Chapter VII

THE ABSURD PROTAGONIST AND THE DEFEATED OUTSIDER

In the continental drama of the nineteen-fifties the Outsider figure is manifested as an absurd protagonist and a defeated individual. The universe in which he appears is very similar to that apprehended by the existential Outsider. The difference between the existential Outsider and the absurd protagonist lies in their response to the universe in which they find themselves. While Caligula and Orestes endeavoured to protest against the absurd and wagered in favour of existence, the absurd protagonist is unable to make any meaningful protest. The existential Outsider actively resisted the absurd as Caligula and Orestes did, through individually justified or socially committed action whereas the absurd protagonist very often does not act. This could be interpreted as a passive submission to the absurd. But Jan Kott sees in this refusal to react to the absurd, the only possible way in which man could hold his own against a mocking and malicious universe. Commenting on the ending of Beckett's Act Without Words Kott says,

> Man must be defeated and cannot escape from the situation that has been imposed on him. All he can do is to give up; refuse to play blindman's buff. Only by the possibility of refusal can he surmount the external forces.

The existential Outsider is still a hero in the traditional sense but the absurd protagonist is an anti-hero, mocked at, perverse and incapable of action.

The absurd protagonist sometimes resorts to clowning. In the absurd universe, where the objective reality is itself irrational, man gives up the attempt to rationalise his life. Instead he mocks the rational by acting as a clown. While the archetypal existential Outsider is a Sisyphean figure, the absurd protagonist is typically a clown. To quote Kott again,

> When established values have been overthrown, and there is no appeal to God, Nature or History from the tortures inflicted by the cruel world, the clown becomes the central figure in the theatre.

The foolish Outsider is often seen as the chief Modern protagonist. Nehama Aschkenasy describes modern fools as
Existential fools who epitomize the absurdity of the human condition through their clowning and imply that modern man is no more than a wretched clown. But clowning and folly are often devices to preserve one's sanity against all odds in an irrational universe. Ionesco sees laughter as the only option left for man in a meaningless and absurd world. Freud's explanation of man's delight in nonsense may also throw some light on the absurd protagonist's penchant for the ludicrous. According to Freud, Delight in nonsense, has its root in the feeling of freedom we enjoy when we are able to abandon the strait-jacket of logic. While the existential Outsider asserted his freedom in a militant manner through action, the absurd protagonist's only access to a sense of freedom lies through clowning, folly or slapstick, where logic is ignored or denied. Sometimes the absurd protagonist may become a wry, jeering fool or jester who directs his irony at everything including himself. According to Robert Brustein, this too is a form of existential revolt. If all the more vigorous forms of revolt have now become futile, the rebel can still express his outrage verbally. To the nothingness of life, he responds with the dry mock, even though this irony is sometimes expended on himself.

The absurd protagonist differs most from the existential Outsider in his absolute lack of social awareness. The existential Outsider, whether in Camus or Sartre, feels some responsibility towards his society, either negatively like Caligula, who by oppressing his subjects hopes to make them aware of the absurdity of the universe, or positively through social commitment like Sartre's Orestes. The absurd protagonist has no sense of any responsibility to society and would never dream of resorting to socially committed action. All his energy is exhausted in his struggle to exist so that nothing is left over to be spent on social action. Further, sometimes as in Beckett's Outsiders, he is completely cut off from society which hardly or never appears in the play.

The universe in which the absurd protagonist moves is an absurd universe which is unintelligible. It defies man's attempts to understand it through reason. Man is at variance with the universe in the
midst of which he finds himself imprisoned and the relationship between the two is uneasy, discordant, incompatible and in short, absurd. Man's longing for immortality, happiness and the rational is thwarted by death, suffering and the irrationality of the universe. The absurd universe is essentially a godless universe. As Arthur P. Hinchliffe says, "I have taken it as axiomatic that for Absurdity to exist, God must be dead." The absurd protagonist is either indifferent to God or has "a negative awareness of the Deity." Being deprived of all notions of transcendence, which traditionally gave meaning to human existence, the absurd universe seems devoid of purpose. Everything seems meaningless; the mechanical repetitiveness of life further reduces all actions to equal insignificance. In the absurd universe language becomes an absurd structure. There is no way of communicating meaningfully with other human beings and each one becomes isolated and forever alienated from others. The dislocation of time and space glimpsed at in the Einsteinian universe becomes a permanent condition in the absurd universe. In R.N. Coe's words,

The avant-garde theatre has grown to be, almost by definition, timeless: a drama of broken watches. The laws of space are equally arbitrary. Robert Brustein suggests that the absurd dramatists use the concept of subjective time as opposed to clock-time, a notion borrowed from Bergson's theory of duration.

The absurd protagonist experiences alienation at all the various levels. He is totally estranged from God and religion and faces the problem of how to confront a universe without God, who had hitherto been its centre and source of meaning. He is also separated from his fellowmen. This isolation is seen as arising from the individual's own self-immersion, his difficulty in understanding the motives and actions of others and his realization of the impossibility of genuine communication between individuals. He seems to be encapsulated within his subjectivity, with a vacuum around him which seals him off from any contact with others. The most painful alienation is that from the human predicament. The senselessness of human existence when it is deprived of any transcendent source of meaning, the tragic
brevity of life and the appalling but inevitable and irreducible absurd fact of death cause anguish in him. As Edward, one of Ionesco's characters says, "We are all going to die. That's the only alienation that counts".13

The conception of the absurd protagonist and the absurd universe arise naturally out of the crisis of the age. Northrop Frye characterises the present age as an era of "the three A's: anxiety, alienation and absurdity".14 Ours is indeed the age of anxiety and fears. Therefore "Salvation today means more release from fear than release from guilt".15 The cause of fear and anxiety is more often abstract rather than concrete, ranging from an uneasiness at living in the midst of what seems to be a hostile universe to a bewildered apprehension of the incoherence and absurdity of human existence in the absence of traditional props and norms.

In the twentieth century man finds himself in a world which has by and large deserted God and therefore finds itself abandoned to absurdity. In Sartre's Flies a connection had been made between man's rejection of God and the rejection of man by the universe. In the last act of Marlowe's Dr.Faustus, the protagonist who rejected God became a cosmic Outsider in the midst of a universe which acknowledged its Creator. It is paradoxical that the plays of two self-styled atheists like Marlowe and Sartre should make this significant connection between man's repudiation of God and his subsequent alienation from everything. Nietzsche's madman could foresee the terror that would overrun the earth when men believed that God is dead and that they had murdered him. The prevalent absurd vision of the universe has been frequently attributed to the loss of God and religion. According to Ionesco,

Cut off from his religious, metaphysical and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless.16

In Colin Wilson's diagnosis, "The Outsider only exists because our civilization has lost its religion".17 Steven Errol McGehee18 specifies the loss of unifying Christian cosmology in particular as the root cause of contemporary pessimism and alienation in the west.
The loss of God in the twentieth century has far reaching effects on the literature of the age too. Man, having displaced himself from his privileged position as the child of God, created in the image of God, is overcome by a sense of his own insignificance. The "general sense of insignificance" which "seems to permeate the whole of modern society" and is reflected in the literary protagonists also could perhaps be traced to this particular loss of identity. The shift in emphasis from a psychological portrayal of character to the probing of a situation in drama could also be shown to stem from a repudiation of God. Sartre's dictum, "There is no human nature because there is no God to have a conception of it," leads logically to his advocacy of the theatre of situation in the place of character. When God is dethroned from His position as "the cosmic lynchnpin," man finds that things fall apart and the centre cannot hold. The resultant impression of the incoherence of life is sometimes mirrored in literature too. The abandonment of a clear and logically developed linear plot in many contemporary plays could perhaps be attributed to this. Helen Gardner points out that today to many people the tragic is "the arbitrarily terrible, something very near the 'absurd'" and the meaningless. "There is a feeling today of the irrelevance to all our deepest concerns of what is meant by 'plot'." The loss of transcendence, together with all its corollaries such as absence of norms, loss of meaning in existence, the absurd universe, and the insignificance of the individual, forms an integral part of the twentieth-century world-view, which however, is composed of fragments and is not a unified whole. Colin Wilson in Religion and the Rebel, even imputes the World Wars of the twentieth century to the loss of religion. "Failure of religion and World Wars are inevitable companions". Since religion is the receptacle of the heroic in man, in its absence, man in his boredom seeks other ways of striving beyond his limits and this leads him to wars.

The effect of the two World Wars on the twentieth-century consciousness could never be exaggerated. To those who actually lived through the nightmare, the experience seemed to completely cut off their pre-war life from their post-war existence, so that there seemed to be no continuity between their past and their present.
Sartre generalises his experience to include others of his generation also when he says,

What happened to most of the people who like me, were born around 1905 was that they reflected or interiorized, a certain society and that there were then two breaks, one occurred in 1914-1918 and the other which was much more complete in 1945. Those who were not able to cope with the radical break in their lives were casualties of war, more tragic perhaps than those who died. Erik H. Erikson diagnoses their problem as the "loss of ego-identity" and relates this disturbance to the inner conflict of young people at war with themselves and to the sense of confusion of destructive rebels at war with society. The horrors perpetrated by man on other men during the war bespoke a diabolic sadism. In the words of George Steiner,

The concentration and death camps of the twentieth century, wherever they exist, under whatever regime, are Hell made immanent. They are the transference of Hell from below the earth to its surface. Torture, brain-washing, organized mass-destruction ignited often by racial hatred, the mockery of justice in the so-called People's Courts, all seemed to reveal "a world abandoned not to absurdity but to pure evil". The traumatic experience of the World Wars with their large-scale devastation exposed not only the evil inherent in man but also his powerlessness and insignificance as an individual. A tidal wave of meaninglessness seemed to overwhelm human existence. The claims of rival ideologies that they worked for the ultimate goal of human happiness, together with the unscrupulousness of politicians who appealed to 'right' and 'justice' in the abstract to conceal their own selfish motives, cast a shadow of doubt on all abstract ideals.

Absolutes lost meaning during the two World Wars because of the contradictory and hypocritical interpretations to which they had been subject, says Cruickshank. The shift from belief in essence to existence is more understandable in this light. The World Wars left their mark not only on the veterans who survived them. Even those who have not been through the experience have to continually live with the menace of yet another global war with the possibility of a nuclear holocaust which would make life extinct on earth. The frailty and brevity of
life are emphasized. It is no wonder then that the post-war world seems to resemble a desolate waste land to many. Out of the waste land came forth a philosophy of protest embodied in drama. According to George E. Wellwarth,

The second World War has stimulated a philosophy of protest against the social order (in the English and German-speaking drama) and against the human condition (in the French-speaking ones). A positive and constructive effect of the war experience could be a feeling of solidarity with other human beings who are also in the same predicament. This is what happened to Sartre. Looking back at his call to barracks in 1939, Sartre in the seventies says,

Through this mobilization I had to encounter the negation of my freedom in order to become aware of the weight of the world and my ties with all the others and their ties with me. But it is equally possible that the same experience may drive a man to a stance of solipsism instead of solidarity. Similarly the need to overcome alienation which led Sartre to social commitment may lead another to seek a grotesque release from the absurd.

The new frontiers pressed forward in science, psychology, economic theory and philosophy further altered the vision of man in the twentieth century. The Darwinian theory of evolution in the nineteenth century had already deposed man from his place of pride as the crown of all creation. Set beside the aeons of cosmic time and the millions of years of geologic time, man with his historic time is reduced to an insignificant speck. Einstein's theory of Relativity, with concepts of four-dimensional space-time and absolute velocity and the repudiation of any absolute frame of reference in the physical world, undermined human confidence in traditional ways of apprehending the world around through the senses and reason.

Freud and Marx who have been important influences in the shaping of modern thought, both project rather gloomy pictures of man. Raymond Williams considers Marxism, Freudianism and Existentialism as all being tragic in their most common forms which he summarises as follows:

Man can achieve his full life only after violent conflict, man is essentially frustrated, and divided against himself while he lives in society; man is torn by intolerable contradictions, in a condition of essential absurdity.
Colin Wilson blames Freud and Marx for promoting what he calls "the insignificance fallacy".32

Freud and Karl Marx have done a thorough job of convincing us that all men are much the same, subject to the same kind of psychological and economic pressures.33

In recent decades, the structural anthropology of Levi-Strauss, the Gestalt psychology of Köhler, the Cybernetics of Wiener and the linguistic philosophy of Wittgenstein have further radically altered man's understanding of himself and his world.34 Of these, Wittgenstein's arguments concerning language have the most immediate repercussions on literature and the use of language in it. Language is no longer taken for granted as a medium of communication. It is seen as being opaque and incapable of faithfully transmitting an individual's vision of reality. Roquentin's realization of the incompatibility of words and things is felt increasingly by linguistically self-conscious intellectuals. "The word remains on my lips; it refuses to go and rest upon the thing".35 In keeping with the absurd vision of the world, language is seen as "an absurd structure of sounds and marks behind which lay an overflowing indiscriminated chaos".36 According to Wittgenstein a man's perception of the world around him is ruled and even formed by the language that he acquires and uses. Summarising Wittgenstein's arguments, R.N.Coe says,

Where there is no language, continues Wittgenstein, there is no thought; and where there is no thought, there is nothing but the massive and unidentified totality of existence: There is All and Nothing. There are words or---silence.

In other words, we can never hope to know anything about phenomena; we can only know something about the words relating to phenomena.37 The use of language in avant-garde drama is seen to be affected by these contemporary notions of language. In pointing out the correspondences between the theatre of the absurd and contemporary thought, Martin Esslin says,

These plays question the efficiency of language as an instrument of genuine communication - so does the British school of linguistic philosophy. If Pinter's characters talk nonsense, because they use language loosely and emotively, that corresponds to the critique of language made by the philosophers concerned.38

The loss of transcendence, the shattering effects of the World Wars and the new horizons envisaged in human knowledge in the twentieth
The changing image of the Outsider figure brings about a change in dramatic structure also. Though Caligula and Orestes also had lived in an absurd universe and had been aware of it, their predicament had been analysed in plays which had a rational approach to dramatic structure and language. The theatre of the absurd however rejects dramatic conventions which imply a belief in reason. It attempts to forge new forms to express its new content and to project the new image of the Outsider figure. As Martin Esslin puts it,

While Sartre or Camus express the new content in the old convention, the Theatre of the Absurd goes a step further in trying to achieve a unity between its basic assumptions and the form in which they are expressed.  

The quest for new forms and techniques which reflect the Outsider's absurd vision has led the theatre of the absurd to dramatic situations where the laws of logic are no longer operative. Robert W. Corrigan speaks of the systematic destruction of "the very foundation of the naturalistic vision: the laws of logic" in absurd drama. Especially the law of cause and effect is shattered. Further the techniques of mime, circus and music-hall are pressed into service because these provide a release from the rational. They also serve to keep the absurd protagonist occupied, to save himself from boredom and ennui. A strong sense of the discontinuity of experience and the disjointed nature of a man's life in the absurd universe dictates the repudiation of a dramatic plot in the Aristotelian sense. Plot is replaced by a situation which reflects a fragment of the absurd universe. An absurd play therefore, does not conclude in a traditional sense with a solution or a neat tying up of ends or the emergence of a new order and stability or even a heroic gesture of defiance. Most often it just tapers out quietly as if to impress upon the audience that this is the way a play ends in the absurd universe, not with a bang but a whimper. The entire dramaturgy of the theatre of the absurd is directed towards the enactment of the theme of existential horror treated in the grotesque manner.
Dramatists who wish to project an absurd vision of the universe inevitably use the form of absurd drama, though they may not self-consciously belong to any school of drama. The title "The theatre of the Absurd" is more an astute critic's attempt to give a local habitation and a name to a theatrical phenomenon than the choice of the playwrights concerned. Eugene Ionesco, Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter are among the foremost dramatists whose plays reveal an absurd vision of the universe. In the course of their experiments in putting forward an absurd world-view, these dramatists sometimes create Outsider figures, who, as absurd protagonists, embody the disorienting experience of the absurd by the individual consciousness.

In this chapter, Ionesco's *Rhinoceros*, Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and Pinter's *The Birthday Party*, *The Caretaker* and *The Homecoming* and Osborne's *Inadmissible Evidence* are taken up for study. *Rhinoceros* has been chosen as a play which presents an Outsider who is at the transitional stage between the existential Outsider's defiance and the absurd protagonist's bewildered passivity and apathy. Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* dramatises the condition of being an Outsider in an absurd universe and has therefore been selected for scrutiny. Here the Outsider disappears as an individual and is identified with the condition of alienation. On the British stage, Pinter's early plays probe the condition and career of the Outsider. In the three plays taken up for study, the Outsider appears predominantly as a defeated figure. Bill Maitland in *Inadmissible Evidence* also seems to have been drawn as a defeated Outsider and is therefore included in this chapter though he does not really inhabit an absurd universe.

Ionesco's *Rhinoceros* combines social criticism with the development of an Outsider figure. Berenger the protagonist feels estranged from human existence when the play begins and is progressively alienated from his milieu, until at the end he stands in complete isolation. At the end he is a clown-hero figure caught in an absurd situation and serves as a good example of the Outsider as absurd protagonist.
The very first appearance of Berenger characterises him as a non-conformist. He is contrasted with his friend Jean who is the living embodiment of the fastidious respectability of bourgeois society. Berenger enters left "unshaven and hatless, with unkempt hair and creased clothes" while Jean enters right, carefully dressed with stiff collar, hat, and well-polished shoes. Jean gives a tie, a comb and a mirror to Berenger, signifying society's attempts to make the Outsider conform at least in appearance. Berenger meekly allows himself to be bullied by Jean. The mechanical repetitiveness of life has sapped all his zest for living. His own diagnosis of his condition is, "I can't get used to it. I just can't get used to life" (p.12). To the Outsider, the incongruity and incompatibility between individual existence and the universe around is something he can never "get used to". However Berenger does not take pride in this quality of his or criticise those who "get used to" things as Jimmy Porter scornfully condemns Alison. The opening dialogue between Berenger and Jean establishes Berenger as an Outsider estranged from human existence and exhausted by his encounter with its absurdity, while Jean is the representative of the middle-class milieu which tries to bring the Outsider into conformity with its expectations.

The bourgeoisie has always been Ionesco's favourite target of derision. He always presents the middle class in caricature to exaggerate and highlight its insipid character, inauthentic behaviour and inane chatter. Against the background of a petty, stupid, cliché-ridden society, Ionesco sometimes places an Outsider figure like Berenger who becomes aware of his alienation not only from his society but from the human condition itself. According to Martin Esslin, the two fundamental themes of Ionesco's theatre are the protest against the mechanical bourgeois civilisation and the loneliness and alienation of the individual. Both these themes are worked out in the opening scene itself. At the weird apparition of the rhinoceros, Jean, the Waitress, the grocer's wife and the grocer repeat in quick succession "Oh, a rhinoceros!". Similarly when they recover from the shock, the meaningless interjection that is repeated by the proprietor, Jean and the housewife is "Well of all things!"
The stereotype responses reveal a poverty of imagination and paucity of vocabulary in the bourgeoisie which is truly petrifying. Like the Smiths and Martins of The Bald Soprano these insiders surrounding Berenger also have mastered what Ionesco describes as "the secret of talking and saying nothing". The use of inane chatter consisting entirely of meaningless phrases, clichés and aphorisms is a favourite device of Ionesco which demonstrates the absurdity of language, the impossibility of genuine human communication beyond the level of 'phatic Communion,' the empty-headedness of the middle class which has ceased to think, feel and live, and the void or nothingness that is in the centre of man which he tries to fill up with words, slogans and platitudes. The uniqueness of Berenger is made conspicuous by his silence and refusal to echo the mechanical responses of others. Ionesco takes pains to make this very clear through the stage-direction given within brackets- "All (except Berenger): Well of all things!" Thus language is used here to bring out the alienation of the Outsider from a mechanical society. Berenger's only comment on the rhinoceros is that it made a lot of dust. Berenger's apathy stands out against the general consternation and especially Jean's excitement. Probably Berenger shared Ionesco's awareness of the absurd. In Notes and Counter-notes Ionesco writes,

No happening, no particular magic holds any surprise for me; no sequence of ideas can compel my attention, nothing is capable of seeming to me in any way more improbable than anything else, for everything is drowned in the general improbability and unlikelihood of the universe itself.

