination towards a lady man.

Gallimard himself is so well aware of the threat to his heterosexual reputation brought about by his scandalous mistake and thus, preoccupied with a wish to regain his masculine reputation: “Alone in this cell, I sit night after night, watching our story play through my head, always searching for a new ending, one which redeems my honor, where she returns at last to my arms” (Hwang, 1989, p. 4). During his imprisonment in jail for espionage that does not only take away his freedom but also the stability of his male identity, Gallimard constantly reviews his life story to search for the way to testify that he is still a heterosexual man as implied by his wish to bring back Butterfly. He attempts to prove that despite the undeniable fact that he took the Chinese actor as his mistress for more than twenty years, he is still a heterosexual man. At last, in this very specific night, his search is finally ended with what he probably regards as success:

GALLIMARD:….Tonight I realize my search is over. That I’ve looked all along in the wrong place. And now, to you, I will prove that my love was not in vein—by returning to the world of fantasy where I first meet her. (p. 91)

The occasion in which Gallimard chooses to unfold his confession is, hence, definitely outlined. It is his moment of discovery: the specific moment during which he finds the way to reassert his heterosexuality.

Through its interplay with the confessional utterance, the occasion helps to unravel the ulterior motive behind Gallimard’s confession of his Orientalist love for Song. Gallimard confesses to be an extreme Orientalist who loves the Chinese man who was the personification of Madame Butterfly. His confession is his attempt to reassert his heterosexual identity challenged by the scandalous treason which he is convicted for. As a result, Gallimard confession of the morbid Orientalist love which he was not truly involved is unintentionally revealed to be his method to negate homosexuality and regain his white man’s honor. Despite the fact that the object of his love was a man, as Gallimard confesses to be an extreme Orientalist who fell in
love with the personification of his fantasy, he turns such love into a heterosexual affection of a white man towards an Oriental woman.

The possibility that Gallimard might confess the mistake he did not truly commit with an intention to validate his heterosexuality is also reinforced by the interrelationship between his confession and another context that the dramatic monologue reading typically places an emphasis: the speaker. In *M. Butterfly*, the speaker is Rene Gallimard, the former French diplomat. From Gallimard’s account about his experience with the Western women and his reaction against a homosexual implication generated by Song, Gallimard is shown to have a homophobia in the sense that he fears for being accused of homosexuality.

From Gallimard’s account, his contacts with the Western women were not satisfying because the women were too assertive and thus, too masculine to appeal to him. With an account of series of unsatisfactory relationships with Western women, Gallimard might want to reinforce his confession that he was attached to Song who performed a real feminine ideal which is submissive, modest, and gentle because he was repulsed by Western women who appeared too masculine and thus, undermined his masculine power. However, such account also explicates that he is over anxious with homosexual accusation. The sign of his homophobic attitude is constantly manifested in his descriptions of his first sexual experience, his marriage of convenience, his extra-extra marital affair, and his sexual impotence with the sexy models in the magazines.

Gallimard’s first sexual experience with a beautiful woman named Isabelle arranged by his high-school friend, Marc, was proved to be a failure. The dialogue between Gallimard and Marc who appeared in his dream in the night after his first time in Song’s apartment is an implicit manifestation of Gallimard’s dissatisfaction with the masculine assertiveness of the Western girl,

GALLIMARD: I looked up, and there was this woman…bouncing up and down on my loins.
MARC: Screaming, right?
GALLIMARD: Screaming, and breaking off he branches all around me, and pounding my butt up and down into the dirt.
MARC: Huffing and puffing like a locomotive.
GALLIMARD: And in the middle of all this, the leaves were getting into my mouth, my legs were losing circulation, I thought, “God. So this is it?”

MARC: You thought that?

GALLIMARD: Well, I was worried about my legs falling off.

MARC: You didn’t have a good time?

GALLIMARD: No, that’s not what I—I had a great time.

(Hwang, 1989, p. 33).

Obviously, Gallimard did not have “a great time” because Isabelle was, as Marc says, “A girl ahead of her time” who “loved the superior position” (p. 33). Isabelle’s assertiveness and sexual boldness disheartened Gallimard and deprived him of sexual satisfaction because he was put in the passive and effeminate position. However, Gallimard chose to lie to Marc in his imagination. The above dialogue serves to emphasise Gallimard’s fear of homosexual accusation in two levels. First, since he is a heterosexual man, he should be appealed only by a feminine woman who is submissive and passive. Being attracted by the masculine girl who made him feel effeminate is comparable to having a homosexual preference or being a man who is attracted by a man. Also, as Gallimard lied to Marc who appeared in his dream, he demonstrates his unconscious attempt to fortify his heterosexual identity. As a heterosexual man, he should have a good time with his first sexual experience with a woman as Marc, the playboy ideal suggests, “Cuz I wanted you to have a good time” (p. 34). However, he did not have a good time but to accept his dissatisfaction suggests his homosexual tendency. So, he chose to lie in order to maintain his heterosexuality.

Besides his first sexual experience, Gallimard was also unhappy with his married life and his revelation of his unhappy marriage reflects his over anxiety about homosexual accusation. Because he was unable to find his submissive and modest fantasy woman in the Western side of the world, Gallimard claims that he had to embark on the loveless but beneficial marriage with Helga. At thirty-one, Gallimard married Helga who was older than him. Evidently, Helga was one of the Western women who depressed Gallimard with her masculine-like assertiveness and independence. She was the daughter of the Australia ambassador who “grew up
among criminals and kangaroos” (Hwang, 1989, p. 14). Also, she was not a sweet
domicile wife but she is a tough adventurous lady with masculine aura as evidenced
by her interest in “a martial art”: “Some of those men—when they break those thick
boards—(she mimes fanning herself) whoo-whoo” (p. 23). She is outspoken and
assertive as evidenced by the way she asked Gallimard to see the doctor for the
problem of their infertile marriage,

HELGA: I want (to see the doctor), I’m sorry. But listen: he says there’s
nothing wrong with me.

GALLIMARD: You, see? Now, will you stop—?

HELGA: Rene, he says he’d like you to go in and take some tests.

GALLIMARD: Why? So he can find there’s nothing wrong with both of
us?

HELGA: Rene, I don’t ask for much. One trip! One visit! And then,
whichever you want to do about it—you decide.

GALLIMARD: You’re assuming he’ll find something defective! (p. 50).

Gallimard accepts that his marriage did not result from affection but it was based
entirely on mutual interests: “…I took a vow renouncing love. No fantasy woman
would ever want me, so, yes, I would settle for a quick leap up the career ladder.
Passion, I banish, and in its place—practicality!” (p. 14). Not different from his
account about his first sexual experience with Isabelle, the way Gallimard talks about
his marriage indicates his anxiety to protect himself from homosexual accusation in
two levels. First, his lack of affection for his wife who is evidently a masculine-like
woman of the Western world indicates his homophobic attempt to pass himself off as
a heterosexual man who prefers only the ideal woman who is submissive. He does
not love his wife because for him, his love for such woman is a homosexual love.
Moreover, Gallimard refers to his marriage as a practical thing to do and such
reference reflects his anxiety to testify his masculine identity. He decided to embark
on this loveless marriage at thirty-one which is considered to be late for a man to get
married because it is a suitable thing for the Western man to do. As a man, he should
marry a women and despite the fact that he was not attracted to her, Helga was the
best choice because she did not only help him to fulfil his conventional male
reputation but also helped to further his career opportunity as well.
Also, what Gallimard calls “my first extra-extramarital affair” (Hwang, 1989, p. 58) was not more satisfying for him than his marriage. During his affair with Song, his Butterfly, Gallimard also sexually engaged with another woman named Renee, a Danish girl. Similar to his previous relationships with the Western women, Gallimard admits that he was not satisfied with Renee and the account of his dissatisfaction testifies his fear for being accused of homosexuality. Despite the fact that Renee was beautiful, Gallimard found her unsatisfactory,

GALLIMARD:…Renee was picture perfect. With a body like those girls in the magazines. If I put a tissue paper over my eyes, I wouldn’t have been able to tell the difference. And it was exciting to be with someone who wasn’t afraid to be seen completely naked. But it is possible for a woman to be too uninhibited, too willing, so as to seem almost too…masculine? (p. 54).

Although the affair with this Danish girl who was boldly questioned “the role of the penis in modern society” (p. 58) was unsatisfying for him, Gallimard still kept their affair for many months because, as he claims, the affair confirmed his power over Butterfly,

GALLIMARD:…I saw Pinkerton and Butterfly, and what she would say if he were unfaithful…nothing. She would cry, alone, into those wildly soft sleeves, once full of possessions, now empty to collect her tears. It was her tears and her silence that excited me, every time I visited Renee. (p. 56).