Berenger is so overcome by the anxiety and anguish of existence itself that he is unaffected by external circumstances, however fantastic they may be, when they do not directly impinge on the problem of human existence. But when later he realises that the advent of the rhinoceros is directly connected with human beings, he becomes passionately involved in the matter. In a later conversation between Berenger and Dudard, it is Berenger who is under nervous excitement while Dudard remains calm. There Berenger protests against men being turned into beasts while Dudard has got used to it. These two duologues between Jean and Berenger and later between Dudard and Berenger are built on the principle of reversal and convey the
radically opposed responses of the Outsider and the insider.

Berenger is not only estranged from his social milieu and from human existence itself, but also feels alienated from himself. To an uncomprehending Jean, Berenger tries to convey his Outsider's consciousness of his own body as if it were something apart from himself.

I'm conscious of my body all the time, as if it were made of lead, or as if I were carrying another man around on my back. I can't seem to get used to myself. I don't even know if I am me. (p.24)

He is overwhelmed by a sense of the illusory nature of everything including his own individual existence. "I sometimes wonder if I exist myself" (p.26).

This conversation where Berenger shares his intimations of the absurd with the robust insider Jean is crossed by the discussion on logic between an old gentleman and a logician. Here it is significant that Berenger's responses become identical with the old gentleman's or the logician's just when he seems nearest to the point of social conformity. During this "dialogue-in-counterpoint" Berenger seems quite dazzled by the prospect laid before him by Jean of cultivating his mind. Berenger almost decides to take up the four-week crash-course in culture prescribed for him by Jean which included visiting museums and the theatre, attending lectures and witnessing Ionesco's plays! Here Berenger is almost won over by the insider way of thinking. His deindividualization is linguistically conveyed by making him say the same thing as the old gentleman or the logician in their conversation. The use of identical responses indicates loss of individuality and psychological interchangeability. This point is further enforced in the next appearance of the rhinoceros immediately afterwards. Jean, the logician, the old gentleman, the waitress, the grocer, his wife and Daisy all exclaim "Oh, a rhinoceros!", in rapid succession and Berenger joins them with "Rhinoceros". After its disappearance the stock response "Well of all things!" is now echoed by Berenger also which is a glaringly noticeable difference from his earlier silent stance.

All: Well, of all things!
Jean and Berenger: Well, of all things! (p.33)
As Berenger's voice joins in unison with Jean's, he almost joins the herd. But it is a short-lived alliance and four pages later Berenger violently disagrees with Jean, irritated by Jean's pedantic display of learning. This brings out the inability of the Outsider to bear the yoke of conformity for any length of time. However the pattern of the desire to conform and the quick recantation is significant and is repeated again in the last scene also.

Act I thus presents the meaningless existence of bourgeois society and the Outsider's alienation from it. It also projects the Outsider figure as an absurd protagonist, passive and listless, unlike the active and almost aggressive existential Outsider. He is overwhelmed by the abnormality of existence and exhausted by the continual battering by it and is also self-estranged.

While act I is set in a fairly leisurely pace, in act II the tempo quickens. Berenger actually witnesses the metamorphosis of Jean into a rhinoceros. Man and animal do not seem far different from each other. It is as if they are merely successive steps on the evolutionary ladder and as if the evolutionary process could be reversed by a quirk of absurdity in this universe. It is indeed a traumatic experience for Berenger and the scene rapidly quickens in tempo until it reaches the paroxysmic climax of a nightmare. Berenger feels himself threatened by rhinoceroses all round him imprisoning him in a menacing, claustrophobic atmosphere (p. 83). In this nightmare sequence Berenger's final release from virtual incarceration is exactly as it would be in a dream. He throws himself against the wall which gives way, allowing him to escape.

The first part of act III consists of a duologue between Berenger and Dudard. Berenger is shattered by the rhinoceros phenomenon. But Dudard is quite calm about it. His approach is that of logical rationalism. He believes that life is knowable and explicable and is the antithesis of Berenger who finds life an abnormal business. Dudard recommends an attitude of acceptance of the absurd situation with detachment and equanimity, but Berenger rejects it as determinism.
Dudard: Then face the facts and get over it. This is the situation and there's nothing you can do about it.
Berenger: That's fatalism.
Dudard: It's common sense........
Berenger: Well I don't want to accept the situation. (p.93)

Berenger disapproves of Dudard's vaunted tolerance, detachment, acceptance, and attempt to understand - all as concessions made to the absurd. Berenger is in favour of a passionate taking of sides and making a strong stand against the rhinoceroses. In this he is akin to the existential Outsider, though he cannot take any definite action to register his protest. His refusal to compromise with the rhinoceroses is itself an asseveration of Man, though his sense of commitment is diffused and his attempt at protest is quixotic.

According to David H. Hesla, there are four ways of dealing with the absurd - God, love, courage and laughter. In Rhinoceros love is resorted to as a brief haven of refuge from the anguish of existence, but it proves to be only a temporary relief. In Act III Berenger and Daisy enjoy a brief idyll of bliss together. But their happiness is threatened by regrets and reproaches which are hangovers from the past. Daisy bids Berenger get rid of his guilt feelings. Berenger agrees and tries to hold on to the happiness of love which seems to be the only real thing in a world of maddening illusion. Even though they decide to banish others and the past which they had spent with others, they are not left in peace. The telephone rings ominously. When Berenger takes up the receiver expecting a call from the authorities and a return to sanity, trumpetings are heard instead. The link between cause and effect, reasonable expectation and fulfilment is rudely snapped. According to Brian Way, "There could be no more vivid dramatic instance of what it means to live in an absurd universe". Thenceforward the rhythm becomes more and more feverish and frenzied. Already the rapid multiplication of rhinoceroses had made them grow from a large minority to an overwhelming majority. Now with the taking over of fire-stations, radio-stations and all the authorities it looks as if they are the only two remaining human beings. This thought makes them panic-stricken and they rush from one window to another. Ionesco deliberately makes their desperate movements to resemble puppet-like grotesquery. Their
agony as trapped creatures is set against the intrinsically comic element of their quick and antithetically balanced movements. In their nervous agitation they turn upon each other in mutual recrimination (p.116). After this they try again to rebuild the relationship in an attempt to keep out the absurd. But it is no longer spontaneous and is a desperate bid to simulate the earlier condition, hoping for a return of the earlier bond of togetherness (p.117). Then suddenly Berenger has, what is to him, a brilliant idea for creating a new generation.

Listen, Daisy, there is something we can do. We'll have children, and our children will have children - it'll take time, but together we can regenerate the human race. (p.118)

He says that it only needs courage aided by time and patience. But against the background of the absurd universe which threatens to swamp them, his patriarchal aspirations seem pathetically and also ludicrously inappropriate. Meanwhile from the time Dudard left them, the thudding of the rhinoceroses takes on a musical quality and their appearance, in spite of the monstrosity, seems to become more and more beautiful. It is as though the audience viewed the spectacle through the eyes of the last man and woman so that the temptation faced by the two comes alive to the audience. Soon the seductive power of majority opinion compelling the individual to conform is at work in Daisy. Berenger makes a desperate attempt to hold her back by appealing to two things which seem to him to prove the superiority of human beings to rhinoceroses - human language and love. But she is not convinced and seems to prefer the animal equivalent. Soon their incompatibility as Outsider and insider becomes apparent. Love, which had been tantalisingly held up as a possible release from alienation is now abandoned as a mocking illusion. This picture of the death of love in an absurd universe is in keeping with Ionesco's portrayal of loveless marriages in other plays criticising bourgeois institutions. Richard N.Coe points out that "Jaques and L'Avenir, Amedee and Victimes, are vicious and grotesquely caricatured portraits of the bourgeois system at work in love and marriage". And here too as in other plays, "Woman, in Ionesco's world, is guiltier by far than man".50 Here woman is the betrayer and deserter, who leaves the Outsider to grapple alone with his alienation and the absurdity of
existence, after promising to stand by him.

As in most other plays with Outsiders, the final situation is a one-versus-all position. Berenger is the only human being in an absurd universe swarming with rhinoceroses. He realizes his loneliness but tries to assert his self-sufficiency and independence.

Now I'm all on my own. But they won't get me. You won't get me! You won't get me! I'm not joining you; I don't understand you! I'm staying as I am. I'm a human being. A human being. (p.122)

Berenger may be anti-heroic, quixotic and ineffectual but his protest is an affirmation even in an absurd universe. In the words of H.A. Smith, "The 'No' of Ionesco's Berenger in Rhinoceros is an affirmation of the self." R.N. Coe describes him as an Outsider, an homme revolte, a metaphysical insurgent rebelling first and foremost against the very absurdity of existence, but still more against the stupidity of those who fail to recognize it for what it is.

But unlike Camus' metaphysical rebel Caligula who had the power to enforce his protest against the absurd on others also, Berenger is absolutely powerless and ineffectual. This difference in the conception of the Outsider affects the technique of presentation also. While Caligula rises to tragic heights, Berenger is deflated into a tragi-comic figure of grotesque drama. Among Ionesco's dramatic characters, Berenger is quite exceptional in his awareness of and protest against the absurdity of existence. But to Sartre with his staunch belief in socially committed action as a protest against the absurdity of existence, Berenger's gesture of resistance unaccompanied by any concrete action, seems meaningless and futile.

To Camus' Caligula and Sartre's Orestes, their very isolation was a matter of pride and a source of strength. But Berenger, who, even at the beginning of the play had been exhausted by the business of existing and who in the course of the play is continually battered by the invasion of the absurd, is completely unmanned by the final loneliness. He almost approaches a disintegration of personality and feels his identity dissolving in the absence of other people to affirm it. Berenger asks himself,

What is my language? Am I talking French? Yes, it must be French. But what is French? I can call it French if I want, and nobody can say it isn't - I'm the only one who speaks it. What am I saying? Do I understand what I'm saying? Do I? (p.122)
With his sense of identity badly shaken, Berenger is hounded by misgivings about his decision to remain as a human being. "And what if it's true what Daisy said, and they're the ones in the right?" (p.123). These doubts further undermine and blur his self-image. Soon Berenger feels ashamed of his own appearance and longs for the horn and hard green hide of a rhinoceros. His radical change of opinion is seen in his praise of the trumpetings as being musical. Berenger laments his individuality which prevents him from joining the others and becoming a rhinoceros.

Now it's too late! Now I'm a monster, just a monster. Now I'll never become a rhinoceros, never, never! I'm gone past changing, I want to, I really do, but I can't, I just can't. I can't stand the sight of me. I'm too ashamed! I'm so ugly. People who try to hang on to their individuality always come to a bad end. (p.124)

Once again as in act I the censure of common opinion bows him down but with an effort he shakes it off and takes up his defiant stance with resilience.

(He suddenly snaps out of it) Oh Well, too bad! I'll take on the whole of them! I'll put up a fight against the lot of them, the whole of them! I'm the last man left, and I'm staying that way until the end. I'm not capitulating. (p.124)

It is in this ambiguous last posture that the Outsider as absurd protagonist differs from the existential Outsider. Caligula and Orestes maintain their heroic defiance till the end while Berenger is the ordinary man, the anti-hero, who finds it difficult to sustain his defiance in an absurd universe where heroic ideals are dead. His quick reversals from defiance, to a desire to conform and belong, and then back to revolt are ambivalent and oscillate between the heroic and the comic-grotesque. This makes him an equivocal figure. Is he a hero, who has passed through disintegration to integration? Is he one who has faced temptation and overcome it finally? Is he one who with courage asserts his identity as a human being, even when he can no longer have "being-for-others", but must be satisfied with "being-to-oneself"? Or rather is he a pitiful clown who is forced to make a virtue of necessity and who, like the fox in the fable, rejects the inaccessible as the undesirable? This ambiguity of portrayal is a technical innovation necessitated by the absurd dilemma in which this Outsider figure is placed. The absurd protagonist's impasse in
Ionesco is described by Richard H. Coe:

he is faced, like Berenger, with two intolerable alternatives:
to accept the absurd, or to revolt against it - knowing full well
that it is the condition of existence, and therefore that revolt
is again absurdity, raised to the nth degree. This is the
angoisse of Ionesco's world.55

To Martin Esslin who finds Berenger's defiance farcical and tragi-
comic, "The play conveys the absurdity of defiance as much as the
absurdity of conformity".56 The final effect of the play is not
pessimistic but as affirmative as could be achieved in an absurd
universe. Sartre sees no positive value at all in Berenger's
protest.57 He regards Berenger's resistance as a rather fashionable
pose with very little meaning in it. But Ionesco in an interview
claims that protest against the absurd itself implies transcending
it.58 In Ionesco's concept of the absurd, despair goes together with
possibility. In Rhinoceros, Berenger finds the possibility of
affirming life once again on the far side of despair. Thus Ionesco
says,

I feel that every message of despair is the statement of a
situation from which everybody must freely try to find a way out.59
Thus Ionesco's mission is to present the human predicament in all its
absurdity in order to arouse people from their slumber of unawareness
or complacency. By thrusting them into a situation of despair, he
forces them to find a way out and set themselves free. In Rhinoceros
the stage-direction that towards the end the animals become more and
more "beautiful" indicates that not only are Daisy and Berenger
tempted by them but even the audience is meant to participate in their
experience. Thus Ionesco's theatre is the exact opposite of Brecht's
theatre of detachment which uses alienation effects to keep the
audience uninvolved. This rhythm of despair and liberation in
Ionesco's plays has frequently been noted and commented upon.60 The
release is very often accompanied by and accomplished through
laughter.61 The equivocal clown-hero figure of Berenger is the focus
of both the desperate defiance and the comic absurdity which are
maintained in a delicate balance in the play.

Ionesco's Rhinoceros, like Camus' Caligula and Sartre's Flies
has been related to contemporary political phenomena. Just as
Caligula is seen as a protest against twentieth-century totalitarian-
ism and Flies as an allegory of the French Resistance movement against
the German occupation of France, Rhinoceros has been considered a
criticism of mass political hysteria like Nazism, Fascism and
Communism. Sartre's contempt for the play could be partly traced
to what he believes to be the blatant and banal political allegory
in it. He asks,

What does it mean to become a rhinoceros? Is it to become a
fascist or a communist, or both? It is evident that if the
bourgeois public is delighted with it, it must be both. There is indeed much truth in the political interpretations of the
play. Ionesco had been a horrified witness to the seductive power of
Nazism over his own father and close friends in the 1930s. This
became an obsession with him and years later emerged as a dramatic
image. According to C.A. Brown

He came to see his image of the proliferation of rhinoceroses as
a major discovery — that rhinoceritis (the blind acceptance of any
prevailing conformity, especially to a political view) is 'the
disease of the twentieth century'.

Ionesco himself would never have subscribed to an exclusively
political interpretation of the play. He believed that the histori­
cal, to be of value must be interpenetrated with the eternal as in
Shakespeare's Richard II. In his own play, the proliferation of
rhinoceroses is not merely a political allegorical image of any
contemporary -ism in vogue, but is an eternal image of all forms of
mob-hysteria which elevate a socially-shared mania to the level of
sanity; it is an a-historical symbol of the tyrannical power of
conformity which tries to coerce the individual to give up his
individuality and join the herd.

The epidemic nature of rhinoceritis signifies the killer-germs
of propaganda infecting even reason and logic in an ad-mass culture.
R.N.Coe sees the play's theme as "the betrayal of man by his own
intellect". The rhinoceros is a vivid image of the estrangement
which the Outsider experiences from those he knew but who suddenly
reveal themselves to be alien creatures and strange monsters to him.
Ionesco, in an interview, explains what 'becoming a rhinoceros' means
to him.
I don't know if you have noticed it, but when people no longer share your opinions, when you can no longer make yourself understood by them, one has the impression of being confronted with monsters—rhinoceroses, for example. They would kill you with the best of consciences. And history has shown us during the last quarter of a century that people thus transformed, not only resemble rhinoceroses, but really become rhinoceroses.67

The use of the symbol thus conveys and perhaps exorcises Ionesco's personal obsessions and political fears. The play thus unites the political and the personal, the temporal and the eternal, the historical and the universal in an imaginative manner.

It has been shown in the course of this study that a change in the form of drama becomes necessary with every new image of the Outsider figure who arises out of an altered vision of the world. Yet in Camus and Sartre, their absurd vision of the world did not bring any radical change in the dramatic form. This may perhaps be traced to the nature of their Outsider protagonists. Both Caligula and Orestes believed in the validity and meaningfulness of the individual's action even in an absurd universe. They took definite action hoping that their initiative would be the cause which would bring about certain beneficial effects to mankind. Hence the plays in which they appear are also structured around the logic of cause and effect. Unlike the existential Outsider, the absurd protagonist is enmeshed in the absurdity of the human condition and rendered incapable of definite and meaningful action. This conception of the Outsider affects the dramatic form, which rejects naturalism, the logic of cause and effect and the possibility of meaningful action and speech. Robert Corrigan sums up the quest of absurd dramatists for a new form:

In reducing the human situation to its ultimate absurdity, Beckett, Ionesco, et al., realize that the stereotyped dramatic progressions of our determinism-oriented natural theatre will no longer satisfy. They are searching for a new form, new techniques that are expressive of the central fact of their world.68

Ionesco's contempt for the traditional form of the well-made play with a linear plot that narrates a story is expressed through one of his characters. Choubert, the hero of *Victimes du devoir* says,
All the plays that have ever been written, from Ancient Greece to the present day, have never really been anything but thrillers: Drama's always been realistic and there's always been a detective about. Every play's an investigation brought to a successful conclusion. There's a riddle and it's solved in the final scene.

In contrast to this form of a straight-lined progression and resolution of an initially posed problem, Ionesco outlines his concept of dramatic structure as an acceleration or intensification of "a series of states of consciousness or situations," until the point of paroxysm is reached. Martin Esslin compares this to "The Pattern of Orgasm" and suggests that the final release from tension takes the form of liberating laughter.

The emphasis therefore shifts from a progressive plot to a comparatively static situation. In the absence of plot interest, dramatic tension is created by imposing a strongly defined and progressively accelerating rhythm upon a static concept. In Rhinoceros the basic situation of the Outsider is laid bare in the first act which enacts a two-fold absurdity - of society and of existence. It works out the alienation of Berenger at the social, interpersonal and existential levels. Into this situation the phenomenon of the rhinoceros breaks in. In act I it is a stray and scattered event; in act II it is increasingly prevalent and claims Berenger's close friend as a victim; by act II the phenomenon is completely out of control. The leisurely pace of act I accelerates into a quick tempo by the end of act II, while in act III the rhythm becomes frenzied, almost driving the Outsider to the point of dissolution of identity. But he recovers and persists in his stand of alienation - from an absurd society and an absurd universe. The structure of the play thus approximates to a static situation and concept on which a quickening rhythm has been imposed. Martin Esslin saw all absurd drama being constructed on similar lines.