Similar to the two previous accounts about his relationships with the Western women, Gallimard’s account about his affair with Renee indicates his fear of homosexual accusation. He was discouraged by Renee’s masculine trait that might threateningly implicate his homosexual tendency. Nonetheless, he kept Renee as his mistress only to confirm his masculine identity with the tears of the submissive ideal feminine Butterfly.

Moreover, Gallimard could not attain sexual satisfaction from the girlie magazines. Although Gallimard claims that the magazines are “quite a necessity in prison” (Hwang, 1989, p. 10), he admits that he does not gain a sexual satisfaction from them. In his first discovery of this magazines at his twelve, the sexy girls in the
magazines “who put their total worth at less than sixty-six cents” (p. 10) made him feel the superior power of man with their willingness and virtual submissiveness,

I first discovered these magazines at my uncle’s house. One day, as a boy of twelve. The first time I saw them in his closet—all lined up—my body shook. Not with lust—no, with power. Here were women—a shelfful—who would do exactly as I wanted. (p. 10).

However, in the prison, these women cannot arouse his libido as Gallimard nervously observes: “I’m shaking. My skin is hot, but my penis is soft. Why?” (p. 11). His revelation that he cannot generate a masturbatory fantasy from looking at these women implies his homophobia. Gallimard indicates that his sexual incompetence results from the sexual boldness of the pinup girls:

GALLIMARD: No. She’s—why is she naked?
GIRL: To you.
GALLIMARD: In front of a window? This is wrong. No—
GIRL: Without shame.
GALLIMARD: No, she must…like it.
GIRL: I like it.
GALLIMARD: She…she wants me to see.
GIRL: I want you to see.
GALLIMARD: I can’t believe it! She’s getting excited!
GIRL: I can’t see you. You can do whatever you want.
GALLIMARD: I can’t do a thing. Why? (pp. 11-12).

The sexy models cannot sexually arouse him because their masculine assertiveness is incompatible with his preference for a submissive and ideal feminine and they threaten his heterosexual identity. For him, to be aroused by these man-like women is to be a homosexual as he would become a man who likes a man.

Besides the way he talks about the series of his unsatisfying relationships with the Western women, Gallimard’s fear of homosexual accusation is also explicitly manifested by his strong rejection of his involvement with homosexuality. Throughout his narration, Gallimard clearly expresses his strong disdain towards his homosexual tendency suggested by Song. Song first invoked Gallimard’s homophobic anxiety with his letters. Six weeks since Gallimard began his experiment to test that
Song is his Butterfly, Song sent him a letter of a concession which Gallimard found “too dignified” (Hwang, 1989, p. 35) to accept. Then, Song’s second letter came: “Six weeks have passed since last we met. Is this your practice—to leave friend in the lurch? Sometimes I hate you, sometimes I hate myself, but always I miss you” (p. 35). With this letter Gallimard expresses his dissatisfaction with the letters in regard to the word “friend”, “Better, but I don’t like the way she calls me “friend.” When a woman calls a man her “friend,” she’s calling him *a eunuch or a homosexual* [emphasis added]” (p. 35). Maybe, Song could see Gallimard’s homophobia and try to encourage him to make a move with this insult. Nonetheless, Gallimard’s commentary clearly expresses his contempt against the thought that he might be related with homosexuality.

Gallimard’s homophobia is further manifested in his attempt to stop Song from revealing his true sexual identity which possibly hints at Gallimard’s homosexual tendency. During his narration, Gallimard manifests his attempt to avoid the recollection of Song’s self-revelation,

GALLIMARD: So...please...don’t change.

SONG: You know I have to. You know I will. And anyway, what difference does it make? No matter what your eyes tell you, you can’t ignore the truth. You already know too much. (Hwang, 1989, p. 78)

In the first part, his plea is an indication of his undying yearning for Madame Butterfly who sustains his illusion of his Western identity. At the same time, such plea also illuminates his fear to facing the truth that his relationship with Song is a homosexual relationship. However, as Song suggests that Gallimard already knows too much, he cannot prevent Song’s self-revelation. His recollection proceeds to the courtroom where Song striped himself naked and fully revealed his true identity as a man who is many times removed from Madame Butterfly.

GALLIMARD (*To us*): In my moment of greatest shame, here, in this courtroom—with that...person up there, telling the world....What strikes me especially is how shallow he is, how glib and obsequious...completely.. without substance! The type that prowls around disco with a gold medallion stinking of garlic. So little like my Butterfly. (p. 84).
As a man in Armani slacks, Song convinces Gallimard to accept his relational homosexuality, “I’m your Butterfly. Under the robes, beneath everything, it was always me. Now open your eyes and admit it—you adore me” (p. 89). Gallimard promptly negates and clearly expresses his contempt toward Song’s suggestion,

SONG: So, throw away your pride. And come…
GALLIMARD: Get away from me! Tonight, I’ve finally learned to tell fantasy from reality. And, knowing the difference, I choose fantasy.
SONG: I’m your fantasy!
GALLIMARD: You? You’re as real as hamburger. Now get out! I have a date with my Butterfly and I don’t want your body polluting the room! (He tosses Song’s suit at him) Look at these—you dress like a pimp. (p. 90).

Whether Song’s invitation happens in reality at the court or insides his mind, Gallimard’s expression clearly indicates his fear to be regarded as a homosexual.

Finally and most prominently, Gallimard’s strong rejection of homosexuality is strongly manifested in his suicide. In the finale of the play, Gallimard confesses his love for Song, a man who was an incarnation of his Orientalist fantasy. Gallimard claims that his love is so extreme to the point that he was willing to be exploited and sacrifice everything like Madame Butterfly, “Love warped my judgment, blinded my eyes, rearranged the very lines on my face…until I could look in the mirror and see nothing but…a woman” (Hwang, 1989, p. 92). Gallimard demonstrates his recognition of the mistake by changing to Butterfly kimomo and declaring: “My name is Rene Gallimard—also known as Madame Butterfly” (p. 93) before committing hara-kiri similar to Butterfly. Firstly and most basically, Gallimard’s suicide is his attempt to validate his confession by testifying that his love for Song who was an incarnation of his Orientalist fantasy was absolute similar to Butterfly’s for Pinkerton. In the same time, the suicide can be read as his attempt to negate homosexual accusation by manifesting his strong heterosexual white male mentality. Because Song who had been his Butterfly turned to be a man in Armani slacks who abused his lover cruelly, Gallimard who was exploited by love has to turn himself into an Asian woman, a Butterfly in kimono, according to the Orientalist fantasy which is typical of a heterosexual Western man. His suicide which
he aims to be a confirmation of his Orientalism indicates that how far Gallimard can go to confirm his heterosexuality. He can kill himself to manifest his heterosexual white male mentality and negate homosexuality.

The interplay between the unfolding utterance and the speaker especially, in terms of his typical character is essential to the discovery of the motive behind such utterance. Gallimard’s fear for being accused of homosexuality helps to unravel his ulterior motivation that reinforces him to confess his morbid Orientalist love. As Gallimard is the French man who is so anxious to keep himself clear from homosexual scandal, his confession that he is an extremist Orientalist with the love for a man who was the incarnation of Madame Butterfly is revealed to be his attempt to protect himself from a homosexual accusation. The confession of his love for a man might be homosexual in the sense that the object of his love is not a woman. However, Gallimard specifies that his love for the Chinese man resulted from his attachment to the man’s portrayal of the submissive, ideal, feminine woman similar to Madame Butterfly. Thus, as his love and relationship with Song were based on ground of Orientalist fantasy of Madame Butterfly and Pinkerton, it was considered a heterosexual love despite the fact the object of his love is nothing more nothing less than a man, he is still a heterosexual man.

In addition to the occasion and the speaker, the true meaning of the dramatic monologue is also generated through the interrelation between the utterance and the auditor. Throughout his confessional narration, Gallimard directly addresses his audience three times and these direct addresses outline the relationship between him and the audience. The first direct address happens almost at the beginning of the play. After claiming that he has found and been loved by “the Perfect Woman”; he turns to address his audience, “And I imagine you—my ideal audience—who come to understand and even, perhaps just a little, to envy me” (Hwang, 1989, p. 4). This first address vaguely posits the audience as someone who shares the concept of the perfect woman with Gallimard so that he can gain their understanding and arouse their jealousy. The second address comes to reveal more about Gallimard’s relation to his audience, “But as she glides past him, beautiful, laughing softly behind her fan, don’t we who are men [emphasis added] sigh with hope? We, who are not handsome, nor brave, nor powerful, yet somehow believe, like Pinkerton, that we deserve a
Butterfly” (p. 10). Finally, the relationship between Gallimard and his audience is completely delineated with the third address that takes place in the first scene of the second act as a whole scene:

GALLIMARD: This, from a contemporary critic’s commentary on Madame Butterfly: “Pinkerton suffers from…being an obnoxious bounder whom every man in the audience itches to kick.” Bully for us men in the audience! Then, in the same note: “Butterfly is the most irresistible appealing of Puccini’s ‘Little Women.’ Watching the succession of her humiliations is like watching a child under torture.” (He tosses the pamphlet over his shoulder) I suggest that, while we men may all want to kick Pinkerton, very few of us would pass up the opportunity to be Pinkerton. (p. 42).

From Gallimard’s three direct addresses, Gallimard’s audience is revealed to be a man especially, a Western man seeing from the way Gallimard uses the words “we”, the phase like “we men” and the series of adjectives such as handsome, brave, powerful, and noun like Pinkerton, that are, no doubt, attributed to a man. In addition to the audience’s identity, the direct addresses also illuminate the fact that in Gallimard’s view, the audience shares the same Orientalist fantasy with Gallimard and thus, sympathizes with him and finds his story convincing.

The interplay between the confessional play and the audience emphasizes the possibility that Gallimard might be motivated to unfold this confessional narration so as to define himself as a heterosexual man. For the audience, Madame Butterfly fantasy is a racial fantasy that is common among the Westerner, especially the male Westerner. All Western men have this Orientalist fantasy and such fantasy becomes one of the definite traits that identifies them not only as a Westerner but also as a man as Song also says to Gallimard, “Men. You’re like the rest of them. It’s all in the way we dress, and make up our faces, and bat out eyelashes” (Hwang, 1989, p. 90). Our protagonist reveals his love for a man who personified Madame Butterfly to the audience whom he believes has a fascination to this same fantasy woman and thus, affiliates with him. Thus, his confessional narration is revealed to be unfolded with his wish to demonstrate that despite the undeniable fact that he had an affair with a
man, such affair is on ground of heterosexuality as it was based on the fantasy of Madame Butterfly which every Western man shares.

Hwang has his protagonist admit his extreme Orientalism manifested through his love for Song, the Chinese man who personified the submissive feminine ideal Butterfly. However, at the same time, he portrays Gallimard struggling to compromise his recollection of his past with his confessional narration by describing Song as Butterfly despite the fact that in his recollection, Song appears entirely different from Puccini’s submissive feminine heroine. As a result, Gallimard is placed on stage to confess the mistake he did not truly commit: he was not a morbid Orientalist who fell in love with the Chinese man for his role of Butterfly. By adopting the dramatic monologue technique which typically encourages the reader to contemplate the unfolding utterance in relation to the occasion, the speaker, and the auditor, Gallimard’s confession of his Orientalist love is revealed to be inspired by his attempt to demonstrate that he is a heterosexual man despite the fact that he fell in love with the Chinese man. The dramatic monologue reading of Gallimard’s confessional narration illuminates the possibility that as a discourse of truth about one’s identity, a confession can be used to negate the undesirable identity and present a more socially acceptable one despite its notoriety. Gallimard negates homosexual accusation with the confession that he is an extreme Orientalist. He does not love the Asian man but he loves Madame Butterfly.
CHAPTER 4
CONFESSION OF A VILLAINOUS MEDIOCRITY: READING ANTONIO SALIERI’S CONFESSIONAL PLAY IN PETER SHAFFER’S AMDEUS AS A DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE

“Not forgive. I do not seek forgiveness. I was a good man, as the world calls good”

(Antonio Salieri, Act 1, Scene 1, p. 49)

Peter Shaffer reveals an inspiration behind one of his successful plays Amadeus that after learning about Mozart mysterious and untimely death, “the cold eyes of Salieri were staring at me….The conflict between virtuous mediocrity and feckless genius took hold of my imagination, and it would not leave me alone” (as cited in Galens & Thomason, 2001, p.1). The rivalry between the two composers, thus, becomes the central image of the play. The unfounded rumour, hinted by Mozart’s letters and several historical records, of the rivalry between Mozart and Salieri which prompts speculation that Salieri might have something to do with Mozart’s unsuccessful career and his immature death also fascinated two other writers. In 1830, Alexander Pushkin wrote a tragic play named Envy which was rechristened later as Mozart and Salieri. Later on in 1897, Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov wrote an opera based on Pushkin’s play.

Amadeus is the second play which Shaffer wrote after his recovery from a period of writer’s block caused by the failure of The Battle of Shrivings (1970). The play attains a commercial success following in the footsteps of Equus which was previously debuted in 1973. C.J. Gianakaris alludes to Amadeus’s phenomenon in his essay about Shaffer’s revision of the play,

Results of Shaffer’s success were felt immediately. Productions of Amadeus were quickly mounted around the world in such location as Vienna, Berlin, Warsaw, Sydney, and Paris. At the same time, Amadeus continued playing in London without interruption. And as this essay is
being written in mid-1982, both the Broadway and London productions continue to play before nearly uniformly full houses. (1983, p. 89).

Despite its enormous public acclamation and five Tony awards including a Tony for best drama of the 1980, critics’ opinions about the play are divided into two conflicting stances. Roland Gelatt regards the play as a testimony which proves that “there is still room for the play of idea” while Werner Huber and Hubert Zapt praise the play as “a dramatic masterpiece in its own right” (as cited in Galens & Thomason, 2001, p.10). However, many other critics condemn Shaffer’s portrayal of Mozart. Among these is Robert Brustein who accuses Shaffer in *The New Republic*, at the same time that the central character—a second-rate *Kapellmeister* named Antonio Salieri—is plotting against the life and reputation of a superior composer name Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, a secondary playwright named Peter Shaffer is reducing this genius, one of the greatest artists of all time, to the level of a simpering braying ninny. (As cited in Galens & Thomason, 2001, p. 10). Brustein as well as other critics who criticize Shaffer for his dramatization of Mozart seem to miss the mark because such dramatization is not groundless. Mozart’s letters reflect his infantile character, his cheeky and bawdy manner in communication as well as allude to his overprotective father, his child-like wife, and his difficulty in pursuing success at the Vienna court. Nonetheless, Shaffer is quite straightforward about his dramatization in *Amadeus*. In his interview with Mike Wood for the William Inge Center for the Arts, Shaffer clearly states,

*Amadeus* is not an objective documentary biography of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. For a start, he never called himself Amadeus. He signed himself, when he did, Amadé, which is, you know, is the French version of it, and a lot of people who criticize the play on that level appear never to have heard of fiction. (2008, p. 9).

Evidently, Shaffer did not intend to make an accurate historical record about Mozart nor about Salieri. What he did is using history as a source of his dramatic creation. In *Amadeus*, Mozart is presented through the eyes of Shaffer’s protagonist, a historical Antonio Salieri who is fictionalized by Shaffer to become the composer of his play.
Although the title of the play is similar to the middle name of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, the play does not centre on Mozart and he is not the protagonist as Shaffer states, Mozart never called himself Amadeus. The title of the play is likely to be derived from “Amadeus”, the Latin word that refers to Love of God that drove Antonio Salieri, the protagonist to commit a mortal crime against Mozart. Madeleine MacMurraugh-Kavanagh observes,

Nevertheless, critics who state that Amadeus is a ‘drama’ about professional rivalry are absolutely incorrect since Salieri is ‘envious’ of Mozart in one way alone: it is not his genius in itself that he envies, but the love that God has for the significantly named ‘Amadeus’ that has led to the bestowing of the genius upon him. Salieri, in short, envies the ‘love of God’. (1998, p. 97).

Kavanagh’s critical observation is partly true in that she can capture the cause of Salieri’s malice against Mozart: Love of God. However, she seems to ignore what Salieri tries to communicate through his composition and thus, hurriedly posits Salieri as a jealous mediocrity. Actually, Salieri never admits that he envies Mozart for God’s Love. On the contrary, he raged against God because in his opinion, the way God granted His Love to Mozart was unreasonably because Mozart was unworthy.

Amadeus is structured as a play within a play with the 1823 Vienna as the outer frame and Salieri’s composition, The Death of Mozart; or, Did I Do It set during the Enlightenment as the framed inner play (see figure 3.1).