The situation of the play remains static; the movement we see is that of the unfolding of the poetic image.

From the end of Act II onwards, Ionesco introduces the surrealistic device of the nightmare structure into the play. At the end of Act II the audience witnesses Berenger in his nightmare. Ionesco here accurately reproduces the breathless panic of the
dreamer immured in a nightmare situation from which there is no exit. In Act III gradually the audience itself is drawn into the dream situation and sees it through the eyes of Berenger, as the rhinoceroses become more and more beautiful, with a seductive appeal to join them.

M.M. Powell divides Ionesco's plays into four groups each dominated by a particular dramatic mode.

It is possible to discern four distinct dramatic modes - satiric, surrealistic existentialist and symbolic - within his body of dramatic literature. In Rhinoceros itself all these four modes could be traced. Social satire on the inanities of bourgeois society is accompanied and ultimately superseded by an exposure of the absurdity of existence itself. The use of the symbol of the rhinoceros and the surrealistic device of the nightmare translate the satiric and existential themes into a theatrical form which defies rational analysis and explanation. The rhinoceros image expresses the Outsider's alienation from a monstrous society. The nightmare sequence conveys his panic-stricken anxiety in moving through an alien universe.

Ionesco protested strongly against making drama a vehicle of ideology. In restoring the theatre to its own legitimate domain Ionesco discovered that the essence of the theatre lay in exaggerating its effects.

It was not for me to conceal the devices of the theatre, but rather make them still more evident, deliberately obvious, go all out for caricature and the grotesque. Ionesco's principle of exaggerating theatrical effects and devices is illustrated in Rhinoceros. The satire of social comedy is carried to the extreme of caricature and farce. Veronica Elaine Kelly points out Ionesco's awareness of existing theatrical tradition as revealed in his utilisation and revitalisation, by parody or surreal distortion, of such staples of 'bourgeois' theatre as melodrama, farce and detective drama. The serious use of dialectic by the existential Outsider is replaced by a grotesque parody of it in absurd drama. Thus in Rhinoceros there is an extended debate on the Asiatic and African rhinoceroses, the only point of which is to show the pointlessness of all argument.
The Punch and Judy shows which fascinated Ionesco as a boy, suggested to him the idea of looking at human beings as marionettes. According to R.N.Coe,

the tendency to write for living actors as though for marionettes is, fundamental to Ionesco's vision of the new theatre. In *Rhinoceros*, he makes a two-fold use of this conception. In act I, members of the middle-class society are seen as robots programmed to make identical mechanical responses in the midst of whom Berenger is the only genuinely alive individual. In act III Berenger together with Daisy performs a puppet-dance across the stage, suggesting the momentary reduction of the Outsider himself to a marionette by the tyranny of a hostile universe. Thus the Outsider's predicament in an absurd inauthentic society and the absurdity of existence are brought out by the puppet element in character representation.

Even tragedy, its atmosphere and patterns are distorted or parodied in absurd drama, which denies mutually exclusive genre differences between comedy and tragedy. The progressive isolation of the hero which is a tragic pattern, is worked out in *Rhinoceros* also, but with a difference. The triumphant defiance of the hero is replaced by the oscillating movement between defiance and submission in a clown-hero figure. The final effect is ambiguous, poised between anguish and laughter - the twin responses to the absurd in the absurd protagonist.

There is exaggeration, distortion and dislocation even in the language used by Ionesco. The expression of surprise and sympathy by the bourgeoisie in *Rhinoceros* is couched in clichés which are echoed by everyone in turn. The mechanical repetition of these meaningless phrases brings out the herd-mentality of the speakers and the meaninglessness of their existence and their inner emptiness. When Berenger is briefly persuaded to accept the bourgeois ideals of life by Jean, he too uses these fossilized phrases, indicating the close relationship between the way of life and the language used. Towards the end of the play, language itself approaches the point of dissolution and extinction. When Berenger is left in complete isolation, with no other human being to talk to, he wonders about the objective existence by itself of the language he had used hitherto.
When there is no one to speak it, can a language be said to exist and have clear-cut meanings? By thus pushing language to an extreme position where it is not only meaningless but is reduced to nothing, the very validity and objective existence of language is questioned in general. Thus, in *Rhinoceros*, language is used to convey the absurd nature of the society which surrounds the Outsider. His total alienation from others is indicated by demonstrating the impossibility of communication. In R.N.Coe's words, "Language itself is an intrinsic manifestation of the absurd". 79

Thus Ionesco in *Rhinoceros* works out the progressive alienation of Berenger from society, existence and self. Berenger shares the existential Outsider's defiance to some extent but deviates from that stance to become a clown-hero figure at the end. In Berenger the Outsider appears as an absurd protagonist registering a quixotic protest against the absurdity of existence. The play reflects the political crisis of the age in a generalized manner. Ionesco breaks new ground in dramatic structure and experiments with form and theatrical devices so as to express absurdity and the Outsider's awareness of it on stage. He also uses language as a manifestation of the absurd.

It has been often pointed out that avant-garde dramatists in French are themselves linguistic Outsiders - non-Frenchman who have disciplined themselves to write in French. They do so in a linguistically self-conscious manner, with part of the man standing aside and evaluating the writing in a detached manner. Beckett, Ionesco and Adamov are all exiles from their own country. In France, the country where they have chosen to be domiciled, they are themselves outsiders in a literal and obvious sense. The alienation experienced by an exile in the country of adoption could be seen as an image of the deeper and more complete alienation experienced by the Outsider at the social, interpersonal and existential levels. As Martin Esslin puts it,

The exile's basic experience is the archetype and the anticipation of twentieth-century man's shock at his realization that the world is ceasing to make sense. 80
The Outsider's predicament in an absurd universe is dramatised in the plays of Samuel Beckett. They are concerned with the problem of existence, the individual's desperate attempts to make time pass, the inevitability of boredom, the deadening nature of habit, the absurdity of human hope and the anguished realization that one's own life is meaningless. Yet, death, which will put an end to a meaningless existence, is also unwelcome. According to R.N. Coe, Beckett's "insistence on the inconceivable choice between two impossibilities, living or dying" makes him the incarnation of the twentieth-century anguish.

The setting of Beckett's drama is an absurd universe, unintelligible, full of pointless suffering and alienated from God. Here no one knows exactly what has happened or why it should have happened. In Waiting for Godot, neither the characters, nor the audience know who Godot is and why Gogo and Didi should spend their lives in waiting for him. The cataclysmic disaster which must have preceded the Endgame situation is never explained. In Happy Days Winnie's universe is inexplicable in rational and logical terms. The arbitrary forces at work in the absurd universe must never be questioned. Vladimir's interrogation of Pozzo on his blindness and Lucky's dumbness meets with an angry outburst, just as Hamm's question as to what has happened plunges Clov into inarticulate fury. When Mr. Shower/Cooker mused on Winnie's predicament, "What does it mean?..... What's it meant to mean?", his wife had exploded: "And you, she says, what's the idea of you, she says, what are you meant to mean?" This might as well be the author's retort to any one who questioned the "meaning" of his absurd universe which is devoid of purpose, meaning or reason.

While in the Cartesian world-view man's existence is defined by his reason, in Beckett's universe human existence is distinguished by suffering. Descartes' formula, "I think, therefore I am" is modified to "man suffers, therefore he is". This is seen in the exchange between Clov and Hamm on Nagg's mourning over the death of Nell.

Clov: He's crying
Hamm: Then he's living.

It is a bleak world where the spectacle of a man crying draws no other response but an affirmation of his existence. Human suffer-
ing is life-long and is viewed as a continual expiation for the sin of being born. Beckett approaches the Sophoclean tragic vision where not to have been born at all is to be blessed. Human distress is an essential part of Beckett's world-vision, which he has confirmed and defended in a recent interview. Beckett's plays are an expression of their author's anguish at the absurdity of the human predicament and the suffering involved in it.

The suffering of Beckett's characters, when it is not self-inflicted, is imposed on them by some arbitrary and possibly malignant power, symbolized by the goad in Act Without Words II, or the bell in Happy Days, or a light in Play. This universe is governed by an impersonal or hostile power. The notion of "a personal God quaquaquaqua with white beard" is as dead as a Dodo in the Beckettian universe. Many of his characters are painfully aware of the departure of God from their universe. Gogo and Didi, Hamm, Clov, Nagg and Winnie, all try to pray. The attempt reveals the yearning for communing with a transcendent reality. But their futile efforts suggest a breakdown in the communication between man and God. Prayer, after all, consists of man talking to God and listening to Him. But "divine aphasia" or speechlessness is an attribute of God in the Beckettian universe. Beckett's characters are alienated from God and are almost angry with God for not existing for them. Hamm's blasphemous "The bastard! He doesn't exist!" (EG - p.36) arises more from disappointment and frustration than from any fundamental atheistic inclinations.

A study of the Outsider theme in the twentieth century leads one invariably to Beckett who is deeply concerned with the phenomenon of human alienation. But in Beckett the mode of representing alienation is changed. In this Beckett is different from Camus, Sartre and even Ionesco.

Caligula and Creastes are Outsiders with a vision of absurdity and they try to impose their own vision on the rest of the world. They live within a social context. In them and in Berenger's case there is a dramatic contrast between the inauthentic living of the bourgeoisie in an absurd universe and the awareness of alienation in
the Outsider. But Beckett totally elides the social context. In Beckett, absurdity is the only context, for there is no contrast between conventional reality and absurdity.

In earlier instances, the Outsider figure had a past when he was an insider; though the present situation was alienation, there was a future possibility of transcending the situation through reintegration, as in Hamlet, or by the assertion of individual existence. In Beckett, only the alienated situation is defined and it is static, with no past or future which "can provide a sense of coherence and purpose".87

While the existential Outsider attempted to transcend absurdity through an assertion of self, identity and existence, Beckett's characters are found in a condition of total absurdity where even existence is not valued. While in Camus and Sartre existence becomes the ultimate value, in Beckett absurdity alone endures. In Camus and Sartre alienation is shown through the consciousness of one individual character who renounces essence in favour of existence. But in Beckett there is no individualised existence in his characters. Thus at first sight Beckett's stance seems to be anti-existential. But actually the shift of emphasis in drama from character to situation, which was seen by Sartre as a natural corollary of the existential motto of "existence before essence" is carried to its utmost limit in Beckett's plays. In Waiting for Godot, the theme of existence in an absurd universe comes alive in the situation of waiting which comprises the entire play. The characters are stripped of individuality and become images of the Outsider's condition. Thus in Beckett the dramatic situation eclipses character, carrying existential norms to an extreme. According to Eric Bentley Waiting for Godot is "The quintessence of 'existentialism' in the popular, and most relevant, sense of the term".89

In Waiting for Godot the static situation of purposeless waiting is used as a metaphor of man's alienated condition in an absurd universe. This image constitutes the total action of the play. The situation of waiting is resonant with both general human significance and archetypal implications. The universality of waiting as a common
human experience has been frequently commented upon. All of us are continually waiting for something or someone to turn up - a good job, better prospects, a happier life, a partner in life, a child, a friend. The list can be extended indefinitely because man's hopes and expectations are unlimited. Waiting is also an archetypal metaphor for human existence and experience. It evokes the waiting of a whole race for centuries looking forward to the coming of a saviour.

Estragon: And if he comes?
Vladimir: We'll be saved.

But in the absurd universe where God is dead, no one comes to "save" the Outsider from the meaninglessness of human existence, of which he is aware. Waiting is a particularly meaningful symbol in Christianity which Beckett refers to as the "Mythology" used by him. The annual liturgical season of advent as a period of waiting for the birth of Christ, considering life on earth as a preparation and waiting for eternal life ushered in by death, the idea of waiting for the second coming of Christ, for the Millennium and the New Jerusalem, the parable of the vigilant servant waiting for the unannounced return of the master, are some of the Christian connotations compressed in the image of waiting. But in the absurd universe all these Christian contexts are emptied of meaning. Waiting is no longer the shared experience of a community with a common belief, an experience which invested both human existence and individual life with meaning. This is not possible when man is alienated at the social, interpersonal, religious and existential levels. Instead, waiting becomes a symbol of futile human existence in a twentieth-century waste-land. Hugh Kenner regards the title Waiting for Godot as the emblem of the age. The purposelessness of the waiting, if pondered over exclusively by the existentially aware Outsider, would drive him to despair and suicide. Hence he adopts the ruse of indulging in various activities for the sole purpose of passing the time while waiting. Both Vladimir and Estragon keep up a self-conscious commentary on the various diversions resorted to by them to fill up the time of waiting. The essential self's awareness of meaninglessness and the performing self's attempts to keep absurdity at bay are kept in continual...
Vladimir and Estragon are not just two individuals waiting for a third one's arrival. By their waiting, they define absurd man as Man-in-waiting. Their very existence is co-extensive with their waiting so that they themselves are their waiting. Waiting, the archetypal image, is itself the action of the play. Thus, in waiting, character, dramatic action and image all overlap. Beckett deals not so much with individual Outsiders as with the dramatisation of the condition of being Outsiders. In Beckett, the character disappears and the situation of alienation is itself acted out. In Beckett the Outsider is not so much a human individual as an archetypal idea. Vladimir and Estragon are images of the state of being Outsiders and are not meant to be taken as individualised Outsiders. Thus in Beckett's drama a new dimension is added to the development of the Outsider theme in drama.

Vladimir and Estragon are caricatures without individual consciousness or individual memory. The art of caricature lies in highlighting one characteristic alone, all other traits being underplayed or ignored. Beckett uses a similar technique. He focuses on one trait, the trait of being an Outsider. In art, it is when man loses faith in the human condition that characters become caricatures and abstractions. According to Ortega y Gasset

In the evolution of prehistoric art we observe that artistic sensibility begins with seeking the living form and then drops it, as though affrighted and nauseated and resorts to abstract signs, the last residues of cosmic and animal forms.93

The disappearance of the human figure from modern art and its replacement by abstractions reveals a general universal apprehension of absurdity. In Beckett, characters are drained of human consciousness. The clownish antics of the Outsider operate as a substitute for the consciousness of an alienated individual. The dramatic portrayal of the condition of alienation substitutes the alienated figure of the Outsider. What Beckett dramatises is not the anguish of an individual but of a whole society and age. Waiting for Godot dramatises a collective experience, the consciousness of the century.
In Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, as also in his later plays *Endgame*, *Krapp's Last Tape* and *Happy Days*, the social context is almost completely obliterated. The only situation which is presented is the Outsider's world. In almost all the other plays dealt with so far the Outsider is seen as a member of society and then the play works out his growing isolation. But in Beckett the established social order is dead or dying. Whatever is left of society, exists off-stage in *Waiting for Godot* and is referred to by the Outsiders as "they". Estragon is haunted by a paranoid fear of being chased and surrounded by "them" (pp. 73-74). Thus the Outsiders, Vladimir and Estragon, are outcasts from a society which exists as a vague threat and assumes gigantic proportions when one loses one's head (p. 74). It is hostile, aggressive and violent and beats up the Outsider when he strays into its territory.

In Beckett, the society which excludes the Outsiders is itself banished from the stage. By a process of ironic reversal, society becomes the literal Outsider, while the absurdist Outsiders are the ones who exist in the absurd universe. In *Waiting for Godot* two specimens from the exiled society appear on stage. Pozzo and Lucky are not really individuals but images of the collective situation of society. Pozzo's command to Lucky to dance and think symbolizes the degradation of fine arts, poetry and philosophy. These have become diversions, performed to order to entertain jaded minds. The commercial control of art and scholarship is suggested here.

Cruelty, oppression and exploitation mark the tied-relationship between Pozzo and Lucky. Juxtaposed with this ruthless, self-seeking of bourgeois society, the concern, camaraderie and untied relationship between the two Outsiders become positive values. Vladimir and Estragon together form a community of Outsiders. They make a stand against both the society which excludes them and the absurd universe which mocks them. Theirs is a relationship of mutual dependence. Estragon needs Vladimir to protect him, to listen to his nightmares, to calm down his fears and anxieties and to provide him with food in the form of carrots and turnips. It is a physical and emotional need. Vladimir needs Estragon's presence to chase away his loneliness and
to affirm his existence. Their relationship is marked by moments of concern and compassion as when Vladimir gives the last carrot to Estragon, or "tenderly" offers to carry him if he is disabled, or covers the sleeping Estragon with his own coat or soothes him down after a nightmare with an almost maternal care. But the relationship is not sentimentalised. There is a continual process of deflation and debunking as when after an affectionate embrace, Estragon recoils with "You stink of garlic" (p.17). There are also moments of antagonism, irritation, impatience and Estragon's frequent threats of separation.

H.AiSmith finds "two fundamental states of consciousness" being embodied in these two pairs. He says,

Pozzo-Lucky is incarcerated in the world of time, while Estragon-Vladimir is committed, however forlornly, to the timeless.94 Society believes in progress and is always on the move though it achieves nothing. The absurdity of the bourgeois ethic of progress in an absurd universe is brought out in Pozzo's cry, "On, on". This is a contrast to the poignant stage-direction concerning the Outsiders at the end of both the acts: "They do not move". Theirs is a static situation. Remaining rooted in the waste land is all that they can do and this is their way of saying No to Nothingness. Raymond Williams points out that neither way leads out of the human predicament. "But the way chosen affects the human beings who choose it".95

While in Ionesco's Rhinoceros, the Outsider is at first seen in the midst of society and then the play works out his growing isolation in Beckett, society is banished off-stage from the beginning. Two generic representatives of society are then brought in, to highlight by contrast the Outsider's values and responses in life. The social alienation of the Outsiders is indicated by a method of contrasts between two kinds of relationship and not by the enactment of a progressive isolation. Thus the introduction of Pozzo and Lucky is a structural device to demonstrate the Outsider's alienation from the objectives and behavioural patterns of bourgeois society.

The play also dramatizes the Outsider's alienation from the human predicament. The play opens with Estragon's exclamation,
"Nothing to be done." (p.9). As spoken by Estragon it is an innocuous statement applied to his boot. But it is repeated thrice again (p.11-twice; p.21) and as the play proceeds, its deceptive simplicity is seen to hide profound depths of meaning. It describes the play-universe where nothing can be done since all activity is futile and meaningless. It sums up the play's action where nothing is finally accomplished. It expresses the Outsider's alienation from the human predicament itself, which seems to be singularly purposeless. Yet Vladimir's first response to this statement brings out the human spirit which continues to grapple with existence and refuses to give up the struggle.

Vladimir: I'm beginning to come round to that opinion. All my life I've tried to put it from me, saying, Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven't yet tried everything. And I resumed the struggle. (p.9)

Vladimir is here seen as an Outsider who is lucidly aware of the void at the centre of human existence and who yet says No to Nothingness. Estragon and Vladimir embody two complementary human responses to the absurdity of existence. Together they embody a composite image of the Outsider. Estragon repeatedly voices the impulse towards suicide as a means of putting an end to an absurd existence (pp.17,53,93). Vladimir expresses the spirit of human resilience even after being crushed by the weight of existence.

The absurdity and meaninglessness of the human predicament is expressed in this play in the situation of waiting for a Mr. Godot who never appears. The Outsider's awareness of his condition, his existential despair and yet his affirmation of the condition and refusal to escape from it are all poignantly expressed in a five-line exchange between Vladimir and Estragon, which is repeated verbatim five times (pp.14,68,71,78,84) and in variations thrice (pp.63,80,92).

Estragon: Let's go.
Vladimir: We can't.
Estragon: Why not?
Vladimir: We're waiting for Godot.
Estragon: Ah.

Even the clowning acts of Estragon and Vladimir, such as the search for the irritant in Estragon's shoe or the flea in Vladimir's hat may be invested with existential significance. The feeling of uneasiness, of the presence of an irksome foreign body in boot or hat is an
image of the Outsider's own existence in the universe as an alien presence. Just as there is no specific and identifiable reason for the uneasiness in boot and hat, no definite external cause can be assigned to existential anguish. But in the absurd universe even existential anguish is debunked and equated with the uneasiness caused by some extraneous object in boot or hat which is not really there. Just as they wait for a Godot who does not come, they look for a flea which is not there.

In this absurd universe laughter is taboo (p.19) because one has given up one's rights and happiness is an illusion with which one deceives oneself.

Vladimir: Say you are, even if it's not true
Estragon: What am I to say?
Vladimir: Say, I am happy.
Estragon: I am happy.
Vladimir: So am I.
Estragon: So am I.
Vladimir: We are happy.
Estragon: We are happy. (silence). What do we do now that we are happy?
Vladimir: Wait for Godot (Estragon groans). (p.60)

Whatever they may do or say, finally the activity or the conversation reaches a dead-end in Vladimir's "We're waiting for Godot" followed by Estragon's despairing groan "Ah!" conveying hopelessness, helplessness, and the realization of having reached an impasse. According to Vladimir, waiting for Godot is the only certainty in the chaos of their existence.

What are we doing here, that is the question. And we are blessed in this, that we happen to know the answer. Yes, in this immense confusion one thing alone is clear. We are waiting for Godot to come—--. (p.80)

But this glib assurance of Vladimir, when juxtaposed with the eternally recurrent non-arrival of Godot, becomes pathetically comic, indeed grotesque. Thus in Waiting for Godot Vladimir and Estragon represent the condition of being an Outsider in a purposeless, absurd universe.

Besides social and existential alienation, this condition also includes alienation from God and religion in the traditional sense. The bible and Christian doctrine are dead and forgotten in this world.
According to Doherty the very setting — the bare tree with a nearby mound suggestive of an empty cross and closed tomb — bespeaks a departed, absent, or simply dead, unresurrected Christ. Soon after the beginning of the play, in the midst of trivialities and clownish action with Gogo's boots and Didi's hat, something profound erupts. With no prior preparation at all Vladimir breaks out with the somber reflection,

One of the Thieves was saved (Pause)
It's a reasonable percentage. (p.11)

Questioned about the theme of the play, Beckett had referred to a passage from St. Augustine, commenting on St. Luke's account of the crucifixion.

Do not despair: One of the thieves was saved.
Do not presume: One of the thieves was damned.

Salvation would therefore appear to be the play's theme, but not in the traditional Christian sense, which is only parodied. The doctrines of repentance and the forgiveness of sins through the passion and death of Christ as Saviour, which are central to Christianity, have absolutely no meaning for Vladimir and Estragon.

Vladimir: Suppose we repented.
Estragon: Repented what?
Vladimir: Oh... (He reflects). We wouldn't have to go into the details.
Estragon: Our being born? (p.11)

The last sentiment goes back beyond Christianity to Job and Sophocles. Being born is the original sin which must be repented by these Outsiders, estranged from not only a particular religion and its doctrines but from existence itself. The Bible means absolutely nothing to them. Estragon's only memory of it is of the maps of the Holy Land and the "very pretty" pale blue colour of the Dead Sea. The narrative of Christ's passion and death, the most sacred mystery of Christianity is bandied between the two tramps as just another means of passing the time. Vladimir offers to tell the story to Estragon because "It'll pass the time" (p.12). When Vladimir begins the narrative and refers to "our Saviour" Estragon comprehensively asks, "our what?" as though he had never heard that word or been used to that idea before. The notion of a "Saviour" is as strange and unintelligible to Estragon as repentance or salvation. As far as he
is concerned, these are merely empty, meaningless words in the
exhausted theological vocabulary of an extinguished religion.
Vladimir who tells the story claiming to be better informed than
Estragon has quite forgotten the word which is opposite of "saved".
The forgetting of the word 'damned' by Vladimir is a sign that to him
as to Estragon 'damnation' as an abstract concept does not exist at
all. When Vladimir says that one of the two thieves was saved,
Estragon asks, "Saved from what?" bringing out the total irrelevance
of Christian ideas of salvation and damnation to the Outsiders living
in an absurd universe. Vladimir's obsession with the two thieves
highlights both the uncertainty of salvation ("how is it that of the
four evangelists only one speaks of a thief being saved?" p.21) and
the element of caprice involved in saving some but not others for
reasons unknown. This pattern of one being favoured but not the
other is also seen in the case of the Boy minding goats and his
brother - the goat-herd is not beaten by Mr.Godot while the shepherd
is. Fantastic as it sounds, the pattern is even extended to
Estragon's feet. Beckett is reported to have told Hobson in 1956,
One of Estragon's feet is blessed, the other is damned; the boot
won't go on the foot that is damned, it will go on the foot that
is not.98
Towards the end of act I Estragon leaves behind his troublesome boots
for another who will come after him. He considers it a magnanimous
sacrifice and compares himself to Christ immediately after that.
Perhaps the implication is that in an absurd universe, Christ's
supreme sacrifice would be about as pointless and ludicrous as
leaving behind an old, tight pair of shoes for a future user, as if
that were a significant sacrifice too. Estragon's ridiculous
comparison of himself to Christ is more a tragi-comic self-delusion
than a sacrilegious mockery.

Estragon: Another will come, just as...as...as me, but with
smaller feet, and they'll make him happy.
Vladimir: But you can't go barefoot!
Estragon: Christ did.
Vladimir: Christ! What's Christ got to do with it? You're not
going to compare yourself to Christ!
Estragon: All my life I've compared myself to him. (p.52)
These overt comparisons with Christ go underground in Act II where
they appear only as veiled allusions. Such, for example, is the
following exchange between Vladimir and Estragon:

Estragon: The best thing would be to kill me, like the other.
Vladimir: What other? (Pause) What other?
Estragon: Like billions of others.
Vladimir: (Sententious). To every man his little cross. (He
sighs). Till he dies. (Afterthought). And is
forgotten. (p.62)

In the first two lines, Christ's name hangs heavily in the air but
remains unspoken. In the next two lines Christ's sacrifice is
belittled again and robbed of all significance. He is just one of
billions of others who were killed. There is no special salvific
meaning attached to his death. In this waste land Christ is not
resurrected and triumphant, but dead, buried and forgotten, like any
other little man with his petty daily cross. R.N.Coe's comment on
the representation of Christ in Beckett's work is relevant here:

Christ is seen always not as the glorious redeemer, but as the
suffering Jesus, wondering like Cain, what he has done to deserve
his fate. He is on our side; he too has been misled and deceived.
Salvation is a fairy-tale, the more cruel because the more
attractive and seductive to our weary souls.99

When Estragon "does the tree" in Act II there is an attempt to
establish contact with God again but the outcome is dubious.
Beckett100 had told Alan Schneider that the tree is a yoga position
used as a prayerful invocatory stance. So perhaps the very position
suggests God and prayer.

Estragon: Do you think God sees me?
Vladimir: You must close your eyes.
Estragon closes his eyes, staggers worse.
Estragon: (Stopping, brandishing his fists, at the top of his
voice). God have pity on me! (pp.76-77)

Besides the yoga allusion, there is also the subterranean reference
to Christ on the tree of the cross and His desolate cry, "My God why
hast thou forsaken me?" The tree posture with out-stretched arms
suggests this. This would link up with Estragon's earlier identi-
fication of himself with Christ. "Do you think God sees me?" is an
existential question. It may be another form of asking, do I exist,
for man exists, when God perceives him. Esse est percipi. The play
may be considered as a realization of Nietzsche's mad-man's vision of
a world anguished by the thought 'God is dead'. Ruby Cohn, following
a hint of V.A.Kolve, suggests that the play has the atmosphere of
Holy Saturday and that Gogo and Didi wait out "a life of Holy Saturdays". Holy Saturday lying between Christ's death and resurrection was marked by fear, doubt and loss of faith among the scattered disciples and by despair which drove Judas to suicide by hanging. A similar atmosphere of terror, anxiety, unbelief and depression overhangs the play also but here there is no Easter or triumphant resurrection to follow. According to R.N. Coe, "Pascal's title 'Misere de l'Homme sans Dieu' would cover everything that Beckett has written". To a Believer this play works out the misery of man without God and is therefore a negative indication of man's indispensable need for God. But Beckett claims that he merely used the framework of Christianity which was the only "mythology" he was familiar with. However it is undeniable that his characters, though estranged from God and religion are still "haunted and tortured by the idea of God. Do what they will they cannot escape it". Towards the end of the play, as Vladimir watches the sleeping Estragon, he yearns for an assurance that he too is being watched. He hopes that there is a transcendent being, someone by whom he is perceived, this perception being an affirmation of Vladimir's existence. But there is the agonizing possibility that from the point of view of this aerial watcher, Vladimir is also immersed in a sleep of unawareness. "At me too someone is looking, of me too someone is saying, he is sleeping, he knows nothing, let him sleep on" (p.91). This speech of Vladimir reveals alienation at various levels. It begins with a strong feeling of self-estrangement, as he wonders if he is awake and if his existence is real or illusory. "Was I sleeping, while the others suffered? Am I sleeping now? Tomorrow, when I wake, or think I do, what shall I say of today? (p.90)

Then comes evidence of a detached sensibility towards interpersonal relationships. He views his relationship with Estragon objectively, from outside. He looks at sleeping Estragon with compassionate irony. He'll know nothing. He'll tell me about the blows he received and I'll give him a carrot. (p.90)

This is followed by an expression of existential anguish, collapsing birth and death together considering the interim existence as one of suffering where habit deadens the pain. "Between birth and death
there is absurdity," said Simone de Beauvoir. Vladimir telescopes both birth and death in a single image conveying the absurdity of existence. He makes a grotesque combination of the grave and the birth-process and associates the grave-digger with the instrument of midwifery, the forceps.

Astride of a grave and a difficult birth. Down in the hole, lingeringly, the grave-digger puts on the forceps. (pp.90-91) Human existence is just so much time for growing old and infirm, a preparation for the grave. The atmosphere is rife with cries of human distress, but soon habit makes man inviolable by numbing his sensibility so that he becomes indifferent to his environment. "We have time to grow old. The air is full of our cries. But habit is a great deadener" (p.91). Last of all comes the nostalgic longing for a transcendent "someone" whose perception of him will affirm his own existence. This speech reveals also an awareness of his own attempt to circumvent absurdity by waiting for Godot. The hopelessness of his effort overwhelms him and he almost gives up the struggle. As in Berenger there is a temptation to abandon a hopeless cause, and an immediate recantation of the moment of weakness. "I can't go on! (Pause) What have I said?" (p.91). The speech is almost tragic in its import. But the mode of delivery makes it comic-grotesque, which is in keeping with the play's anti-heroic structure.

In representing the condition of the Outsider, Vladimir and Estragon dramatise the tactics by which existential anguish is sought to be drowned in incessant activity and chatter. While waiting for Godot, they act out several turns to keep themselves occupied. Very often they become the actors, audience and critics of their own performance as in the following exchange which reveals extreme self-alienation.

Vladimir: Charming evening we're having.
Estragon: Unforgettable.
Vladimir: And it's not over.
Estragon: Apparently not.
Vladimir: It's only beginning.
Estragon: It's awful.
Vladimir: Worse than the pantomime.
Estragon: The circus.
Vladimir: The music-hall.
Estragon: The circus. (pp.34-35)
Everything that happens to them and everything that they do, is viewed by them from the outside and commented upon as a bit of role-play meant to pass the time or rather to fill up the time allotted for performance. Thus, after the first Pozzo-Lucky interlude, Vladimir's comment is "That passed the time" (p.48). When Pozzo and Lucky reappear for a shorter interval in Act II Vladimir considers their arrival primarily as a wonderful opportunity to pass the time and save them from their boredom. Vladimir and Estragon are willing to try anything if it could help them to pass the time - putting on boots and hats and removing them, doing exercises, hopping from one foot to another and abusing each other. Music-hall comic acts like putting on and removing boots to the accompaniment of farcical gestures and the business with hats demonstrating the permutations and combinations possible with three hats and two heads, further accentuate their role as performers, especially clowns. Estragon is most often the commentator, identifying each new ruse for passing the time making it clear that it has no intrinsic meaning in itself but merely serves the purpose of passing the time.

That's the idea, let's make a little conversation. (p.48)
That's the idea, let's contradict each other. (p.64)
That's the idea, let's ask each other questions. (p.64)

Thus everything that they do is made to appear as part of their role of waiting. While they wait, the time of waiting has to be filled in with activity, talk and diversions. Even when they hurl angry abuse at each other, it is suggested that this too is mere play-acting. "That's the idea, let's abuse each other" (p.75) says Estragon. What began as a show of temper and angry name-calling is soon diverted into a mechanical exercise in invective, indulged in for the sole purpose of passing the time. We are thus frequently reminded that Vladimir and Estragon are not mimetic representations of real individuals, but are mainly images of the Outsider's condition of alienation. Their continual role-play and flitting from one dramatic scene to another seems to suggest that they have no identity of their own. They are merely players and their act is not the seven ages of man played in logical or chronological sequence. Their acting is an impromptu performance which may be entitled
"waiting for Godot; or the exagmination of the Outsider's condition of total alienation". For Vladimir-Estragon, each day is a programme of improvisations to be enacted for a certain number of hours during which a whole repertory of items are gone through. Every minute is filled up with gags, slapstick clowning, spots of dialogue, revue sketches and all the regular stock-in-trade of a comedian of the music-hall and the silent film. Hence reaching the end of a day is quite an achievement for Vladimir. He says,

it is not for nothing I have lived through this long day and I can assure you it is very near the end of its repertory. (p.86)

Beckett's plays are like circus performances and the characters are clownish performers who go through their daily repertoire on stage. The various activities in which they indulge are items on a programme and their aim is to somehow fill up the time allotted for the performance. Waiting for Godot, Endgame, Krapp's Last Tape and Happy Days are almost entirely made up of the diversions by which the characters keep themselves occupied. It is hinted that human existence is made up of such intrinsically meaningless activities which finally amount to a life-time just as individual millet grains when accumulated together constitute a heap. This tragic theme is presented grotesquely through clownish antics in order to discourage sentimentality and pathos.

Thus in Beckett's drama we discover that the earlier heroic Outsider who had been intensely and tragically aware of his alienation is recast in the role of a performing clown. His antics reveal an alienated consciousness which mocks the mocking universe. This disappearance of the hero is a phenomenon characteristic of the modern age. The homogeneity of industrialization leads to the advent of the faceless individual, reduced to a number or an initial in a collective society. As Corrigan observes, "It would seem that a collective society not only does not need heroes, but it actually suppresses or perverts our need of them". The same is true of modern art also. There is a "tendency to dehumanize art". Ortega Y.Gasset notes that while the earlier art with a human accent was weighty and serious, modern art is waggish running through "the whole gamut from open clownery to a slight ironical twinkle". In the absurd
universe of modern drama heroism cannot be sustained because all heroic motives and gestures are reduced to meaninglessness and become comic. In such a universe, motley's the only wear for the sane individual who is aware of his own absurdity and that of existence and the universe. The heroic Outsider of an earlier age is replaced by the Foolish Outsider in modern drama. Slightly modifying Jan Kott's contrast between the tragedy of traditional theatre and the grotesque drama of modern theatre one might say that tragedy is the theatre of heroes, grotesque is the theatre of clowns. 110 According to Nehama Aschkenasy, the introduction of the clownish protagonist indicates "the modern writer's disillusionment with the humanism of Western civilisation". Yet at the same time, the mask of folly is also used "as a device that helps the modern protagonist retain his humanity in the midst of a dehumanized world." 111 Further, Beckett's clowns use the comic absurd, to fight the absurdity of existence itself. The absurd gesture, both linguistic and dramatic, is used to hurl defiance at the absurd universe. For as H.A. Smith points out, "One way of not being defeated by the cosmic irony is to laugh at it". 112

Beckett's use of the clownish Outsider as his protagonist derives from a hoary philosophical tradition associated with Socrates and Erasmus which regards self-assumed folly as a sign of wisdom. D.D. Raphael differentiates tragic irony from Socratic irony as follows:

Tragic irony arises from the self-deceit of the protagonist who thinks he is wise while others know he is not. Socratic irony arises from the self-knowledge of the protagonist who knows he is wiser than others in being aware of his ignorance. 113

Beckett's presentation of the clownish Outsider is therefore paradoxical. His folly is wisdom, his clownish antics arise from existential anguish and even his banalities like "Nothing to be done" are invested with profundity. It is clear that he wears not motley in his brain. According to Anouilh, Waiting for Godot was the Pensees acted out by circus clowns. 114 Beckett fuses the philosophical and theatrical elements in the tradition of folly and clowning, for in Jan Kott's words, "Buffoonery is not only a philosophy it is also a kind of theatre". 115
It is obvious that when the Outsider is a clown, tragedy in the heroic sense is an impossibility. The existential Outsider could still rise to tragic dimensions by asserting his individual existence. He could still be a hero because he was viewed in the social context and could tower above the herd of insiders. The absurd protagonist in Beckett is completely divorced from society and keeps himself occupied in solitude by clowning. His is no longer a stance of heroic defiance but of grotesque parody. This difference in the conception of the Outsider affects the dramatic form also. A play which has an absurd protagonist can never be a tragedy. If at all it has tragic elements in it, it can only be a parody. Beckett's plays Waiting for Godot and Endgame are best described as anti-tragedies or mock-tragedies. The theme and rhetoric of tragedy are presented in burlesque form. For example in Waiting for Godot, Estragon is often tempted to commit suicide as an escape from the absurdity and despair of his existence. But this temptation is not presented with tragic poignancy as in Hamlet's pondering over death and "self-slaughter". Instead it is debunked and made grotesque by the fall of trousers and the snapping of the trouser-string when they test its strength as a rope for hanging themselves. Suicide in an absurd universe can no longer be a tragic or heroic or defiant gesture; it can only be a clownish antic with perhaps a pathetic undertone at best. Similarly Vladimir's last speech with its tragic possibilities becomes a travesty in its manner of delivery. It is spoken to an audience of one and that too a sleeping partner. The deliberate undercutting of tragic rhetoric is seen in Hamm's opening speech in Endgame. Evoking past tragic figures like Oedipus, Phedre and Lear he indulges in self-commiseration. But the interspersed yawns and bored tone completely drain away the tragic intensity and replace it with bathos. He is merely playing at being a hero. "Can there be misery - (he yawns) - loftier than mine?" (EG-p.12). Like Bottom, he wants to be a versatile actor, a one-man theatre, where he plays the tragic hero and the clown, both Lear and his fool. In Beckett's plays, there is genuine suffering of tragic potential, but the Outsider's absurd vision and his role as a clownish performer dislocate and distort the tragic form and convert it to a parody.
Towards the end of the play Hamm indulges in self-pitying self-dramatisation rather similar to Richard II. But while Richard II dramatised himself and played a tragic role without realising it, Hamm affects it consciously and thus parodies the tragic vision.