![Figure 3.1 A play within a play structure of Amadeus](image)

The main action of the play takes place within the inner layer or Salieri’s “last composition”(Shaffer, 1981, p. 8) which he invites posterity whom he conjures up to
be his “confessors” (p. 5) to attend as his “last audience” (p. 6). *The Death of Mozart; or, Did I Do It?* unfolds in an autobiographical tone with Salieri’s stepping into this inner layer to be the narrator of his composition and retracing his contribution to Mozart’s untimely death. Before presenting the play, Salieri introduces himself by retracing his childhood and declaring his sole aspiration in life: “I wanted *Fame*. Not to deceive you, I wanted to blaze like a comet across the firmament of Europe! Yet only in one especial way. *Music! Absolute music!*” (p. 8). For the pursuit of such fame, Salieri recounts that he struck a bargain with God at his sixteen that he would live a virtuous and charitable life and worship God with his music in return for “sufficient fame” (p. 8). After the bargain, Salieri claims that the way to his dearest wish was bright. He was taken by the family friend to Vienna, the city of music to study music during the year which the ten-year-old Mozart was touring Europe showing off his musical talent. After that, Salieri became favoured by the Emperor and retained a successful position in the Hubsburg court at Vienna.

Salieri’s last composition, *The Death of Mozart; or, Did I Do It?*, opens with Salieri at thirty-one became “a prolific composer to the Hubsburg court” with “a respectable house and a respectable wife” (Shaffer, 1981, p. 9). He claims that he firmly kept his promise with God by living a virtuous life of self-restraint and charity. Evidently, Salieri got what he asked from God. He was cosily embedded within his throne of fame and also, of wealth as he composed the simple music to please Emperor Joseph who favoured the music that “made no demands upon the royal brain” (p.20). However, Mozart was suddenly on the way to his musical empire with “Tales of his prowess” (p. 12) that were spread all over Europe. Salieri conceived the coming of Mozart as a threat to his fame:

**SALIERI:** …As for young Mozart, I confess I was alarmed by his coming. Not by the commission of a comic opera, even though myself was then attempting one called *The Chimney Sweep*. No, what worried me were reports about the man himself. He was praised altogether too much. (p. 14).

Salieri’s fear was made worse by his first encounter with Mozart’s music through which he seemed to hear “a voice of God” (p. 19). Mozart did not have fame only for being a musical prodigy but he also had a musical talent that seemed to be granted by
God. Salieri’s fear was, at last, confirmed when he soberly recognized Mozart’s musical talent: “I was staring through the cage of those meticulous ink strokes at—an Absolute Beauty” (p.45). It became evident to Salieri that God granted Mozart talent for the Absolute music that undoubtedly surpassed Salieri’s composition:

SALIERI: Capisco! I know my fate. Now for the first time I feel my emptiness as Adam felt his nakedness…[Slowly he rises to his feet] Tonight at an inn somewhere in this city stands a giggling child who can put on paper without actually setting down his billiard cue, casual notes which turn my most considered ones into lifeless scratches. Grazie Signore! You gave me the desire to serve You—which most men do not have—then saw to it the service was shameful in the ears of the server…Spiteful, sniggering, conceited, infantine Mozart—who has never worked one minute to help another man! Shit-talking Mozart, with his botty-smacking wife! Him You have chosen to be Your sole conduct! And my only reward—my sublime privilege—is to be the sole man alive in this time who shall clearly recognize Your Incarnation! (pp. 46-47).

God did grant Salieri the sufficient fame which he asked for but as if to mock Salieri, granted the true talent for music to Mozart whom Salieri regards as unworthy, vulgar, and immoral. After the embittered recognition, Salieri determined to get revenge on God by blocking His plan as he claimed, “Man is not mocked!...I am not mocked!” (p. 47). He devoted all of his effort to prevent Mozart’s Absolute music from spreading in the Hubsburg court where he had been the musical tycoon:

SALIERI:…On that dreadful Night of the Manuscripts my life acquired a terrible and thrilling purpose. The blocking of God in one of His purest manifestations. I had the power. God needed Mozart to let Himself into the world. And Mozart needed me to get him worldly advancement. So it would be a battle to the end—and Mozart was the battleground. (p. 49).

Salieri’s eventually led Mozart to untimely death in destitution. However, the last composition ends with Salieri being punished by God to live to witness his name “become extinct” (p. 93) while Mozart’s music is highly praised around the world.
After the end of the composition, Salieri reveals his “last move” (p. 94) to pay God back. He is going to leave the false confession to his contemporary that he poisoned Mozart with arsenic in order to be remembered although in hate as long as Mozart is remembered. To make this false confession convincing, he also attempts to commit suicide to show that he feels too guilty to go on living. Before cutting his throat, Salieri addresses his audience,

Now I go to become a ghost myself. I will stand in the shadows when you come here to this earth in your turns. And when you feel the dreadful bite of your failure—and hear the taunting of unachievable, uncaring God—I will whisper my name to you: “Salieri: Patron Saint of Mediocrities!”

And in the depth of your downcastness you can pray to me. And I will forgive you. Vi saluto. (p. 95).

Amadeus ends with Salieri’s failure to commit suicide and convince the contemporary with the false confession. However, in the finale, he directly addresses the audience of his composition as Saint of Mediocrities: “Mediocrities everywhere—now and to come—I absolve you all. Amen!” (p. 96).

Because Salieri’s composition revolves around his “murder” of Mozart, it is instantly regarded as a confessional play. David Galens and Elizabeth Thomason claims that “The play is structured like a deathbed confession, similar to Monticello’s in Edgar Allan Poe’s short story “The Cask of Amontillado” (2001, p. 7). Similar to Galens and Thomason, Carole Hamilton asserts that Salieri “invites the audience to sit back and observe his confession, framed as a detective mystery” (2001, p. 13). Also, Dennis A. Klein notes that,

Salieri uses the audience of Amadeus as his collective confessor. He summons the audience to witness his only performance of “The Death of Mozart or Did I Do It?” on what he thinks is the last night of his life. He confesses to having contributed to Mozart’s early death through his petty dealings to ruin him professionally and financially, but stops short of claiming that he physically poisoned Mozart. (1983, p. 31).

Evidently, Salieri’s confessional play is not a religious confession which is aimed for forgiveness and salvation. However unlike the previous confessional plays of Michael Evans in Brian Friel’s Dancing at Lughnasa and Rene Gallimard in David
Henry Hwang’s *M. Butterfly* which are not religious in the sense that they confess the mistakes they did not truly commit, Salieri’s involvement with Mozart’s death is never clearly proved nor disproved. His confession of murderer is not religious because he clearly demonstrates that he confesses without the feeling of guilt or the desire for forgiveness as the quotation at the opening of this chapter and his expression that his crime is unavoidable: “Witness the fact that in blocking Him [God] [parenthesis added] in the world I was also given the satisfaction of obstructing a disliked human rival. I wonder which of you will refuse that chance if it is offered” (Shaffer, 1981, p. 50) show. Sallieri makes clear that he confesses the crime to be remembered and immortalised as Saint of Mediocrities who killed Mozart, the unworthy genius, to get revenge on the malevolent God for His injustice.

Nevertheless, Shaffer does not blandly portray his protagonist and this unreligious confessional play to show that a person can articulate a confession to define his own identity. On the contrary, he entertains the reader/audience by discouraging them from credulously believing in Salieri’s words and encouraging them to read Salieri’s confessional play critically with the help of the technique of alienation effects (Verfremdungseffekt or V-effect) of Brechtian theatre. Bertolt Brecht’s epic theatre or theatre of alienation is . . . . where the audience was discouraged from identification with character and was therefore persuaded to respond to events intellectually rather than emotionally. This involved a continual smashing of the fictional frame to remind the audience that the performance was a performance only, and that the issues raised in the course of the play remained in need of urgent and direct action. (MacMurraugh-Kavanagh, 1998, p. 27).

Although Madeleine MacMurraugh-Kavanagh posits that Shaffer’s plays are not entirely Brechtian for “while certain elements may suggest Epic influence, more elements suggest significant departures”; she admits that the Brechtian theatre “apparently infiltrates several of Shaffer’s plays” (p. 28) and certainly, one of her several plays is *Amadeus*. The alienation elements including the Light Box, the on-stage costume change, the visible sceneshifters, and plays with a play underline the fact that what is happening on stage especially, Salieri’s confessional composition is
fictional creation. Thus, the audience is discouraged from emotionally involved with Salieri and convinced by his words. On the contrary, they are encouraged to respond to the play with reason and intellect.

One of the elements that Shaffer uses to create V-effect throughout the play is the Light Box. The Light Box is described in his note, “The Set” as the “wonderful upstage space, which was in effect an immense Rococo peep show” (1981, p. xvi). This Light Box destroys the virtual reality of the play scenery with its unrealistic representation of scenery. Moreover, with its “peep show” style, it metatheatrically reminds the audience that what they are witnessing is a show. This element is introduced since the curtain of the play raises in the outer frame of the play set in 1823 Vienna with the citizens in the Light box gossiping about the spreading rumour that Salieri assassinated Mozart,

[Darkness.
Savage whispers fill the theatre. We can distinguish nothing at first from this snakelike hissing save the word Salieri! Repeated here, there and everywhere around the theatre. Also, the barely distinguishable word Assassin!

The whispers overlap and increase in volume, slashing the air with wicked intensity. Then the light grows Upstage to reveal the silhouettes of men and women dressed in the top hats and skirts of the early nineteenth century—CITIZENS OF VIENNA, all crowed together in the Light Box, and uttering their scandal.]

WHISPERER: Salieri!...Salieri!...Salieri! (p. 1).

The Light Box is also constantly used throughout Salieri’s composition to denote scenery and sometimes, give brief introductions to the incidents and characters with brief descriptive tableaus. For example: Rosenberg, Strack, and Van Swieten are occupying the Light Box at the beginning of scene 4 to denote that the incident in this scene takes place at the Palace of SchÖnbrunn. In the scene that sets at the Baroness Walstädten’s library, the Light Box is equipped with “two elegantly curtained windows surrounded by handsome subdued wallpaper” (p. 15). Moreover, after Salieri mentions Mozart’s creation of Don Giovanni, “in the Light Box appears the
silhouette of a giant black figure, in cloak and tricorne hat. It extends its arms, menacingly and engulfuingly, toward its begetter” (p. 69).

Another element that distance the audience from emotional response to the play is the on-stage costume change. After proposing to present his last composition, Salieri changes his costume on stage:

He bows deeply, undoing as he does so the button of his old dressing gown. When he strightens himself, divesting himself of this drab outer garment and his cap, he is a young man in the prime of life, wearing a sky-blue coat and the elegant decent clothes of a successful composer of the 1780s. (Shaffer, 1981, pp. 8-9).

Salieri’s change of costume is a transition between the outer frame to the inner play or his composition. For Salieri, to change costume before his audience might be his attempt to transfer the affiliation that he establishes with them through the Invocation from the outer frame to his younger self who is the narrator in the inner play so as to convince and manipulate them. However, Salieri’s change of costume during this moment of transition severely disrupts the illusion of reality of the whole play as well as his composition and thus, works against his intention by detaching the audience from emotional involvement with the composition. The change indicates that what is happening and going to happen within the framed inner play is a play with an actor who dons a costume and plays Salieri similar to the way Salieri dons the costume and plays his younger self. This disruptive on-stage costume change is performed again by the character of Constanze Mozart in Salieri’s composition. After giving birth to her baby, Constanze “has slowly risen, and divested herself of her stuffed apron—thereby ceasing to be pregnant” (p. 81). Constanze’s change generates the same effect with Salieri’s change. The audience are reminded once again that they are watching a play. Possibly, as this V-effect is generated at the moment when Mozart is portrayed as being pitiful and Salieri as totally heartless, the audience might be prompted to critically question Salieri’s saintly and heroic self-representation and his portrayal of Mozart as his rival.

Besides the two elements above, the alienation effect is also created by Shaffer’s use of the visible sceneshifters. The action within the inner play or Salieri’s confessional composition must be fluid and continuous so the sceneshifters who dress
as the eighteen-century servants are assigned to arrange the props and facilitate changes of scenes. Although Shaffer indicates in “The Set” that these sceneshifters should be “virtually invisible and certainly unremarkable” (1981, p. xvi), the audience as well as the reader cannot ignore their presence which is ironically obviously indicated in the stage directions. For example, when the scene shifts from the palace of ShÖnbrunn to the Baroness Walstädten’s library, the stage direction describes, “Two SERVANTS bring on a large table loaded with cakes and desserts. Two more carry on a grand high-backed wing chair, which they place ceremoniously downstage at the left” (p. 15). Again at the beginning of scene 10 of the first act, the stage direction indicates, “Two SERVANTS stand frozen, holding the large wing chair between them. Two more hold the big table of sweetmeats” (p. 34). Then, as Salieri comes into the scene, the stage direction directs, “The SERVANTS unfreeze and set down the furniture. SALIERI moves to the wing chair and sits” (p. 34). The sceneshifters who appear on stage to move and arrange the stage props throughout the inner play constantly remind the audience that what they are experiencing as a whole including Salieir’s composition is a play.

The last alienation element which is not least in its disruptive effect are plays within the play. Salieri’s composition which is the inner play of Amadeus also contains short performances including several of Mozart’s great operas and the Venticelli’s news. As Salieri’s composition is concerning with his antagonism towards Mozart who is endowed with Absolute talent in music, it has to consist of Mozart’s operas. However, in Salieri’s composition, Mozart’s operas are not faithfully and visibly reproduced. The live audience of Amadeus must be astonished by the scenes involving the performances of Mozart’s operas because they cannot see the performance but can only hear the music which are suspiciously distorted by Salieri’s perception. In the first performance of The Abduction from the Seragilo, the audience do not see the show on stage but hear only the music composed by Mozart and the audience of his opera as the stage direction notes,

*The light changes, and the stage instantly turns into an eighteen-century theatre. The backdrop projection shows a line of softly gleaming chandeliers. The SERVANTS bring in chairs and benches. Upon them, facing the audience and regarding it as if watching an opera, sit the*
EMPEROR JOSEPH, STACK, ROSENBERG, and VAN SWIETEN. (Shaffer, 1981, p. 27).

All of Mozart’s operas cited in the composition are presented in this manner because Salieri might intend to prevent the audience to appreciate Mozart operas due to his fear that the great operas might compete and overpower his composition. However, this manner of representation contributes the effect which Salieri does not probably anticipate. The fact that the audience in the auditorium are faced by the audience on the stage metatheatrically reflects the live-audience’s position and highlight the fact that they are attending the play similar to the on-stage audience. Besides the unseen operas within the composition, there is also the Venticelli’s news that takes a form of a play within the play. The two Venticelli appears in Salieri’s composition as his “Little Winds” (p. 10) or personal spies. On one occasion in which they passed Mozart’s information to Salieri, the two spies are dictated to step out of the scene and give the report to Salieri by staging the scene of their observed information as the stage direction read: “Instant light change. MOZART comes in with STRACK. He is high on wine, and holding a glass. The VENTICELLI join the scene but still talk out of it to Salieri. One them fills MOZART’s glass” (pp. 31-32). Similar to the operas within the composition, the Venticelli’s news which is dramatically reported serves to remind the audience that they are witnessing Salieri’s dramatic account similar to the way Salieri watches his spies’ dramatic report.

The V-effect which Shaffer creates through his insertion of the above elements underlines the fact that the audience is attending a play to which they should respond critically with reason and logic rather than emotion, credibility, and sympathy. One practical and critical way to approach Salieri’s confessional play is suggested by Martha A. Townsend in her essay “Amadeus as Dramatic Monologue”. Of all the critics of Amadeus, Townsend is the only one who suggests the possibility of reading the play or actually, Salieri’s The Death of Mozart; or, Did I Do It as a dramatic monologue,

... neither side of the Amadeus dialectic has articulated the striking similarity that Amadeus shares with the dramatic monologues of Robert Browning, both in form and content, a similarity that negates much of the disparaging criticism. Poems such as Fra Lippo Lippi, Andrea del
Sarto, and My Last Duchess, for example, contain elements which make them akin to Amadeus in way which critics, both pro and con, have failed to notice and which when taken into consideration add another compelling dimension to the film. (2001, p.21).