Hamm: Did any one ever have pity on me?
Clov: What? (Pause) Is it me you're referring to?
Hamm: (angrily) An aside, ape! Did you never hear an aside before? (Pause) I'm warming up for my last soliloquy. (EG-p.4)

Clov here momentarily forgets his role as supporting actor to the lead-role, when he responds to an aside, which other characters on stage are never supposed to hear, even though the entire audience down to the last row hears it. Here Beckett is not merely parodying great tragedies of a bygone era which revelled in asides and soliloquies however unnatural they might seem. He ridicules the very basic conventions and assumptions on which drama rests.

According to Dietrich Klaus Burow the element of parody in Beckett's plays actually links up with the past tradition and imposes a meaningful pattern on the chaos of the modern world. Instead of invalidating tragedy, as might be expected, the parody rejects contemporary reality and indicts the audience for having betrayed the ideals expressed in tragedy. Burow concludes,

Ultimately, these plays are designed to exhort the audience to embrace again the tragic vision of man, of which their present life is nothing but a ludicrous parody.117

This anti-heroic, anti-tragic tendency in structuring the play, which arises from the conception of the Outsider protagonist as the clown-hero of a post-war absurd universe, is part of a broader anti-theatre movement. Frederick Lumley considers the anti-theatre drift in modern drama as an indication of an "interregnum stage" in culture, when the old is rejected before the new is ready. Beckett's attempt to write for the theatre by denying the accepted basic premises of theatre like action, conflict, plot progression, character development, interaction and communication between characters, stage accessories and decor is indeed a virtuoso performance.

With the disappearance of real characters and psychological motivation the possibility of dramatic conflict is destroyed. But in traditional theatre the essence of drama is conflict, both internal
within the hero and external between the protagonist and the others. So in eschewing character, plot and conflict, Beckett's drama comes close to being anti-drama. It is "a drama of inaction" meant to convey that "nothing really happens in human life".\textsuperscript{119} Even the Outsider's conflict with the cosmos which had enlivened \textit{Caligula} is lacking here. The absurd Outsiders can no longer fight the universe though they can still mock at it with their clowning.

Francis Doherty points out that Beckett's theatrical work "starts by calling into question the accepted idea of a play and then follows the path of diminution".\textsuperscript{120} Ultimately this anti-theatrical bias may perhaps be traced to the trend in modern art where the artist invites us "to look at a piece of art that is a joke and that essentially makes fun of itself".\textsuperscript{121} According to Jose Ortega Y. Gasset, "the new art ridicules art itself".\textsuperscript{122} Beckett's plays which are drama ridiculing drama itself could be considered a particular manifestation of this general characteristic of modern art.

In Beckett's anti-theatre, the first traditional dramatic requirement to be thrown over-board is plot in the Aristotelian sense. Drama is no longer the imitation of an action but the unfolding of a static situation which is an image of the Outsider's alienation.\textsuperscript{123} The Outsider's conviction that all action is futile in an absurd universe accounts for the lack of a progressive action. Instead of action, the Outsider's condition of alienation is presented and probed in depth. Since the Outsider's condition is fragmented, the dramatic presentation of it also involves the dislocation of the traditional dramatic elements. The fragmented consciousness of the Outsider necessitates repudiation of a meaningful and connected plot. Earlier serious drama, particularly tragedy, demonstrated belief in the causal relationship of events in drama. Such a belief was based on a more general conviction regarding the causal links connecting everything in nature and life. But in the modern existential-absurdist vision of life there is no place for causality. Life is believed to be purposeless and meaningless; events are believed to be haphazard and unconnected. Therefore in modern drama plot is mimetic of modern life and eschews causality.
In Beckett's plays it is not any particular individual who is the Outsider, but Man himself is the Outsider. The characters are stripped of individuality and become images of the Outsider's condition. The disappearance of the Outsider as an individual character finds its structural equivalent in the disappearance of the plot and progressive action. The replacement of individual Outsider figures by icons representing Man's alienation is paralleled in the dramatic structure by the replacement of plot by the unfolding of an image.

The structure of Waiting for Godot is symmetrical or rather asymmetrical. There are repetitions but almost always these are accompanied by a slight difference. The use of repetitions with modification imposes an almost musical structure on the play. Just as in music certain phrases, movements and sequences recur with variations and in different keys, in the play too certain significant phrases like "Nothing to be done" are repeated in different contexts and certain gestures are re-enacted with a difference. Renouncing the traditional linear structure, the theatre of the absurd often adopts a circular structure, ending as it begins. Beckett's plays however are not exactly circular but rather have a spiral movement. Though apparently we return to the same point, actually it is a point in the next coil of the spiral, going a little deeper, probing more into the situation. The play deals with some intermediate coils in a spiral whose beginning and end (if such can be imagined) lie completely outside the play's range. We only know that there were other coils before with corresponding points of comparison and there will be more extending beyond the play. The two acts which represent two days contain similar activities and enact the monotony and sameness of life. Estragon's nightmares, his beating by the insiders, his wish to leave Vladimir, his return, their reconciliatory embrace, the episode of Pozzo and Lucky, the talk of hanging, the Boy's arrival with Godot's message are all repeated on both days with the hint that these events had happened before and will happen again.

In Beckett's plays the repetitions of phrases, snatches of dialogue and gestures arise from the absurd predicament of the
The repetition of "nothing to be done" in various contexts and the short exchange between Vladimir and Estragon, beginning with Estragon's "Let's go" and ending with his despairing groan "Ah" convey the existential anguish of the Outsider in an ever deepening gloomy mood. Vladimir's song at the beginning of Act II and his speech at the end ("He'll tell me about the blows he received and I'll give him a carrot" - p. 90) reveal a keen and yet detached awareness of the endless repetitions which constitute human existence in an absurd universe. The use of repetition as both theme and technique by Beckett may thus be related to the Outsider's consciousness of repetitiveness as a sign of absurdity.

The absurd Outsider's self-conscious role as performer finds a structural equivalent in anti-illusionistic devices which make the audience become aware of the play as a play. The Outsider's deliberate reference to his role as a performer leads directly to the audience's awareness of the play as a play. In other words, the self-alienation of the absurd Outsider is structurally expressed in "the alienation effect". This is different from Brecht's use of the alienation effect, where dramatic illusion was destroyed in order to annihilate audience-identification with characters and arouse detached cerebration on what is staged. In Beckett, the anti-illusionistic form arises from and is an expression of the Outsider's alienation. Both in Brecht and Beckett the characters are not conceived as real individuals. But the Brechtian purpose is different from Beckett's. In Brecht the audience's interest is shifted from individual consciousness to the social situation. Brecht destroys dramatic illusion to make the audience contemplate the social evils presented in the play. But in Beckett there is no social concern. Beckett's characters are used as convenient tools for presenting the absurdity of existence through various acts which are intrinsically meaningless.

In Waiting For Godot, Vladimir and Estragon are constantly aware of playing at many things just as a means of passing the time. Their detached consciousness of their role and comments on it remind the audience that they are at a play. The impression conveyed is
that of an impromptu performance where the actors know the scenario in a very broad sense. They have to wait for the duration of time allotted for the play and somehow or other they must fill up that time-gap with dialogue and activities. When Vladimir and Estragon comment on their evening's performance, they draw the audience also into the stage situation of waiting, and become the spokesmen of the audience, thus disarming criticism.

Vladimir: Charming evening we're having.
Estragon: Unforgettable.
Vladimir: And it's not over.
Estragon: Apparently not.
Vladimir: It's only beginning.
Estragon: It's awful.
Vladimir: Worse than the pantomine.
Estragon: The circus.
Vladimir: The music-hall.
Estragon: The circus. (pp.34-35)

The effect achieved here is not Brechtian detachment but on the contrary, audience-involvement in the absurd situation on stage. Dramatic illusion is further broken by referring to the audience-experience in the theatre, down to the point of visiting the toilet, telling a companion to keep the seat. As Vladimir rushes out to ease his bladder Estragon calls out aloud, "End of the corridor on the left" and Vladimir replies in the tone of a theatre-goer, "Keep my seat". In a mood of puckish Irish humour Beckett sometimes reverses the traditional theatre-situation and makes his actor survey the audience and comment on it tongue-in-cheek.

Vladimir: (He pushes Estragon towards auditorium. Estragon recoils in horror.) You won't? (He contemplates auditorium) Well, I can understand that. (p.74)

Clov: (He gets down, picks up the telescope, turning on auditorium) I see.... a multitude..... in transports... of joy. (BG-p.25)

Commenting on the audience involvement in Beckett's theatre, John Fletcher says,

The absurd lies not only in the words spoken, it haunts the stage and crosses the footlights into the auditorium. Beckett's theatre partakes of the cruelty and the ridiculousness of a life devoid of meaning. It reflects the world: theatrum mundi in our time. Man is an actor in the cosmic farce!124
In Beckett the anti-illusionistic method is used to focus the audience's attention on the absurdity of the human predicament. The enactment of alienation is not only on the stage where it is in the most obvious form taken by caricature, the area of enactment is projected on to the audience also.

While the Outsiders in *Waiting for Godot* play as a means of passing the time while waiting, in *Endgame* play becomes an end in itself. In both, the characters' awareness of and comments on their role as performers, shatter the dramatic illusion. Hamm speaks of his actor's role in specific theatrical terms. He introduces every turn of the coil in the spiral structure of the play with a self-conscious "Me to play" (*EG*-pp. 12, 51). He appropriates to himself Prospero's concluding remark as producer of a play within the play, "our revels now are ended". Hamm describes everything in theatrical terms, thus indicating his alienation from reality and from his essential self. These theatrical references in turn remind the audience that they are watching a play and destroy any possibility of dramatic illusion. Hamm views his own speeches as asides and soliloquies. He is so dissociated from reality as to view everything only in theatrical terms, at one remove from reality. For example, when Clov espies something strange on earth through the telescope, Hamm's response is, "More complications! Not an underplot, I trust" (*EG*-p. 49). Thus the alienated sensibility of the absurd protagonist gives rise to the anti-illusionary method employed. This method extends the stage-situation into the auditorium and involves the audience also in the human predicament portrayed on stage.

In translating the absurd protagonist's condition into action and dialogue Beckett used devices taken from the existing forms of popular entertainment. Circus, music-hall and mime techniques have been identified in Beckett's works. In Beckett's plays, these time-honoured devices which provoke laughter are also invested with metaphysical significance. For example, Estragon's struggle with his boots is not merely a hilarious gag but has been related by Beckett himself to the salvation theme which tortures the Outsider. So also the comic mime of the tree has been linked by Beckett to the yoga
position of prayer. This brings out the absurd protagonist's alienation from God and his inability to communicate with God in prayer. The numerous falls of the characters indicate the hostility of the universe trying to reduce the Outsider to a position of supine submission. Estragon's trouser-fall symbolizes the humiliation of man when he submits to the absurdity of existence and is tempted to give up the struggle. The meaningless chatter indulged in by the Outsiders to pass the time is the linguistic parallel of the total meaninglessness of existence as perceived by the Outsider as absurd protagonist. However, these deeper meanings conveyed by these comic techniques do not make them less funny. Hilarious laughter accompanies these enactments of the absurd protagonist's alienation and the laughter itself becomes a therapy for existential anguish.

The setting and stage-decor of Beckett's plays also reveal the impact of the alienation theme of the absurd Outsider. The stage is denuded of everything that may lend local colour to the situation. The void at the centre of existence as perceived by the Outsider is mirrored in the naked stage and bare decor. Upon this stage, stark as Lear's heath, the drama of human existence is enacted. Sally Frances Burke points out,

Because the stage is sparsely furnished and the locales non-specified, the plays acquire universality even in their settings. 126

Since the stage is stripped of all conventional trappings, the few things which do appear are charged with significance and almost become archetypal symbols. Such are the tree and mound in Waiting for Godot. Vladimir's half-remembered quotation "Hope deferred maketh the something sick", gives a clue to one of the possible interpretations for the tree. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life" (Proverbs XIII, 12). The leaves that appear on the tree in act II seem to give weight to the view that the tree is a symbol of life and desire fulfilled, just as the mound may represent a tomb, death, a mass-burial-ground. But the tree is an equivocal symbol evoking both the tree of life, the cross and the judas-tree of hanging.
Beckett's images, while being richly evocative in significance, also remain sufficiently nebulous and ambiguous as to be perennially mysterious. Such for example are the "four or five leaves" on the bare tree in Waiting for Godot and the child espied in Endgame through the telescope in the otherwise extinguished world. Both are primordial images of freshly emergent life. It is particularly significant that in both the plays these signs of life erupt out of what is apparently dead and finished. Are they symbolic of the eternal recurrence in nature irrespective of the fate of man? or do they represent the hope which springs eternally in the human breast, keeping alive the life-principle in man? Are they symbols of a new covenant when the "tree of life" shall put forth fresh leaves bringing paradise on earth, when "a little child shall lead them?" Do they signify a 'happy ending' of de-alienation and fulfilment of desires and promises?

Besides the symbolism of the setting, there is also the symbolism of names. Much critical ingenuity has been expended in trying to solve the enigma of "Godot", which however eludes definite interpretation. Ruby Cohn enumerates the various explanations for Godot.

The very first review suggested that Godot might be happiness, eternal life, the unattainable quest of all men. And Godot has subsequently been explained as God, a diminutive God, Love, Death, silence, Hope, De Gaulle, Pozzo, a Balzac character, a bicycle racer, Time Future, a Paris street for call-girls, .... 127 Beckett himself could not formulate what exactly he meant by Godot. When questioned by Alan Schneider on the meaning of Godot, Beckett replied, "If I knew, I would have said so in the play". 128 It is therefore foolhardy to venture yet another interpretation. Yet viewing the play in the Outsider context, perhaps one may suggest that the Outsider's 'Will to meaning' is given the name 'Godot'. Despite a lucid vision of the absurdity of existence the Outsider continually struggles to bring his existential anguish under control. His will to meaning strives to elicit meaning from the chaos of existence and even assigns significance to it by the expedient of 'waiting for Godot'. Just as to a believer, God is the centre who holds things from falling apart in confusion, to the Outsiders in
This play, Godot and Waiting for Godot is the reason for their existence.

It is Beckett's pained consciousness of the inadequacy of spoken language that makes him resort to symbols and visual images in his plays. The use of the comic techniques of circus and mime also points to a deep-seated doubt regarding the efficacy of language to convey the dramatist's intention to the audience. In the words of Martin Esslin,

"Beckett probes the limitations of language both as a means of communication and as a vehicle for the expression of valid statements, an instrument of thought. Language in Beckett's plays serves to express the breakdown, the disintegration of language." 129

In Waiting for Godot the fragmented sensibility of the Outsiders finds a structural equivalent in the dialogue. The dialogue of the play consists of unconnected fragments. The scraps of conversation, the question and answer routine and antiphonal responses are meant to fill up the hours and minutes and also to fill the void at the centre of the Outsiders' existence. Dialogue is no longer a dramatic instrument of communication between individual characters. Instead it becomes a device by which two characters conspire to pass the time by exchanging meaningless nothings.

Vladimir and Estragon are adept at flinging clichés and meaningless phrases at each other.

Estragon: And what did he reply?
Vladimir: That he'd see.
Estragon: That he couldn't promise anything.
Vladimir: That he'd have to think it over.
Estragon: In the quiet of his home.
Vladimir: Consult his family.
Estragon: His friends.
Vladimir: His agents.
Estragon: His correspondents.
Vladimir: His books.
Estragon: His Bank account.
Vladimir: Before taking a decision. (p.18)

Vladimir and Estragon almost play a game where the ball of conversation is tossed to and fro feverishly and with anxiety, lest silence should provoke them to commit the crime of thought. "Come on, Gogo, return the ball, can't you, once in a way?" (p.12) pleads
Vladimir after a particularly painful silence. This inability to communicate meaningfully even with a constant companion is symptomatic of the Outsider’s alienation in interpersonal relationships. The monologue becomes the most characteristic form of expression of the alienated Outsider. Vladimir’s monologue before the end of the play is the only place where his essential self emerges briefly, revealing an awareness of alienation at every level. Hamm, on the contrary, remains a performer even in his monologues. Krapp’s Last Tape consists entirely of monologues by the only character in the play, tape-recorded in the past and replayed. As Hugh Kenner says, Beckett does tend toward the monologue, and has invented ingenious ways to vary it, as when he presents, on stage, an old man communicating with words he tape-recorded three decades before.

The most celebrated single piece among Beckettian monologues is Lucky’s "thinking" in Waiting for Godot. This speech is a frightening comment on the state of the bourgeois society of insiders. Lucky, whom Pozzo associates with song, dance, poetry and thinking is a collective person representing the artistic, philosophic and creative impulse. Lucky reveals what happens to the creative individual who compromises with the bourgeois society of insiders and allows himself to be oppressed and tyrannised by it. Lucky’s speech contains the accumulated wisdom of the ages in a pitiful jumble and chaos. As Ruby Cohn puts it, "Lucky’s monologue displays western civilisation as shards of religion, philosophy, science, art, sport and modern industry". The suppression of the creative mind increases the pressure within until there is the inevitable explosion which destroys existing constructs. There is however some method in the madness and the principle of free association is followed which transcends logic and reason. Semantic structures are broken and there is a loosening of language. The traditional moorings of language are cut off and words float adrift, not tied down by sentence-structure or syllogistic forms. However, the speech is not totally devoid of all meaning. It is a parody of academic pedantry. It is also related to the tortured questionings of the Outsider regarding God and man. Vladimir’s musing on the capriciously bestowed gift of salvation by which only one of the thieves was saved,
reappears in a garbled version from Lucky, together with a reference to God's indifference as perceived by an Outsider alienated from God. A personal God quaquaquaqua which white beard quaquaquaqua outside time without extension who from the heights of divine aphasia loves us dearly with some exceptions for reasons unknown. (pp.42-43)

The vanity of all human endeavour and the frustration of human efforts are expressed in the nightmarish repetition of the phrase "labours left unfinished for reasons unknown" ascribed to pseudo-academic pairs of names like "Puncher and Wattman", "Testew and Cunard", "Fartov and Belcher", names resonant with unsavoury associations. The alienation from the human predicament itself is seen in the picture of "man in brief", who, "in spite of the strides of alimentation and defecation is seen to waste and pine waste and pine" (p.43). The recurrent reference to "tennis" in this speech evokes an image of meaninglessness in the to-and-fro movement of the ball to no purpose; it recalls Vladimir's metaphorical "ball" of conversation bandied pointlessly between him and Gogo; and ultimately it links up with Bosola's comparison in The Duchess of Malfi of human beings to tennis-balls sported by fate. Lucky's obsession with the skull at the end of his speech, together with the mention of "stones", suggests a vision of Golgotha. To the Outsider the skull is a weirdly evocative image of death, the irreducible fact of absurdity in human existence. It links up with Malevole's vision of the world as a Golgotha, Vendice's play-long preoccupation with the skull and death and Hamlet's musing on the skull. Here the image appears in all its horror in the disjointed whirling words of Lucky. The speech reaches the pitch of paroxysm and collapses in nightmarish screams and shouts as the others throw themselves on Lucky to stop him. Finally his hat is removed and trampled upon by Pozzo, by which the total destruction of Lucky's intellect is symbolized. The actual action is grotesque, but its meaning and implication are horrifying. It is the killing of the mind and soul of man far more grievous than the killing of his body.

The breakdown of meaningful communicative dialogue and the outbreak of the monologue are the linguistic equivalents of the
Outsider's alienation in Beckett. Further the pointlessness and monotony in the speeches enact the futility of human existence in the absurd universe. However not all passages enact the boredom of existence. Beckett has many styles and tones and continually varies the rhythm of language. The alternation of the prosaic and the poetic, the fusing together of the trivial and the profound has its origin in the ambivalence of the absurd Outsider who is both a hero and a clown at the same time. Suddenly in the midst of inane chatter their conversation takes on a lyrical tone in an exchange which echoes the cadence of a liturgical antiphon.

Estragon: All the dead voices.
Vladimir: They make a noise like wings.
Estragon: Like leaves.
Vladimir: Like sand.
Estragon: Like leaves.
Silence. (p.62)

A feature common to the more voluble of Beckett's Outsiders is their use of quotations, usually recalled vaguely and in part. These reminiscences are almost always tinged with irony. They serve a double purpose of both evoking a former mode of human existence where life was still meaningful and tragic and contrasting that with the meaninglessness and absurdity of the present grotesque existence. The irony is not so much directed at the past as at the present which in the author's vision, has become incapable of retaining any kind of significance.

Beckett has been criticised as a dramatist who presents the human condition in unrelieved gloom and despair. Frederick Lumley calls Waiting for Godot "a grand guignol of despair". According to him. The plays of Samuel Beckett lead us directly into this no-man's land, where despair becomes one long interminable sentence which leads from sanity to madness because no human mind can support the condition of the human fate. Martin Esslin has been the champion of the theatre of the absurd. He defends absurd drama from the charge of despair. Its demolition of accepted beliefs and systems is seen by him as a means of awakening man from the sleep of complacency and unawareness. "It is a challenge to accept the human condition as it is, in all its mystery
and absurdity, and to bear it with dignity, nobly, responsibly". The grotesque manner in which this is achieved rather provokes "the laughter of liberation" than "tears of despair". David Hesla applies this general defense to Beckett in particular when he says, "Beckett's mission can be seen as the attempt to awaken man to the grim facts about his life". Beckett's plays are meant to shake men out of their bad faith by forcing them to witness man's alienation at every level. By this they are forced to examine their own condition. If, for them religion has become an empty ritual, or social integration a matter of mechanical conformity, or interpersonal relationships a meaningless farce, or self-identity mere role-play, they are awakened to the fact with a jolt. Out of this lucid vision an attempt at authentic living might emerge.

In the Beckettian Outsider, the realization of alienation is also accompanied by a longing for de-alienation. For example, his attempts at prayer arise from a frustrated longing for union with God. It is only fossilized pseudo-religion that is parodied. The denial of the false values of contemporary society is indirectly an affirmation of true ideals. The discontent with the modern predicament of alienation arises from a yearning for meaningful existence, for life in all its abundance. As John Fletcher says, "Underlying the Beckettian man's nihilism is a frustrated hunger for the good and the pure".

After the first two monumental works of Beckett there is seen a tendency towards condensation, compression and the least minimal expression. His dramatic career seems to illustrate his earlier description of the fate of the artist to Georges Duthuit.

There is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express.

To move from Beckett's Waiting for Godot to the early plays of Pinter is to shift from a vast sweeping expanse of arid, scorched waste land to a claustrophobic room, which carries ambivalent associations of an asylum and a prison. Beckett makes his setting an unspecified locale where universal situations can be presented. Pinter furnishes his rooms paying great attention to realistic
Beckett peoples his stage with characters who are not so much individuals as embodiments of the alienated condition. Pinter on the contrary repeatedly claims that he deals with people and not with symbols.

I start off with people, who come into a particular situation. I certainly don't write from any kind of abstract idea. And I wouldn't know a symbol if I saw one. But he also attributes a generalised significance to his characters.

I'm talking about two people living socially, and if what takes place between them is a meaningful and accurate examination of them, then it's going to be relevant to you and society. This relationship will be an image of other relationships, of social living, of living together.

Thus Pinter's characters may be seen in double perspective, as individuals and as images of the human predicament. Pinter's Outsiders are defeated individuals who are also images of alienation. They are real individuals who struggle against the hidden menace in society. They are also images of the alienated individual placed in a hostile environment.

The pervading atmosphere of menace in Pinter is an intimation of the hostile universe in which the Outsider finds himself trapped. While in Beckett the metaphysical menace is diffused in the symbolic setting, in Pinter the sense of menace is highlighted, as the prime feature of the play-universe. Pinter focuses equally on the forces which drive man to alienation as on the condition of alienation. The Outsiders in Pinter like Stanley, Aston and Davies are victims of hostile forces which drive men into the state of being Outsiders. In Pinter's universe, man does not face a void but encounters hostile forces which use him as a tool and try to dehumanise him.

There is an oppressive sense of evil in Pinter's plays but it is not exactly located. The menace is not interpreted in social, ethical or religious terms. It is not traced to society or an institution or any demonic intelligence. It is shown to be all-pervasive but unidentifiable. Pinter has given a dramatic form to modern man's sense of insecurity and fear in an incomprehensible universe. The menace is Pinter's way of dramatising the meaningless casual violence on modern man.
Beckett's language is essentially theatrical, while Pinter's dialogue gives the impression of a "tape-recorder fidelity" to the actual speech of ordinary people. Beckett believes that there is "nothing with which to express" and demonstrates the inadequacy of language as a means of communication. Pinter however denies any failure of communication in his plays and claims to deal with the deliberate evasion of communication by people. The alienated figures are driven to take recourse in evasions because of hostile forces surrounding them. Evasion, in Pinter, is not merely an indication of the state of being an Outsider, it is also a means of self-preservation.

Despite the differences in setting, dramatic characters and the use of language, both Beckett and Pinter share a common interest in the alienated Outsider figure, Pinter acknowledges Beckett as having been an important influence on him. In their plays one finds two successive and complementary manifestations of the Outsider. While Beckett's treatment of the Outsider focuses on man's existential alienation in a meaningless absurd universe and on man's alienation from God and religion, Pinter's primary emphasis is on the Outsider's interpersonal alienation in his relationship with others and on his self-estrangement.

Almost all the plays of Pinter deal with alienated individuals. As William Baker and Stephen Ely Tabachnick put it, "he concerns himself with the Outsider and the relationship of the individual to the group." Of the five major plays of Pinter, the first three have been selected for study here, in order to examine the nature of Pinter's Outsiders and trace the levels of alienation in them. The Birthday Party, The Caretaker and The Homecoming contain characters identifiable as Outsiders at the social, interpersonal and existential levels and who are also self-alienated. They are either rejected by society or keep themselves aloof. They find it difficult to establish rapport with others or deliberately avoid being drawn into relationships. They feel threatened by menacing forces, often unidentifiable and emanating from a hostile universe. There is a deep rift between their real self and their inflated self-image.
Stanley in *The Birthday Party* keeps himself in self-imposed isolation. He finds a refuge from society and reality in the boarding-house run by Meg and Petey. Meg and Petey form the solid bourgeois background against which Stanley stands out in contrast as an Outsider. The play opens with a conversation between Meg and Petey which is almost entirely composed of banalities, platitudes and unnecessary comments on what is self-evident. The limited vocabulary of Meg is a measure of her restricted sensibility. The trite adjective applied by her to everything ad nauseam is "nice". The cornflakes, the weather and the newspaper titbits are all "nice". Peter Thomson describes this situation accurately as "a world of impoverished values". As the play progresses Meg's inane chatter is seen to be a subconscious or half-conscious strategy of self-deception and bad faith. She keeps herself in the sleep of unawareness through self-anæsthesia and a refusal to face harsh reality. The herd of insiders in Ionesco's play has been replaced here by Meg.

As in the case of Berenger, the business of existing seems to exhaust Stanley. Soon after rising and breakfasting he collapses with "Oh God, I'm tired". His violent outburst to Meg reveals an intense disgust bordering on nausea for his present condition which contrasts with her complacency and self-delusion.

Stanley: (violently) Look, why don't you get this place cleared up! It's a pigsty. And another thing, what about my room? It needs sweeping. It needs papering. I need a new room!

Meg: (sensual, stroking his arm) Oh, Stan, that's a lovely room. I've had some lovely afternoons in that room. (p.19)

When Stanley hears about the two gentlemen who might be Meg's prospective boarders, he becomes very uneasy and apprehensive. The atmosphere is taut with a sense of irrational fear at some vague menace. Stanley feels his identity dissolving in his fear and tries to take a firm grip on himself by frightening Meg out of her wits. But the strain is too much and he collapses. "He groans and his trunk falls forward, his head falls into his hands" (p.21). However Stanley recovers quickly and begins to fantasize on his career as a concert pianist. He conjures up alternate visions of self-grandeur and persecution by an anonymous and menacing "they". This speech is
crucial in establishing Stanley's self-alienation and existential alienation. Unable to face the truth about himself and his failure, he seeks escape in an inflated and illusory self-image of himself as a world-famous pianist. Besides being thus self-estranged, he also feels alienated in a hostile universe and calls the threatening forces vaguely as "they", just as Estragon designated those who beat him up every night as "they". The Outsider in modern drama is not up against a definite institution like society, church or the state as in former ages. Instead there seems to be a vague conspiracy, an invisible network, spreading its tentacles everywhere, against which no definite action is possible. Stanley blames "them" for blighting his rising career. "They carved me up". "They pulled a fast one" (p.23). This combined delusion of a glorified self-image and of persecution by unidentified people or forces is characteristic of paranoia. Stanley's obsessional concentration on what "they" did to him reduces him once again to groaning prostration on the table (p.23). Again he tries to assume control over himself and the situation by frightening Meg. He plays what must have been a regular game between them. It is almost a ritualised verbal exchange on "they" who are coming in a van with a wheelbarrow to take away someone. By this game, Stanley not only frightens Meg, but also rationalises his own nameless fear and tries to exorcise it. While Meg is genuinely devoted to Stanley in a maternal way, though with incestuous overtones, Stanley is completely detached in his attitude to her. His unwillingness or incapacity to relate to Lulu also reveals an alienation in interpersonal relationships. He deliberately ignores her attempts to draw him out of himself and into a reciprocal relationship. His conversation with Lulu reveals also his realisation of the purposelessness of his existence.

Stanley: (abruptly) How would you like to go away with me?
Lulu: Where?
Stanley: Nowhere. Still we could go.
Lulu: But where could we go?
Stanley: Nowhere. There's nowhere to go. So we could just go. It wouldn't matter.
Lulu: We might as well stay here.
Stanley: No, it's no good here.
Lulu: Well. Where else is there?
Stanley: Nowhere. (p.26)
The reiteration of "nowhere" four times within four exchanges brings out Stanley's existential vision of the meaninglessness and futility of life and all human action. Since all action is futile, it does not matter what one does or where one goes. In the absence of purpose or direction, the mere action of going matters, not the destination. There's nowhere to go because Stanley feels that there is no place of safety in a menacing world.

As if to prove true Stanley's fears of a hostile universe, menace appears in the tangible form of two strangers, Goldberg and McCann. They share the dual nature which marks many of Pinter's characters in that they are real individuals as well as images of a deeper level of reality. They are hired assassins like the killers in The Dumb Waiter. They also represent hidden, hostile forces which cause a crisis in the lives of alienated individuals. They are not recognizable enemies but faceless forces released in society by modern civilization. With the arrival of Goldberg and McCann, Stanley reaches the brink of his alienated existence. The hitherto vague and distant menace now assumes an urgency and the terrifying prospect strikes him dumb (p.35). To further aggravate matters Meg's gift of a toy-drum makes him realize the gap between his grandiose self-image as a concert-pianist and the reality of his condition as a timid little boy hiding behind Mother for protection against the big bad men from the city. He is forced to see how far below his aspirations and ideals he has fallen. "His shoulders sag" (p.36). What follows is a grotesquely frightening image of a mind on the threshold of disintegration. At first the spectacle is ludicrous as he puts the toy round his neck and beats it regularly. Then suddenly "the beat becomes erratic, uncontrolled". "He arrives at her chair, banging the drum, his face and the drumbeat now savage and possessed" (p.36). The splintering of his mind is evoked non-verbally by the drumbeat which is at first a gentle tap, then a regular beat and finally a frenzied banging. Stanley has now reached the edge of the precipice and is now requires only a push to send him hurtling down. This process is enacted in Act II. Goldberg and McCann force the Outsider who is already alienated from individuals, society, existence and self to move towards total alienation, whose psychological equiva-
lent is seen in the state of catatonia.

Stanley's behaviour in Act II suggests that he is weighed down by some past guilt and fears punishment. It is this submerged feeling of guilt in him that is played upon by Goldberg and McCann during their interrogation of him. Martin Esalin calls this "a weird surrealist cross-examination" and considers it, "an expression of Stanley's general feelings of guilt, of his tormentors' general conviction that he deserves punishment;"\(^{149}\) In a menacing contest of wills, Stanley is forced to sit down while his inquisitors stand on either side. They confront him with a barrage of questions and accusations. The arraignment includes vaguely generalised charges and very specific condemnation. The purpose of the denunciation is to arouse all the consciously suppressed and subconsciously repressed guilty feelings within him. According to John Russell Taylor it is also meant to awaken guilt in the audience.\(^{150}\) Stanley at first does not realise what is being done to him and straightforwardly tries to answer their questions. But he is given no time to answer them. As in Ionesco's *The Lesson*, here also language is used as a weapon which reduces the victim to a state of dissolution. In the words of Simon Trussler, Their armoury is words - and in this case their weapons are not defensive but offensive, battering down Stanley's feeble resistance until he stutters into speechlessness.\(^{151}\)

His glasses and his chair are snatched away and the weird second part of the interrogation begins with Stanley clutching the chair and bending over it. Accusations are flung at him in rapid succession like missiles to systematically break down his resistance. He is accused of killing his wife, of neglecting his old mother by abandoning her to a sanatorium and of deserting a girl at the last minute before the wedding. The questions "Why did you kill your wife?" and "why did you never get married?" (p.49) are both asked by Goldberg. They cannot both be true. So it is clear that the fact that he is subjected to a grilling inquisition is more important than the verbal meaning of the charges framed against him. Rejecting the reference theory of meaning and applying new linguistic theories to Pinter's use of language, Austin E. Quigley points out the inter-relational function of language in this passage.
All these accusations are devices whose power is born of their number and variety, not of their accuracy or even relevance to Stanley's past or present life. Their function is to overcome Stanley by the quantity of accusation, not by the truth-quality of any particular accusation.152

There is a rapid battery of accusations mixing serious charges with trivial ones. In a nightmarish piling up of bizarre details he is accused of lechery, gluttony, promiscuity, non-payment of rent, incest, breach of social etiquette ("Why do you pick your nose?" p.51), political treachery, desertion of priesthood, heresy and cheating at cricket. As Martin Esslin points out, this long list "covers the whole gamut of possible sources of guilt feelings".153 The last straw that breaks Stanley in this sequence is the childish riddle, "Why did the chicken cross the road?" (p.51). The stock answer, 'because it wanted to go to the other side' sticks in his throat. He is so unnerved by their non-stop buffeting that he cannot go further than "He wanted to-". They deliberately make his condition worse by repeating it more and more demandingly.

Goldberg: Speak up Webber, why did the chicken cross the road?
Stanley: He wanted to- he wanted to- he wanted to---
McCann: He doesn't know!
Goldberg: Why did the chicken cross the road?
Stanley: He wanted to- he wanted to- he wanted to---
Goldberg: Why did the chicken cross the road?
Stanley: He wanted---
McCann: He doesn't know, he doesn't know which came first. (p.51)

Then comes the perennially insoluble question, an existential enigma as to which came first, the chicken or the egg. Stanley moves from a painful groping for words to an agonized scream at his own speechlessness.

Goldberg: Which came first?
McCann: Chicken? Egg? Which came first?
Goldberg and McCann: Which came first? Which came first? Which came first?
Stanley screams. (p.52)

The entire process resembles a ritual by which an individual is driven to a point of dissolution. Repeated battering splinters the consciousness and reduces the individual to a state of disintegration. Having almost destroyed his identity as an individual they try to impose on him their image of him as a corpse.
McCann: Who are you Webber?
Goldberg: What makes you think that you exist?
McCann: You're dead.
Goldberg: You're dead. You can't live, you can't think, you can't love. You're dead. You're a plague gone bad. There's no juice in you. You're nothing but an odor! (p.52)

This last speech links up with Goldberg's earlier definition of man when he wakens in the morning as "a corpse waiting to be washed" (p.45). They succeed in stripping him of his human identity so that he feels constrained to emit animal growls—"uuuuuhhhhh"—as he stalks McCann with a chair as a protest against such a definition of him by them. But before he could be driven to the point of no return, there is a sudden change of tempo and release of tension as Meg comes down dressed for the party and beating the drum. Stanley recovers human speech immediately and speaks his last intelligible words in the play—"could I have my glasses? (p.53).

The interrogation marks a critical stage in the breaking of the Outsider by the hostile and menacing forces of a meaningless and absurd universe. According to Peter Thomson,

They conduct their comic and terrifying interrogation of Stanley in a moral void. Precisely because it lacks a context, because its malignity is motiveless, it stands for all persecutions. Here Pinter employs the image of the trial as a metaphor of human existence. As in Camus' Caligula and Kafka's Trial, man is found guilty and under sentence of punishment, whatever he may have done or not done.

The interrogation employs and evokes many images particularly relevant to the twentieth century. It resembles war-time trials and court-martials and brain-washing procedures for political purposes. It even parodies the rapid questions and spontaneous answers in a psychiatric session; but instead of eliciting the true sources of personality, it is a destructive and demoralising experience resulting finally in the break-up of personality and not integration.

The dissolution of identity is brought to its completion at the end of the party. The focussing of the torch on his eyes during the toast carries sinister implications of torture and brain-washing techniques. The party-game of Blind Man's Buff is an ironic metaphor of Stanley's condition. At the end of it when he is blindfolded for
the game, McCann breaks his glasses, making him blind for all practical purposes. Broken, blinded and reduced to animal level he attempts murder and rape in an outburst of brutal instincts breaking through the usual human inhibitions. By subjecting him to a battery of imagined accusations, Goldberg and McCann finally drive him towards actual crime and then close in on him to administer punishment. Once again the torch-light is focussed on his now-unprotected eyes and he begins to giggle. "Their figures converge upon him" (p.66). The Outsider is over-powered and pushed into total alienation and his last stage is worse than his earlier alienated condition.

In Act III when Stanley is finally ushered in by McCann, he is "dressed in a dark well-cut suit and white collar. He holds his broken glasses in his hand. He is clean-shaven". His appearance is a marked contrast to his first shabby outfit and looks. Spruce and clean, in a catatonic trance, he resembles a corpse washed and dressed for the funeral. Goldberg has succeeded in imposing his definition of Stanley - "You're dead" - on him. When they address him, Stanley emits weird, unintelligible sounds.

Stanley: Uh-gug... uh-gug... eeehhhh-gag... (on the breath) caahhh... caahhh... (p.84)

Stanley's non-human status is confirmed here and he relapses into the stillness of catatonia. Stanley's earlier fear, rationalised into the wheelbarrow-in-van image, now comes true as he is led to the big black car.

**The Birthday Party** enacts the complete dissolution of the Outsider by hostile forces. Stanley, who at the beginning of the play is alienated from people, from a menacing universe and from a true knowledge of himself, is further precipitated into the abyss of total estrangement. His already splintered self is further broken into smithereens by the torturers until he becomes incapable of making a single intelligible human sound or connection. The Outsider no longer has the inner strength to defy external pressures but is broken by them. He is presented as a defeated deindividualised person reduced to an object by the aggression of hostile forces. Incapable of the defiance and power of earlier Outsiders he is broken by these forces. Unable to make a compromise like Petey and unable
to indefinitely deceive himself with self-deluding illusion like Meg, he collapses into total withdrawal from a reality which he cannot control either by any insider expedients or by Outsider-defiance.