Although Townsend’s dramatic monologue approach to Amadeus is based on the film version, the idea is applicable to the reading of the play version. All the traditional contexts indispensable to the dramatic monologue reading: the speaker, the listener, and the occasion which appear in the film also appear in the play. The dramatic monologue is suitable to read the play critically as Shaffer’s technique of V-effect encourages as it leads the audience/reader to contemplate the first person narrative utterance in relation to its contexts namely, the occasion, the speaker, and the auditor. However, there are differences in the contexts between the play and the film versions that make the results of the dramatic monologue reading of the two confessions different from each another. Firstly, while the occasion in the film is the period of Salieri’s confinement in a mental hospital where he attempted to commit suicide, the occasion in the play is when Salieri attempts to convince the contemporary with the false confession that he poisoned Mozart and make them remember him with loathing. Although Salieri is the speaker in both the play and the film, the one in the film version is an old man who suffers from guilty feeling and desire for forgiveness while the one in the play is a mediocre composer who reveals his deceitful contribution to Mozart’s death with an impression that what he did is justifiable and he deserves to be recognised as Saint of Mediocrities. Moreover, while in the film version the auditor is a priest who is summoned to Salieri’s deathbed; the play features the future audience, “Ghosts of the Future”, (Shaffer, 1981, p. 5) conjured up by Salieri as the auditor. Therefore, in the film version, Salieri’s self-representation as a repentant sinner generated by his confession is encouraged with the dying old man as the speaker, the presence of the priest as the auditor, and the period of confinement as the occasion. On the contrary, in the play version of Amadeus, the interplays between Salieri’s confessional composition and its surrounding contexts work against Salieri’s intention by revealing that Salieri is not a hero who killed the immoral genius and fought against the villainous God but he is a villainous mediocrity who intends to make himself a hero in his own composition.
One of the main contexts that the dramatic monologue typically encourages the reader to contemplate in relation to the uttering monologue is the occasion. In *Amadeus*, the occasion that frames Salieri’s confessional composition is the outer frame of the play that contains the action of 1923 Vienna during Salieri’s struggle against the decline of his fame by spreading a false confession among his contemporary that he poisoned Mozart with arsenic out of envy in order to attach his name with the famous Mozart thirty-two years after his death. Salieri is seventy-three and evidently in his retirement as the two Venticelli report,

V1: Stays in his apartments.
V2: Never goes out.
V1: Not for a year now.
V2: Longer. Longer.
V1: Must be seventy.

Although he is still the First Kapellmeister, Salieri ceases to go in public or give a concert. From his first appearance and almost throughout his narration, Salieri seems to be at the final phase of his life. By sitting in a wheelchair with an old red cap on his head and a shawl around his shoulder, he appears old and frail. Moreover, throughout his narration of the confessional play; Salieri clearly and constantly declares to his audience that he is on his deathbed: “This is the last hour of my life. Those about to die implore you” (p.6), “my last composition…Dedicated to posterity on this, the last night of my life” (p.8), “I, being alive, though barely, am at the constant call” (p. 47) and, “This is now the very last hour of my life” (p. 49). Salieri, thus, creates an impression that he is on his deathbed on the stage.

However, as his narration comes to its close and the play proceeds almost towards the end, the true occasion in which Salieri chooses to stage his confessional play is revealed. Salieri does not cease to appear in public because of his bad health but he is forced to live in isolation by the unpopularity of his music and the decline of his fame. On the contrary, the celestial music of Mozart whom he confesses to murder attains great success despite the fact that its composer had long deceased. Salieri is full of bitterness and determined to get back in the limelight. Before the night of the confessional composition, Salieri has scandalized 1823 Vienna with a
rumour that he assassinated Mozart and plan to reinforce his false confession with his suicide which is intended to be a gesture of remorse:

SALIERI: [To audience]. . . . You see, I cannot accept this. I did not live on earth to be His joke for eternity. I will be remembered! I will be remembered!—if not in fame, then infamy. One moment more and I win my battle with Him. Watch and see! . . . All this month I’ve been shouting about murder. “Have mercy, Mozart! Pardon your Assassin!” . . . And now my last move. A false confession—short and convincing!

[He pulls it out of his pocket.]

How I really did murder Mozart—with arsenic—out of envy! And how I cannot live another day under the knowledge! By tonight they’ll hear out there how I died—and they’ll believe it’s true! …Let them forget me then. For the rest of time whenever men say Mozart with love, they will say Salieri with loathing! …I am going to be immortal after all! And He is powerless to prevent it.

[To God] So, Signore—see now if man is mocked!

(Shaffer, 1981, p. 94).

The occasion is, thus, definitely delineated. Salieri is not on his deathbed but he is struggling to immortalise his name as the destroyer of Mozart, the Absolute composer by revealing the false confession to his contemporary that he poisoned Mozart and planning to validate this false claim by committing suicide.

The interplay between the occasion and Salieri’s self-representation generated by the confessional composition that he is a saintly mediocrity who killed the immoral genius to pay back the prejudicial God unintentionally reveals an un-heroic side of Salieri. As the occasion is not a true deathbed but during the implementation of a deceptive scheme to regain public recognition and as Salieri claims, to win over God; his saintly heroic image is totally disrupted. Salieri makes clear to the audience that his plan to leaves a false confession in a form of letter in which he poisoned Mozart out of envy is his “last move” (Shaffer, 1981, p. 95) to win over God as he would be remembered with loathing as long as Mozart is remembered. As Salieri alludes to his contemporary Vienna as “a City of Slander” where
“Everyone tells tales” (p. 6), he has to pass himself as a wicked villain who cruelly poisoned Mozart so as to appeal to and convince his contemporary Vienna citizens who favour scandal and easily believe sensational gossips. Although the plan indicates Salieri’s intelligence in manipulating the contemporary and his audacity to fight against God with all available means, the plan underlines his manipulative and cunning natures and thus, undermines his heroic self-representation. Obviously, it is difficult to imagine a hero adopting such ignoble deceptive schemes.

Salieri’s heroic self-representation is further undermined through its interplay with another context necessary to the dramatic monologue reading. Besides the occasion, another one of the three contexts is the speaker. In *Amadeus*, the speaker is Antonio Salieri, the First Kapellmeister of the Habsburg court of Emperor Joseph and also, a senior contemporary of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. From his narration, whether due to his mediocre skill in composing or his slip of the tongue, he does not appear heroic. On the contrary, Salieri appears to be unreasonably malicious and deceptive. These characters revealed in the course of the narration totally destroy the heroic image which he intends to set up by his confession.

Salieri confesses that he murdered Mozart who is his immoral rival to take revenge on God for his unreasonable way in bestowing His grace. However, in his mediocre narration, Salieri fails to portray Mozart’s immorality but inadvertently reveals the flaw in his accusation of Mozart and his unreasonable malice towards the younger composer. Firstly, after learning that Mozart chose Katherina Cavalieri, “his daring girl” (Shaffer, 1981, p. 28) to play the leading part in *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, he instantly accused Mozart of having an affair with Katherina, “I had kept my hands off Katherina. Yes! But I could not bear to think of anyone else’s upon her—least of all his!” (p. 25). Evidently, Salieri’s accusation is entirely groundless. Mozart might not be promiscuous as Salieri intends to portray. However, the way Salieri raged against Mozart indicates his personal dislike towards the younger composer who may get involve with his student whom he was attracted. Also, Salieri portrayal of Mozart at Baroness Walstädten’s library also works against his intention. Salieri recounts that the first time that he had a chance to observe Mozart is during his isolation in the Baroness Walstädten’s library with refreshment. Obviously, Mozart made his first debut into the scene as “an obscene child” (p. 19) as Salieri intends to
portray. Nonetheless, it is hard to imagine the hero like Prometheus assumes the same voyeuristic position like Salieri. Later, Salieri claims that he had a chance to observe Mozart’s vulgarity at the same place again. However, in this time, Salieri alludes to Mozart’s sexually promiscuity and potential animosity towards himself. From his voyeuristic position, Salieri observes Mozart and Constanze’s dialogue:

CONSTANZE: You’ve only had every pupil who came to you.
MOZART: That’s not true.
CONSTANZE: Every single female pupil!
MOZART: Name them! Name them!
CONSTANZE: The Aurnhammer girl! The Rumbeck girl! Katherina Cavalieri—that sly little whore! She wasn’t even your pupil—she was Salieri’s. Which actually, my dear, may be why he has hundreds and you have none. He doesn’t drag them into bed!
MOZART: Of course he doesn’t! He can’t get it up that’s why! (p. 36)

The bawdy insult and the uncertain accusation of promiscuity are not solid enough to reinforce Mozart’s immorality and unworthy for how much can we account for the angry couple’s dialogue during their quarrel? The fact that Mozart challenged his wife to name the students whom he had the affairs with seems to indicate that he was not guilty as charged. However, the portrayal shows that Mozart offended Salieri on a personal level. Moreover, the fact that Salieri was in the same room twice to overhear Mozart’s vulgar language and behaviour might be too incredible to believe and thus, prompt the audience to suspect the veracity of the stories. Salieri hypocritical malice is also clearly evident in his account about the Venticelli’s news. The two Venticelli who were his spies reported their news to Salieri by stepping out of the scene with Salieri and presenting their news in another separated scene in which Mozart is reported to call Salieri “a musical idiot!” (p. 32). Evidently, the scene is Salieri’s second-hand knowledge as emphasised by the gesture of the two Venticelli. So, the truthfulness of the scene is challenged because the Venticelli might invent or modify it to provoke Salieri and turn him against Mozart. Nonetheless, this second-hand knowledge does not definitely posit Mozart as immoral but it emphasises the fact that Salieri developed his hatred towards Mozart because Mozart looked down upon him.
While Salieri intends to show that his murder of Mozart is justifiable because Mozart is vulgar and immoral and thus, unworthy for God’s love; he unintentionally undermines the heroic image which he constructs through his confession. From Salieri’s account, Mozart’s promiscuity is not verifiable so he might not be a villain that is deserved to be killed and thus, Salieri might not be a hero. Salieri hated Mozart because his involvement with Katherina and his insult. Therefore, Salieri is not a saintly hero. On the contrary, he is rather a villain who killed his rival because of personal offense.

Besides his personal malice that is unintentionally revealed during the course of his narration, the saintly heroic image which Salieri tries to construct with his confessional narration is also undermined by his deceptive nature inadvertently demonstrated through his narration. During his presentation of the confessional play, Salieri as the narrator proudly brag about his clever manipulative schemes for causing Mozart’s downfall. He might want to show off his wits with the account about the schemes but such account also indicates his deceptive nature and ironically, draws sympathy for Mozart whom Salieri inadvertently portrays as naïve and innocent. Salieri never revealed himself to Mozart as his rival. On the contrary, he pretended to be friend and offered help while actually, manipulated the whole court against Mozart. As his financial status was gradually worsened, Mozart hoped to better the circumstance with the post of Princess Elizabeth’s musical tutor. Instead of helping Mozart, Salieri cunningly “recommended a man of no talent” (Shaffer, 1981, p. 52) for the post in order to obstruct Mozart’s financial opportunity and pretended to sympathise with Mozart,

SALIERI: [To audience]. Mozart certainly did not suspect me. The Emperor announced the appointment in his usual way—.

JOSEPH: [Pausing]. Well—there it is. [He goes off.]

SALIERI: And I commiserated with the loser.

[MOZART turns and stares bleakly out front. SALIERI shakes his hand.]

MOZART: [Bitterly]. It’s my own fault. My father always writes I should be more obedient. Know my place! . . .He’ll send me sixteen lectures when he hears of this!
[MOZART goes slowly up to the fortepiano. Light lower.]

SALIERI: [Watching him, to audience]. It was a most serious loss as far as Mozart was concerned. (pp. 52-53).

Also when the Emperor intended to give Mozart a post of Chamber Composer, Salieri suggested he give Mozart “Light payment” (p. 71). He is rather satisfied with his scheme as he turns to audience and says, “And so easily done. Like many men obsessed with being thought generous, Joseph the Second was quintessentially stingy” (p. 71). However, in front of Mozart, he claimed that he suggested the post in favour of Mozart and thus, won the younger man’s gratitude: “Oh…forgive me! You’re a good man! I see that now! You’re a truly kind man—and I’m a monstrous fool!” (p. 71). His boast indicates his hypocritical nature as he shows his contempt towards the Emperor, his own patron while Mozart’s response indicates his own innocence and emphasises Salieri’s mischievousness. The satanic image of Salieri and the sympathetic naïve image of Mozart is further emphasised in Salieri’s account about his scheme for turning the Freemason against Mozart. He convinced Mozart to put the Freemasons into The Magic Flute, knowing that the Freemasons would be indignant. Salieri is evidently pleased with his ability to use such cunning plot against Mozart, “[To audience]. And if that didn’t finish him off with the Mason—nothing would!” (p. 77). To make his plan successful, Salieri also invited Baron Gottefried Van Swieten, the Ardent Freemason who was Mozart’s patron to the performance. As the Baron revealed himself after the end of the show and raged against Mozart, Salieri proudly makes a fluent aside to the audience, “I had of course suggested it” (p. 84).

While Salieri shows off his manipulative and cleaver schemes to destroy Mozart socially and financially so as to impress the audience, he inadvertently reveals himself as being deceptive and Mozart as being naïve and sympathetic. This inadvertent revelation destroys the heroic and saintly self-representation which Salieri tries to construct with his confession that he killed the immoral Mozart to get revenge on God’s injustice. First, his manipulative scheme is obviously a deception which is ignoble and un-heroic. Moreover, as Mozart who is supposed to be his immoral rival appears naïve and totally unaware of Salieri’s scheme and malice, Salieri becomes a villain himself.
In addition, the heroic image of Salieri is also disrupted by the interplay between his confessional composition and the auditor. In addition to the occasion and the speaker, the auditor or the listener is essential to the understanding of the dramatic monologue in terms of their relationship with the speaker as captured by the speaker himself. In *Amadeus*, the identity of Salieri’s auditor are defined almost at the beginning of the play as Salieri makes a plea and conjures them up,

SALIERI:… *Now, won’t you appear*? I need you—*desperately*! This is the last hour of my life. Those about to die implore you! What must I do to make you visible? Raise you up in the flesh to be my last, last audience?...Does it take an Invocation? That’s how it’s always done in opera! Ah yes, of course: that’s it. An Invocation. The only way.  

[He rises]. Let me try to conjure you *now*—Ghost of the distant Future—so I can see you. (Shaffer, 1981, p.6)

After the Invocation which Salieri claims to be taught to compose by Gluck, the stage direction denotes the coming of Ghosts of the Future, “*The light on the audience reaches its maximum. It stays like this during all of the following*” (p.7). The identity of the auditor is, thus, introduced as the Invocation includes the live-audience from the future time into the play to take a role in *Amadeus* as “Ghosts of the Future” (p. 5) whom Salieri conjures up to be his confessors and the last audience of his confessional play.

While the identity of the audience is made explicit through Salieri Invocation, the relationship between the audience and Salieri himself is established through the way he addresses them. Salieri’s manner when addressing his audience indicates his belief that they are his supporters or more likely, his followers who are expected to take his side and idolise him. The relationship between Salieri and the audience is first established as he uses the Invocation to conjure the audience from the future,

[Singing]

*Ghosts of the Future!*

*Shades of time to come!*

*So much more unavoidable than those of time gone by!*
Appear with what sympathy incarnation may 
endow you!

Appear you:
The yet to be born!
The yet to be hate!
The yet to kill!

Appear. . . posterity! (Shaffer, 1981, pp. 6-7).

By using his Invocation to conjure the audience, Salieri believes that they must recognise that they own their existence within this auditorium to him and thus, identify themselves with him.

Because the audience own their existence to him, Salieri believes that they must idolise him as indicated in the way he boasts about himself with the audience. In his explanation of the general atmosphere of the Hubsburg court where he enjoyed his position of a successful composer, Salieri manifests his pride in his musical profession:

SALIERI:…You, when you come, will be told that we musician of the eighteenth century were no better than servants: the willing slaves of the well-to-do. This is quite true. It is also quite false. Yes, we were servants. But we were learned servants! And we used our learning to celebrate men’s average lives….The savor of their days remains behind because of us. (Shaffer, 1981, p. 10).

Salieri confidently claims his power to glorify and immortalise people and manifests his belief that the audience will admire him. Also, he demonstrates the same confidence again when introducing his Little Winds,

SALIERI: These are my Venticelli. My “Little Winds,” as I called them.

[He gives each a coin from his pocket.] The secret of successful living in a large city is always to know to the minute what is being done behind your back. (p. 11).

Evidently, to spy on other people is not a good behaviour to boast about. However, Salieri talks proudly about his use of spies because he self-confidently believes that the audience will take side with him. Moreover, Salieri clearly proclaims to his audience that he does not want forgiveness from his act of confession because he did
nothing wrong: “I was a good man, as the world calls good. What use was it to me? Goodness could not make me a good composer! . . . Was Mozart Good? Goodness is nothing in the furnace of art” (p. 49). His bold profession indicates his self-confidence that the audience regards him with approval as a hero who did the right thing.