The Outsider's fate is a metaphor of human existence in the modern world where man seems to be threatened by unidentified menacing forces released by a mechanical civilization. No individual or institution can be blamed for this situation and so the Outsider feels trapped since there is nothing definite to rebel against.

The atmosphere of fear and menace in the play may be a reflection of the author's racial memory. The experience of the European Jew, persecuted, wounded and destroyed, is seen to be distilled and generalized in the play. Commenting on the play Pinter said,

I don't think it is all that surrealistic and curious because surely this thing, of people arriving at the door has been happening in Europe in the last twenty years. Not only the last twenty years, the last two or three hundred.  

Some Critics have seen a definite Jewish bias in the play. Interpretations range from seeing Stanley "as the assimilated Jewish artist" attacked by his bourgeois business-oriented community, to considering him as "the Aryan prisoner" on whom racial vengeance is executed by representatives of two exploited and spat-upon races - the Jew and the Irishman. The violence and threat of menace in Pinter's plays have often been related to the author's childhood in the East End of London in the 1930s.

Pinter as an artist gives importance to the structure of his plays. He says,

I think I certainly developed some feeling for construction which, believe it or not, is important to me. I think I can say I pay meticulous attention to the shape of things, from the shape of a sentence to the overall structure of the play. This shaping, to put it mildly, is of the first importance.

In The Birthday Party, Pinter uses the three-act structure, the ending of each act marking a dramatically effective point in the development of the Outsider. At the end of Act I, the news of Goldberg's arrival and the shattering of the self-image as a concert pianist bring Stanley dangerously close to dissolution. The beginning
of disintegration is conveyed through the frenzied drum-beating with which the curtain falls. In act II, the interrogation sequence and the party-and-game ritual culminate in Stanley being driven to total alienation. The curtain comes down with the glare of torch-light being focused on Stanley's giggling figure while the shadowy outlines of Goldberg and McCann close in upon him. Act III begins with the breakfast-table inanities of Meg and Petey as in Act I giving the impression of a circular structure. But the chatter is no longer comic but is seen to be a pathetic self-deception on the part of Meg and a deliberate encouragement of it by Petey. The closing tableau is very similar to the opening scene except for the scattered newspaper strips on the floor "an image of the past day's destruction" as Peter Thomson puts it. The erstwhile laughter at Meg's bourgeois fatuity is now frozen at the memory of Stanley's last appearance as the defeated Outsider reduced to a walking corpse dressed for the hearse.

The mixture of hornpipes and funerals which characterised the mongrel breed of tragi-comedy in an earlier age, is also a feature of many modern plays. According to Harold Pinter, "The old categories of comedy and tragedy and farce are irrelevant". In Pinter's own plays, elements of farce, comedy, melodrama and tragedy may be found together as strange bed-fellows. Raymond Williams traces in The Birthday Party the bringing together of the two idioms of farce and melodrama. Simon Trussler sees in this play "an allegory about the rise of fascism, a seaside social comedy and a sexual farce". Bernard F. Dukore finds a tragicomic structure in all the plays of Pinter, which are shown to be primarily associated with the comic genre but denying the conclusion and audience-response connected with it. The mingling of different idioms can however be traced to the Outsider, his environment and the interaction between them. The middle-class background introduced as a contrast against which the Outsider figure stands out, has perennially been a source of comedy, social satire and farce. Thus Meg and Petey, by their mindless chatter and mechanical responses highlight Stanley's sensitivity and also provide comedy and a critique of bourgeois existence. But the
Outsider's alienated sensibility and his haunted awareness of a hostile universe introduce the alien elements of fear and menace into what began as a social comedy. With the news of the coming of Goldberg and McCann, who are the concrete embodiments of the Outsider's apprehension of threatening forces, the comic structure is subverted and terror takes precedence. The Outsider's blustering attempts to control the menace lend a touch of the comic and the pathetic to what would otherwise be spine-chilling melodrama. His fragmented consciousness and sense of unreality find their structural equivalent in the surrealistic procedures to which he is subjected. The breaking of the Outsider and his final and total estrangement are structural patterns belonging to tragedy and worthy of evoking pity and terror. But the Outsider in Pinter is a weak, defeated creature who lacks the heroic stature of Macbeth and Caligula who hurl defiance at the forces of retribution which close in on them. The ambivalence of the Outsider figure, who is both comic and pathetic, accounts for the ambiguous ending of the play. While the beginning of the play reveals an affinity to the structure of social comedy, satire, and farce, the presence of the Outsider and his alienation impose the pattern of melodrama and tragedy on the basic structure. Simon Trussler points out that both in tragedy and in farce "the fates mount a concerted attack on a chosen sufferer". According to him it is the dramatist's point of view "that distinguishes the farceur's description of domesticity from the tragedian's trail of destruction and death". In Pinter, the Outsider as defeated victim is viewed bifocally, both within a funny domestic interior and as haunted and hunted by unidentified destructive forces. The Outsider figure who defies any precise definition as tragic hero or clown may thus be held responsible for the play's structure which transcends genre classifications.

While in The Birthday Party Stanley is easily identifiable as the Outsider in the play, in The Caretaker both Aston and Davies may with equal justification be considered as Outsiders, alienated at various levels.

Aston's cluttered-up room is a metaphor of his confused state of mind. The sink which has no water connection and the gas stove
which is not linked to any gas supply symbolise the difficulty of the room's occupant in making connections with others. Aston's alienation is revealed in the course of the play. He has isolated himself from a society which had carried out an aggression on him in the form of an enforced lobotomy. He says in his long monologue to Davies,

I don't talk to people now; I steer clear of places like that cafe. I never go into them now. I don't talk to anyone.... like that.168 (p.66)

According to William Baker and Stephen Ely Tabachnick, "Pinter touches the raw nerve of fear in this monologue revealing society's depredations against the individual". He feels alienated from his own mother whom he thinks had betrayed him by allowing the electric treatment to be carried out on him. Like Stanley, Aston also refers to the hostile forces that beset him as "they". His self-estrangement is seen in the vast gap between his self-image as being good at his hands and capable of building a shed for himself and the sad reality of being unable to even set right a plug with which he occupies himself almost throughout the play.

Davies regards society as a hostile force which treats him like dirt. Unable to retaliate, he resorts to what Sartre calls "antisemitism", "the poor man's snobbery". He has a paranoid hatred of foreigners and blames them for his own ill-treatment at society's hands.

All them Blacks had it, Blacks, Greeks, Poles, The lot of them, that's what, doing me out of a seat, treating me like dirt. (p.17) He is incapable of maintaining interpersonal relationships because of an unfortunate tendency to antagonize others. He too is obsessed by "them" representing all the vague inimical forces ranged against him. He fears not only people but even objects like the disconnected gas-stove and the switch of the electric fire. He nurses an illusory self-image of grandeur, of having "had dinner with the best" people, for example. Davies has a serious problem about his identity. The loss of his identity papers and the assumption of a false name suggest acute self-alienation (p.29). His "pipe-dream", corresponding to Aston's shed, is going to Sidcup to collect his identity papers, after the weather clears up.
Both these Outsiders with complementary characteristics could have worked out a symbiotic relationship. They could have formed a community of Outsiders finding in companionship an effective way of structuring their time and also protection from existential fears and hostile forces from outside. Aston possibly befriended Davies as a fellow victim of a malicious society. Being an inveterate talker, Davies would have helped pass the time. The loquacious presence of Davies even acts as a catalyst to draw out Aston and launches him on his long monologue. Aston in turn provides Davies not only with shelter but also thoughtfully supplies him with tobacco, shoes and clothes. Above all he restores his self-respect to Davies by showing that he trusts him alone in the room. When Davies wakes up with a nervous start on his first morning in Aston's flat, Aston soothes him down, in a manner resembling Vladimir's gentle comfort to Estragon after a nightmare.

Davies: What? What's this? What's this?
Aston: It's all right.
Davies: (staring) What's this?
Aston: It's all right. (p.31)

Both Davies' need for protection and a place of refuge and Aston's need for a companion in his loneliness would have been satisfied if they had formed a community of two. But they are not allowed to do so because of Mick's machinations and also the crookedness of Davies resulting from a lifelong exposure to society's exploitations and cruelty. Totally unused to kindliness, Davies is unable to appreciate or even recognize the genuine goodness of Aston. He even distrusts the kindly smile with which Aston views his supposedly sleeping figure every morning. It is therefore easy for Mick who epitomizes the vices of urban competitive society - ruthlessness, cunning and manipulation of people as objects - to arouse the worst instincts in Davies so as to cause an estrangement between the two Outsiders, thus effectively preventing a partnership between them. The idea of evil within the individual working out his downfall is brought out by Pinter who does not just make Mick the villain of the piece but makes Davies shoulder the responsibility for his fate. Interpretations which blame Mick's jealousy or which romanticize Davies into a dynamic Dionysian figure or a defenceless victim of
the system, neglect the basic culpability of Davies whose latent instincts are activated by Mick to bring about his own rejection, at the end of the play. The play which began with exploring the possibility of an inter-dependent relationship between two Outsiders, ends with an unbridgeable gulf between them. The last scene, enacting the desperate pleading of Davies with the impassive Aston whose back is turned to Davies, is a potent visual image of interpersonal alienation between the two men. Thus the play may be regarded as the frustration of the attempt of two Outsiders to form a sheltered community for themselves. Their efforts are thwarted by Mick the visible representative of society and by the hidden force of evil within Davies partly nurtured by society's treatment of him and partly released by the mysterious forces in a hostile universe.

The Outsiders in this play reflect the social situation and arise out of the crisis of the age. The ever-increasing subjection of private concerns to public interests and the domination of institution over individual produce social casualties like the cases in One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest. Aston belongs to this category of Outsiders, broken and rendered impotent by society which is composed of vague, unidentifiable forces menacingly grouped together as "they". Davies is a typical product of the dregs of British society in contemporary England. His dramatic portrayal is a social comment on the current attitude to Immigration, considering it almost as an invasion and a threat to the native dwellers. Davies' paranoid xenophobia is only a distorted reflection of the average Englishman's fear of being swamped out of existence by the foreigners, especially Asians, ("Blacks" says Davies) pouring into the country from former colonies. According to Bernard Dukore Pinter's plays reflect the tensions and attitudes of an England which is no longer a colonial power. The quick changing of sides by Davies and his absolute lack of any guiding principle of conduct are the result of the situational ethic practised in the twentieth century.

The construction of The Caretaker is very complex. Various structural patterns have been traced in it. An allegorical morality structure has been identified in the play by Terence Rattigan and
Clifford Leech. Arnold P. Hinchliffe reports that

When Terence Rattigan saw it as an allegory about the God of the Old Testament, the God of the New Testament and Humanity, Pinter replied that the play was about a caretaker and two brothers. 174

Clifford Leech sees Davies as Everyman befriended by Aston and Mick who are good and bad angels. 175 Though Pinter rejects such specific symbolic interpretations, he claims that his characters are images of human relationships. Here his use of the archetypal figure of the triangle in studying the tensions and conflicting loyalties in interpersonal relationships has suggested the above interpretation. A less specific structural pattern which can be seen in the play is a subtle form of the power-struggle. In Act II Mick and Aston both claim Davies as a friend; while Mick does it verbally, Aston proves it in action by giving him the bag (pp. 46-47). Towards the end of the play Aston becomes the coveted object of possession for both Mick and Davies. The struggle for power over a person is also accompanied by a struggle for possession over the room. The three-pronged struggle ends in the expulsion of Davies both from friendship and from the room. Martin Esslin sees in the eviction of Davies the oedipal "image of the sons chasing the father out of the house". 176

Pinter's own description of the structure of the play emphasize the close interweaving of the comic and the tragic. According to him,

The Caretaker is funny up to a point. Beyond that point it ceases to be funny, and it was because of that point that I wrote it. 177

The disreputable tramp, his prevarications and trickery, his various attempts to get the better of others and his ultimate failure traditionally belong to farce or comedy. But the aggressive forces in society and the universe and the eruption of evil from within himself reduce Davies to a pathetic, defeated Outsider figure, while denying tragic dignity to him. At the end of the play he resembles a trapped animal, frightened and desperate. There is neither heroic defiance nor affirmation and acceptance in him. Aston is a near-tragic figure at the beginning of the play, broken by hostile forces and painfully struggling to put his thoughts together and trying to establish rapport with another individual. But towards the end of the play he
has just begun to exercise control over his surroundings as seen in his fixing of the leaking roof; he has also begun to emerge from his shell to establish reciprocal contact with his brother, as seen in the faint smile exchanged between them. Thus the tragi-comic structure of the play has two simultaneous movements proceeding in opposite directions and involving the two Outsiders. While Davies begins as the comic butt and ends as a pathetic powerless figure, Aston is at first a near-tragic figure but approaches comic resolution and reconciliation.

Both The Birthday Party and The Caretaker can be approximated to the structural outline summarised by Raymond Williams as "The irruption of a bizarre and arbitrary violence into an ordinary life". The comedy arises from the realistic portrayal of ordinary life, while the alien structure imposed on it may be traced to the Outsider and his alienation in a menacing universe and a hostile society.

In Pinter's third full-length play The Homecoming there is more than one alienated character. The most obvious is Teddy, whose intellectual claims estrange him from his family. His wife Ruth, as her Biblical name signifies, is initially an alien woman in the midst of her husband's clan. Teddy's brother Lenny is alienated from all human relationships. He himself is an alienating force because of his treatment of others as objects to be manipulated. Almost every member of the family is alienated from all the others in interpersonal relationships. The traditional bonds between father and sons, husband and wife and between brothers are all broken. As Austin Quigley points out, "The whole family structure seems based less on mutual sharing than on mutual exploitation". In this family the traditional Gemeinschaft relationship of a shared community life based on affection has been replaced by Gesellschaft or a utilitarian gathering of self-centred individuals for certain pragmatic advantages, like common boarding and lodging under one roof. Malice, antagonism and violence mark the relationships in this family, especially those of Max, the head of the family, with the others. Thus the entire family set-up is an alienating one.
It is probable that Ted originally left his family in order to dissociate himself from its alienating atmosphere. But at his homecoming he still finds himself to be as much an Outsider as ever. He is the most obvious Outsider in this family of alienated people. According to Charles Spencer, this play "is concerned with the Outsider, the misfit, the oddity in society, the relationship of the individual with the group". Teddy's choice of profession reveals an attempt to cut himself away completely from his antecedents. Son of a retired butcher and a prostitute, nephew of a cab-driver, he has risen up to be a Ph.D. and Professor of Philosophy while his brothers are a brothel manager and an amateur boxer. At the homecoming of Teddy and Ruth, "Their alien quality is stressed by America and Teddy's Ph.D." says Arnold P. Hinchliffe. Teddy presents his own alienation from his family in terms of their different perceptions of reality. He claims that he can stand outside things with philosophical detachment and view them without getting lost in them or entangled in them. He accuses them of being just objects without self-awareness, lost in whatever they are doing. Assuming a supercilious air, he denounces them as being incapable of understanding his philosophical writings. His speech in Act II in response to Ruth's deliberate needling "Has your family read your critical works?" portrays him as an Outsider in his family, intensely aware of his alienation.

You wouldn't understand my works, you wouldn't, you wouldn't have the faintest idea of what they were about, you wouldn't appreciate the points of reference. You're way behind. All of you, There's no point in my sending you my works, you'd be lost. It's nothing to do with the question of intelligence. It's a way of being able to look at the world. It's a question of how far you can operate on things and not in things. I mean it's a question of your capacity to ally the two, to relate the two, to balance the two. To see, to be able to see. I'm the one who can see. That's why I can write my critical works. Might do you good... have a look at them... see how certain people can view... things... how certain people can maintain... intellectual equilibrium. You're just objects. You just... move about. I can observe it. I can see what you do. It's the same as I do. But you're lost in it. You won't get me being... I won't be lost in it.182 (pp.61-62)

The speech begins with aggressive self-confidence but ends hesitantly, punctuated with pauses as he gropes for words. It is as if he is suddenly drained of all life and vitality and forced to accept defeat.
though he tries to maintain a semblance of defiance. This onslaught on the family is his way of retaliating on them for permanently estranging him from his wife by appropriating her as their common mistress.

Teddy's alienation from Ruth however reaches back to their life in America. Her past as "A photographic model for the body" (p.57) fitted ill with the new sober role that he offered to her as a professor's wife. Her reminiscence of her life as a model is tinged with nostalgic longing and images of freshness (p.57), whereas her memory of America evokes sterility and distaste. "It's all rock, and sand, it stretches... so far... everywhere you look. And there's lots of insects there" (p.53) when Teddy tries to paint a glowing picture of their life together at the university, Ruth does not at all respond with enthusiasm (p.50 and p.55). The communication between them steadily dwindles in the course of the play as Teddy realises his own weakening hold on her and her longing to escape from an unsatisfactory marriage. As Pinter himself has commented, "If this had been a happy marriage it wouldn't have happened." 183

Though Ted affects objectivity and has a self-image of being a detached philosopher, in reality he feels resentful towards his family and particularly towards Lenny for separating his wife from him. The submerged vindictive self breaks through the mask of detachment when he seeks a petty revenge on Lenny by stealing his cheese-roll. In the squabble that follows, the cheese-roll becomes almost an equivalent for Ruth. Just as Lenny had inveigled Ruth away from Teddy who had found her and groomed her to be a professor's wife, so also Teddy had purloined the cheese-roll carefully prepared by Lenny for himself. This little incident highlights the gap between his self-image and the reality, between the public-image that he projects verbally and the reality that comes through in his deeds. Ted is thus self-estranged.

Teddy's final estrangement stands out in his leave-taking. Banalities devoid of any genuine feeling are exchanged in a superficial manner. "It's been wonderful to see you", "Good bye Lenny", 


"Ta-ta Ted", "Bye-bye Joey". "Tata" (pp. 79-80). As he goes to the front door without having said a word to Ruth, she calls out to him - "Eddie". But this evocation of a former intimacy as husband and wife is followed by a cliché usually uttered at leave-taking - "Don't become a stranger". Ted makes no response to this but walks out and shuts the door behind him. The break is final and irrevocable.

The moment of Teddy's extreme alienation almost coincides with Ruth's moment of triumph. In the course of the play, while Teddy moves from attempted reconciliation and hope of integration to irredeemable alienation, Ruth moves from being an alien among strangers to matriarchal rule over them. There is careful structural balance in working out these two movements. At first when Teddy and Ruth enter the house, Teddy is excited at the idea of homecoming, while Ruth is apprehensive about her reception as an Outsider intruding into the family circle. Her very name is suggestive, with its Biblical connotation of a woman who went to the alien land of her husband's birth and finally won over his people to the extent of establishing herself and her progeny there. In act I Ruth is apparently the alien, ill at ease, and eager to leave soon. But soon it becomes clear that she has more in common with her husband's family than her husband. It is then Teddy who is eager to leave whereas she feels at home. By the end of the play Ruth has taken the place of her mother-in-law and established herself as the mistress of the homestead, while Teddy is expelled as the intruder and goes into exile once again. The homecoming thus spells the end of the alienation which Ruth had experienced in America as Teddy's wife whereas for Teddy it results in greater alienation.