The way Salieri tells the audience whom he believes will support him in every way that he is a saintly hero who killed the immoral genius to pay back the villainous God undermines such heroic image. Salieri presents himself as a hero to people who are under his power and willing to take him as a hero. No matter what he says, his audience will regard him as a hero unconditionally. Thus, by offering the heroic image to this audience, Salieri unintentionally reveals his overzealousness to be a hero and his arrogance. This unintentional revelation probably undermines his heroic self-representation because a hero must not be eager to be a hero nor conceited with his action. We cannot imagine Prometheus and other heroes manifest their desires to be regarded as a hero.

Unlike the two previous confessional plays in Dancing at Lughnasa and M. Butterfly which are not religious confessions because the confessional protagonists confess mistake they did not truly commit to re-define their identity; the confessional play in Amadeus is revealed to be unreligious because Salieri, the confessor, makes clear that he confesses his crime to be forever recognised as the Saint of Mediocrities who killed the unworthy and immoral genius to revenge the malevolent God. Salieri does not want forgiveness and purification but he wants to immortalise himself as a hero. However, his attempt to define himself with the confession is proved to be a failure because of his mediocre skill in writing endowed to him by his author and the very fact that the author intends to undermine him with the V-effect that leads the audience to read critically and see flaws in his composition. As a contextual reading method, the dramatic monologue encourages the critical reading of Amadeus and reveals that Salieri’s intention to make himself a saintly hero with a confession fails miserably. Despite his attempt to present himself as a hero, Salieri appears to be a villain in his own composition. The dramatic monologue reading offers an insight that a person cannot define himself solely with his words for his identity is the culmination of his relation with the surrounding contexts. A confession cannot establish one’s identity if the identity generated by the confession is out of contexts.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS

“Where one-time cornerstones of confession (subjectivity, truth, authority, representation) are under question, as they are today, where does confessional writing and its study turn?”

Jo Gill

A confession is one of the methods that the authority use to produce, what Michel Foucault terms, “men’s subjection” (1990, p. 60). With his subjection—both consciously and unconsciously—to the authority such as religion, sovereign, and government, a person articulates a negative discourse of truth about himself with a confession. Back to the early time of confession, a person’s subjection was absolute with complete obedience and his confession was traditionally produced as Foucault notes, “Imagine how exorbitant must have seemed the order given to all Christians at the beginning of the thirteenth century, to kneel at least once a year and confess to all their transgressions, without omitting a single one” (p. 60). During that time, a person confessed his actual action that the authority categorised as a transgression with the hope that he would be forgiven or his soul would be purified as the authority indoctrinated him. Thus, the confessional writing of that time was traditionally produced with a religious aim similar to St. Augustine’s Confessions. However, as time passes, the relation between the authority and its subject evolves and so does the practice of confession. In Romantic period, the authority was challenged by the notions of individuality and freedom inspired by the French Revolution. The standards set by religion, sovereign, government were regarded as obstacles to freedom and individuality. A confession as a negative discourse of truth about one’s self was no longer a ticket to God’s Kingdom but became a method to manifest individuality and freedom against the oppression of authority as Jean-Jacques

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Rousseau’s *Confessions* shows. Nonetheless, the subjection to authority was lessened but not completely eliminated as a resistance with confession had to refer to the authority’s standard in regard to what is to be confessed.

In our time, a confession might no longer function as it did because the growing challenge against “one-time cornerstones of confession (subjectivity, truth, authority, representation)” (Gill, 2006, p. 8). As our views towards elements involved with a confession change (e.g. we might no longer conceive the authorial institutions and their standards as being oppressive and immutable), what, thus, a confession turns to be? The dramatic monologue reading of the selected modern confessional play *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990), *M. Butterfly* (1988), and *Amadeus* (1979) offers interesting insights into the playwrights’ interest in the complexity of the minds of the confessants. The three plays deny the notion of a confession as a first step to purification of soul and move away from being resistance against the oppressive standard of the institutions of power.

The dramatic monologue reading of the confessional narration of Michael Evans in Brian Friel’s *Dancing at Lughnasa* reveals that a confession as a production of self-definition can be used to highlight the less obvious self-definition eclipsed by illegitimacy. In this play, Friel leads us to see the overlooked fact that ‘illegitimate’ is only a socially constructed label which oppressively overshadows other sides of a person’s identity as illegitimacy eclipses Michael’s status as a male member of the Mundys, as Chris’s son, and as the Mundy sisters’ nephew. Michael uses his confession of his selfish abandonment of the family to underline his status as a family member and succeeds in highlighting the fact that although he is illegitimate, he could help relieve his family’s financial burden.

In David Henry Hwang’s *M. Butterfly*, Rene Gallimard’s confessional narration is explicated by the dramatic monologue reading to be a method to negate the more scandalous crime with the less scandalous one. Hwang highlights, as he intends to do, the fact that sometimes, love is based solely on fantasy rather than reality. Despite the fact that his relationship with Song is homosexual, Gallimard covered the fact with a fantasy of Orientalist love similar to Pinkerton’s and Butterfly’s. Gallimard confesses to be an extreme Orientalist with an obsessive love for the Chinese man who personified Madame Butterfly so as to negate homosexual
accusation and maintain the heterosexual love he professes. Nonetheless, Gallimard’s confession fails to reach its goal. He and his audience cannot forget the fact that the object of his love is a man and the Orientalist love is merely the fantasy which he constructed to cover his homosexual relationship with the Chinese man.

In Amadeus which is the final selected play in this study, Peter Shaffer dramatizes the immortality of art through his protagonist’s attempt to immortalise himself with an art of composition in which he presents himself as the destroyer of the immortal composer who was favoured by God. While the dramatic monologue reading of the above two confessional plays explicates purposes behind modern confessional writing, the dramatic monologue reading of Salieri’s confessional composition leads the audience to evaluate whether the confession achieves it goal. In the light of the dramatic monologue, the revision of identity which Salieri intends to create with his confession fails because the self-definition generated by a confession is incompatible with its contexts. Salieri’s attempt to immortalise himself as a heroic saint of mediocrities who killed the unworthy genius to revenge against God’s injustice fails miserably as he unintentionally reveals his villainous side concurrently the naivety of his victim.

From the study, it becomes evident that modern confessional writing is no longer inspired by the notions that a confession is a ticket to salvation and a method to resist against the oppressive authority. On the contrary, modern confessional writing seemed to result from a new relationship between the authority and its subject. A person no longer approaches the authority with awe and complete obedience but he exploits the authority to fulfil certain goal. Religious principles, laws, and regulation may no longer be oppressive rules that should be strictly followed but become tools used by a person to serve his personal purpose. Therefore, a confession as a production of a self-definition which is completely imbued with the influence of authority becomes a method to revise, reassert, and re-define one’s identity.

Moreover, the dramatic monologue reading of a confessional play as the study framework can be used to approach the fictional and non-fictional writings that feature the narrating “I” in dialogue with the implied listeners/readers. In the study, the framework is employed to the reading of the fictitious confessional plays of the fictional characters. Therefore, it can be used with other fictitious confessional
writings in both prose and poetics forms. Moreover, the dramatic monologue might shed interesting lights on the fictional first person narrations which are not in a confessional form. For example, the autobiographical novel like Charles Dickens’s *David Copperfield* (1850) and Charlotte Bronte’s *Villette*, the epistolary novels like Jean Webster’s *Daddy Long-Legs* (1912) and Lionel Shriver’s *We Need to Talk About Kevin* (2003), and the diary novels like George and Weedon Grossmith’s *The Diary of a Nobody* (1892) and Helen Fielding’s *Bridget Jones’s Diary* (1996).

Besides the fictional first person narrative writing, the study framework can be applied to the non-fictional writing possibly as a supporting method of the biographical reading. First of all, it can be applied to real confessional writing in a form of autobiography. In the case of the real confessional writing, the dramatic monologue should be used in tandem with the biographical reading which can help to establish the surrounding contexts of the confessional statement. The confessional writing should be contemplated in relation to the occasion during which it is composed, the writer’s typical character and specific attitude of mind as well as his relation to the reader as implied in his composing manner. Moreover, the dramatic monologue might add an interesting dimension to the biographical reading of the non-fictional first person narrative writings. We might read the autobiographies or memoirs like Solomon Northup’s *Twelve Years a Slave* (1853), Karen Blixen’s *Out of Africa* (1937) and Heinrich Harrer *Seven Years in Tibet: My Life Before, During and After* (1952) as well as the diaries like *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1947) by Anne Frank and *Berlin Diaries* (1941) by William L. Shirer, and the collected letters of famous people through the dramatic monologue framework and discover some hidden thoughts behind the narrations or the utterances. Finally and the most basically, even a personal letter in everyday life can be read through the light of the dramatic monologue which might encourage better understanding of its writer and the underlying message.
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