The ease with which Ruth fits into the family may be traced to her skill in adapting herself to the games people play in it. For example in the power-struggle between her and Lenny on the night of her arrival, he wins the first round by insisting on removing the ash-tray, but she soon learns the game and holds her own when he tries to snatch away her glass of water. This victory of Ruth in the second contest of wills anticipates Lenny's later acceptance of her terms regarding their contract of prostitution. Ruth herself initiates a
game on her own, revealing her self-confident control of the situation. In act II she plays what could be classified as the "stocking game" in the phraseology of Eric Berne in *Games People Play*. Berne describes the stocking game:

> In it the most obvious characteristic is the exhibitionism. A woman comes into a strange group and after a very short time raises her leg, exposing herself in a provocative way, and remarks, 'Oh my, I have a run in my stocking! This is calculated to arouse the men sexually.

The implication of this game is that the woman is sexually available. 184

In act II Ruth interrupts a pseudo-philosophic discussion among the men and focusses their attention on herself in a similar way by exposing her leg and talking of her underwear (pp. 52-53). While earlier Lenny had subtly indicated his recognition of her as a daughter of the game, here she manifests her availability. What transpires after this shows that the men had got the message. Pinter also comments on Ruth's beating the family at their own game - "She says, if you want to play this game I can play it as well as you". 185

The entire play may be seen as conforming to the game-structure and consisting of erotic and power-games played in earnest, in several rounds. Teddy is finally the loser in all the games and leaves home as a defeated Outsider. Lenny and Ruth emerge as victors in the power-struggle and the sexual game respectively. The game-metaphor may be varied and "the play can be seen as a series of bouts in a battle" 186 as Arnold Hinchliffe puts it. Austin R. Quigley sees the play as a complex structure of fighting and in-fighting. 187

A Freudian framework has also been traced in the play. The play contains the archetypal pattern of the *Vatersohnkampf* where a dominating father is displaced and finally dethroned by young and virile sons; there is also the possession of a surrogate mother-figure and the fraternal clan sharing a woman in common. Martin Esslin sees the play as "a dream image of the fulfilment of all oedipal wishes". 188

Like the other plays of Pinter, this too eludes definite genre classification. The play turns around themes which have perennially reigned supreme in a particular type of comedy. Deprivation,
discomfiture and cuckoldry have been featured regularly in satiric comedy. But usually the victim is culpable and so his overthrow is accompanied by a sense of comic justice and the laughter of derision. But here the victim is an Outsider, whose alienation acquires a poignancy which subverts the mocking laughter. His ambivalent nature of being superior to the hostile society which expels him and yet sharing its weaknesses, makes him an object of pity at being dispossessed and exiled, but not of admiration like a tragic victim. Bernard Dukore points out the savage nature of the comedy which leaves the spectator gasping with shock. The introduction of the Outsider in the basic structure of satiric comedy destroys the comic nature of the denouement and leaves a bitter taste in the mouth which needs to be purged but is denied tragic catharsis.

In depicting the Outsider's alienation Pinter sometimes uses the earlier images of power-seeking and incest. He also introduces a new variety of the Outsider as a defeated tragi-comic individual who is forced to give up the struggle by hostile and menacing forces which cannot always be fully accounted for.

Goldberg, Mick and Lenny, all belong to the category of Outsiders who wield power ruthlessly and are therefore alienated from others and also cause alienation in others by using them as objects. In Renaissance drama, political rule, wealth and knowledge had been sought after by power-seeking Outsiders to the exclusion of everything else, thus effectively cutting them away from society, other individuals, religious and moral norms and sometimes even from themselves. In Pinter's plays, a less spectacular and more subtle kind of power is aspired to such as the possession or domination over a room or an individual, or the power to impose one's subjective vision on the past. While a single power-mad Outsider towered far above the other characters in Renaissance drama, in Pinter's plays many characters, both alienated and alienating wrestle for power in a strategically carried out struggle. Conflict, which is usually regarded as the essence of drama, is handled in Pinter mainly as a contest of wills. Such for example are the ego-battles centred around Stanley's sitting down in The Birthday Party, Davies' bag in
The Caretaker and Ruth's glass of water in The Homecoming. Thus psychic conflicts among characters in the power context replaces the earlier one-versus-all external conflicts between the power-seeking Outsider and his society as in Richard III and Macbeth and the inner conflict arising from the self-division of the Outsider himself as in Dr. Faustus.

The power-struggles in Pinter's plays have also been interpreted in Freudian terms as following the archetypal pattern of father-son conflicts. Incest, the violation of the most primitive of taboos has also been dramatised as an image of alienation. The treatment of incest as an unconscious attraction, a neo-platonic obsession, an expression of tyranny and a form of social protest has been traced down the ages in plays dealing with incestuous Outsiders in an earlier chapter. Pinter's plays, when examined in the psychoanalytic light reveal alienated figures who enact oedipal desires or are punished for them.

Stanley, Aston, Davies and Teddy are all variations on the Outsider as a defeated figure. They are all alienated from society, either fugitives shunning social contact or victims on whom persecution or aggression is carried out. They shrink from interpersonal encounters and their relationships with others around them are strained if not estranged. Their failure is partly due to their inability to play games or use language effectively. Further all of them are alienated from their present condition and the reality around them and seek refuge in fantasy in an idealised past or a utopia elsewhere. Their exaggerated, deluded self-image reveals a singular lack of self-knowledge, arising from a severe condition of self-estrangement. Pinter's defeated Outsiders are all trapped in an alien universe and are haunted or hounded by menacing forces.

The perilous nature of human life in the universe is powerfully conveyed by Pinter by the evocation of a menacing atmosphere. It is this pervading sense of menace that allies Pinterland to the existential universe. The origin and nature of the menace in Pinter is ambivalent like everything else in Pinter. On the one hand, it seems to be connected with ordinary objects, people and occurrences.
A toy drum, a dumb waiter, a disconnected gas-stove or even a glass of water take on a threatening aura while a ring at the door and the arrival of two strangers may assume an ominous significance. As Wilson Knight observes,

"What is so strange is that we are nowadays given the experience of nightmare, almost of the supernatural in terms not of devils or ghosts, but of ordinary material objects and affairs."\(^{193}\)

On the other hand, the menace also becomes an abstract threat with no definite identifiable source. Even when it is connected with actual men, the absence or insufficiency of motivation and the mystery shrouding the intimidating agents make the menace obscure. According to Harold Hobson "It is exactly in this vagueness that its spine-chilling quality lies."\(^{194}\)

Pinter uses the image of the room as a refuge from all hostile forces. But a room is also very vulnerable because with the opening of its door, danger can walk in. If, on the contrary, the door is kept shut against all intrusion, it also becomes a prison to the one within. This ambiguity is a typical Pinteresque characteristic.

Extensive research has been done on Pinter's unique use of language.\(^{195}\) For the purposes of this thesis a study of the relationship between the Outsider's alienation and his wielding of language alone suffices.

Pinter makes frequent use of the monologue to suggest a character's alienation at various levels. The monologue may be a sign of the character's inability to hold reciprocal conversation with others in interpersonal relationships. *Landscape* and *Silence* are almost entirely composed of monologues revealing the estrangement of the characters from one another. During Aston's long monologue in *The Caretaker*, the light focusses on him leaving Davies and the rest of the stage in darkness. This brings out the speaker's total isolation, for Davies merges in the shadow with the other objects and is not a fellow human-being listening and responding with sympathy. The halting narrative recaptures a harrowing experience and conveys the menace that hangs around man in the universe. When the present reality becomes unbearable, the character seeks escape from it by constructing an imaginary past which takes the form of a
monologue. Such for example is Stanley's fanciful flight on a round-the-world tour as a concert-pianiet. The stage-direction "to himself" which precedes this speech reveals that it is a monologue and not a serious effort to deceive Meg. Rather Stanley deceives himself by conjuring up this grandiose self-image. Thus the monologue is used as a linguistic indication of a character's interpersonal and existential alienation and self-estrangement.

Pinter emphatically denies any 'failure' of communication in his plays and claims instead to have dramatised people's attempt at evasion.

I think that we communicate only too well, in our silence, in what is unsaid, and that what takes place is a continual evasion, desperate rearguard attempts to keep ourselves to ourselves. Evasiveness is a signal characteristic of the fugitive Outsider who is afraid of aggression from a hostile world. Thus apparent non-sequitur in the responses of Davies do not evidence a breakdown of communication but rather arise from his desire for concealment. He suspects a lurking menace behind the most innocent queries and avoids direct replies (p.34). Thus the paranoic fears of the Outsider may lead to evasive language as a deliberate strategy. This must not be mistaken as Pinter's criticism of language as an inadequate vehicle of communication.

The use of language as a weapon is seen in characters like Goldberg, Mick and Lenny who emerge victorious in power-struggles in the plays. A steady torrent of language is directed by them on their victims whose defenses and evasions are thus broken down. The battery of questions and accusations levelled at Stanley without giving him time to reply reduce him to speechlessness. Mick's use of legal terminology on real estate lease and purchase and his sophisticated jargon on interior decoration constitute his method of carrying on aggression on the ignorant tramp Davies. One of the tactics of Lenny is to initiate pseudo-philosophical discussions when he wants to make the listener feel insecure. He tries this technique successfully both with Max (p.36) and with Teddy (p.52) and induces in them a feeling of inadequacy and powerlessness which later ends in alienation. The triumph of the aggressive alienating characters is
causally connected with their manipulation of language, while the defeat of the weak Outsiders is intimately related to their allowing themselves to be manipulated by the aggressor's use of language.

Pinter's stage-dialogue has often been noted for its close approximation to the actual speech of ordinary people. The effect of natural conversation is conveyed through the use of tautology, clichés and repetitions. Very often these quirks of speech arise from the nature of the speaker. Thus, for example, Davies's speech is replete with redundancies which may be traced to the fact that he himself is redundant and so to make himself and his presence felt he resorts to voluble speech. For as Saul Bellow observes, "powerlessness appears to force people to have recourse to words". When the use of clichés is unconscious and habitual as in the case of Meg it exposes the inanity of bourgeois existence, as also in Ionesco. But when a character deliberately adopts a trite phrase as Ruth does in her farewell to Teddy, it carries an ironic significance. "Don't become a stranger" completes the estrangement between husband and wife. Martin Esslin analyses the various purposes served by the use of repetitions - to indicate the boredom of existence, the inarticulate man's struggle to find the correct word, the hysterical irritation of an obsessed man and the slow digestion of an unpalatable fact. All these may be related to Outsider themes like existential alienation and the struggle to control and overcome aggression and hostility from outside.

Pinter's preoccupation with the theme of alienation has been explained as the author's attempt to communicate "the totality of his own existential anxiety". Martin Esslin considers the plays as originating from the playwright's "wound of existential anguish" which also includes the world's suffering and the anguish of other people together with his own. William Baker and Stephen Ely Tabachnick make the connection between the playwright and the theme of alienation too specific in suggesting that the theme and situation of his plays may be traced to Pinter's ethnic background as a Jew brought up in East End. Sometimes the autobiographical connection is pressed too far as in the suggestion that The Homecoming is related
to the author's own predicament in bringing a gentile wife into a tightly-knit Jewish family. However it may be said that the plays deal with the universal quest of how to come to terms with life, as imaginatively experienced by a particular sensitive and creative artist. Pinter claims that he wrote his plays primarily for himself.

I was always surprised that anyone initially came in to see my plays at all, because writing them was a very personal thing. I did it - and still do it - for my own benefit.

As one who writes primarily for himself, Pinter disclaims any commitment or aim of propagating ideas.

No, I'm not committed as a writer, in the usual sense of the term, either religiously or politically. And I'm not conscious of any particular social function. I write because I want to write. I don't see any placards on myself, and I don't carry any banners.

Pinter writes for himself from a driving inner compulsion. It is this which distinguishes Pinter and Beckett from the existential dramatists like Sartre and Camus who write out of a sense of commitment and whose mission is to shake people out of their sleep of unawareness to face absurdity and affirm it, to lead an authentic existence free from illusions, self-deception and bad-faith.

Pinter vehemently rejects explicit moralising and didacticism. In dealing with the Outsider and his problems, Pinter does not propose any facile solutions. But there are implied values in his plays, such as indignation at social pressures on individuals, criticism of the aggression and exploitation of weak individuals by others, and the need for kindliness, concern and sympathy in human relationships. In this lies Pinter's lasting achievement.

* * * *

John Osborne's early Outsider protagonists are dynamic and aggressive and do not easily allow themselves to be defeated by the system or by a hostile universe. Such, for example, are Jimmy Porter, Luther and Leonido who have been studied under the chapters on Malcontents, Reformers and Incest. But in the later plays there are some protagonists who break down under constant battering. Bill Maitland in Inadmissible Evidence is alienated at all levels and ends up as a defeated Outsider reduced to waiting in silence. He may
therefore be studied in comparison with Pinter's defeated Outsiders, though Osborne's play-universe is not really absurd.

The play opens with a dream sequence which brings to surface the submerged guilt feelings of Maitland. It is in the form of a trial where Maitland conducts his own defense. Paradoxically his 'defense' is in the mood of self-accusation as he confesses that he is "potentially and finally, that is to say, irredeemably mediocre" (p.17). His dissatisfaction with himself indicates his alienation from self. He also acknowledges his failure in friendship and love, revealing an alienation in interpersonal relationships. He says,

With the first, with friendship, I hardly succeeded at all. Not really. No. Not at all. With the second, with love, I succeeded, I succeeded in inflicting, quite certainly inflicting, more pain than pleasure. I am not equal to any of it. But I can't escape it, I can't forget it. And I can't begin again. (p.20)

He has reached the edge of hopelessness and despair. There is no escape or salvation in view. The dream is prophetic, for the play works out the stages of his alienation until he reaches the point of total estrangement.

Soon the mists of the dream disperse and life begins. Bill Maitland who had been incarcerated within "the dream, the prison of embryonic helplessness for the moment" (p.20) is seen gradually being encased in a prison world of his own making in real life. Maitland's alienation from other people is a two-way process - he thinks that others ignore him and even deliberately cut him; but at the same time he too cuts himself away from others. An early indication of the breakdown of communication between Maitland and the outside world is seen in the taxidrivers' turning a deaf ear to his call (p.21). He recalls this again on p.28 - "I still can't understand why I couldn't get a taxi. They all had their lights on: for hire". To add insult to injury, the caretaker of the office-building seemed to deliberately ignore him. Maitland complains, "the caretaker turned his back on me," "he looked straight at me. And turned his back on me" (pp.28-29). Maitland claims to have done his best to maintain a large circle of acquaintances, but it is of no avail. "I keep trying and the circle just seems to get smaller" (p.33). Starting with his secretary Shirley, one by one his employees leave him. Even the bait
of partnership is not enough to retain the longstanding associate Hudson in the firm. The telephonist Joy who had been the most sympathetic employee in the play also finally concludes, "I think they're all right. I don't like you either" (p.108). As for his clients, Maitland is at first most reluctant to meet them and tries his best to wriggle out of the interviews. When he is finally forced to talk to them he is so ineffectual that when they leave, it is clear that they will not come again. Maitland realises this and tells his clerk Jones,

I'm the wrong man for these things. You and Hudson should do them. You're the right people. You can handle them - I can't. They turn away from me and they're probably right. (p.76)

Maitland soon discovers to his chagrin that others in the legal profession do not want to talk to him and even make excuses to avoid talking to him over the phone (p.89). The play dramatises the cutting away of Maitland from five of the women in his life. Shirley and Joy, the employees with whom he had played the selfish philanderer leave their jobs. His daughter Jane who comes to the office to meet him, leaves without having spoken a word. Liz, his mistress, backs out of their earlier arrangement to spend the week-end together. She tells him,

Perhaps you'd rather I didn't come away for the week-end. (p.113) I just thought you seemed... as if... you might... want to be alone. (p.114)

Maitland's last contact in the play is with his wife Anna through the telephone. But here it is he who puts down the receiver, cutting off the last link connecting him to the world outside his solipsism. This is a highly meaningful and even symbolic act. Earlier he had told Anna,

Sometimes I think you're my only grip left, if you let me go, I'll disappear, I'll be made to disappear, nothing will work. I'll be like something in a capsule in space weightless, unable to touch anything or do anything, like a groping baby in a removed, putrefying womb. (p.64)

By deliberately replacing the receiver Maitland symbolically cuts himself from life and sets himself adrift in an aimless existence. In working out the process of total alienation from interpersonal relationships, Osborne is careful to show that both the Outsider and the others around him are equally culpable. If others desert him, he
too withdraws from them.

Like many another modern Outsider, Bill Maitland also hits out against bourgeois society. He reviews the middle-class way of life and pastimes with unmitigated scorn.

They're the ones who drive the family fifty miles into the countryside and then park their cars beside the main road with a few dozen others, get out their thermos flasks, camp stools and primuses...... (p.25)

He rails at their mechanical life and the lack of spontaneity in them. Even in his dream he sardonically refers to "the technological revolution" and "the inevitability of automation" (p.10). He is indeed a social Outsider full of "hatred against the symptoms of admass civilisation - its nourishment upon noise, its worship of the internal combustion engine, its computerised thinking, its 'slabs of concrete technological nougat,' (p.30) its trivialisation of culture into colour-supplement fodder".

In the course of the play he grows progressively alienated from reality and this is conveyed through the increasingly impressionistic mode in which his interviews with his clients are conducted. In his work, Bill Maitland experiences the meaninglessness of existential alienation. His work becomes for him an absurd mechanical ritual in which he is not able to find fulfilment. The dissatisfaction with self pre-figured in the nightmare develops into self-hatred as the play proceeds. He seems to consider his body and his whole being as a malignant cancerous growth, for he describes his thumb as "A fat little tumour. On the end of another" (p.109). Alienated at all levels, Bill Maitland reaches and helplessly accepts a state of complete isolation at the end of the play. The play indeed works out "Maitland's personal endgame".

The play is evidently a product of the age. It depicts modern man on trial, as a prisoner at the dock. Possibly it is the court-martials, People's Courts and the Nuremberg-experience of the World War which have generated the trial image as a metaphor of human existence. Man is seen to be on trial all the time, hounded by guilt, accused sometimes by hostile external forces and sometimes by himself. The nightmare trial with which the play opens is in the surrealistic
tradition of Kafka's Trial. The title of the play uses legal phraseology and refers to the evidence which cannot be brought to court because there is nothing definite or concrete to lay one's hands on. The reasons for the failure of Bill Maitland cannot be established in unequivocal legal terms though the experience is convincingly enacted in the play.

The contemporary technological era is glimpsed at in the play, but it is viewed through the obsessed consciousness of the Outsider. In the interview between Maitland and his daughter there is a demonstration of the 'generation gap' which was talked about much in the last decade. His monologous tirade against his daughter is an "indictment of the cult of coolness" among contemporary youth.

Even the play's structure is appropriate to the age. In an age of psycho-analysis when the interpretation of dreams assumes great significance, a dream structure is found to be imposed on drama. Inadmissible Evidence opens with a nightmare trial sequence, in which the protagonist is the prisoner of his own dream, haunted by guilt feelings. Even when the dream-court dissolves into the solicitor's office and the judge and prosecutor metamorphose into Maitland's senior and junior clerks, the odd mixture of the real and the unreal continues, thus diffusing the nightmare effect through the whole play. Apparently much of the play's material belongs to the naturalistic set-up of a lawyer's office, dealing with divorce, charges of adultery and homosexuality. But when all this is viewed through the alienated Outsider's consciousness, a distorting effect takes place, giving rise to a surrealistic dream structure and an impressionistic technique. Ronald Hayman describes the process—

The action on the stage is now being pictured through the distorting lens of Bill's vision. He is becoming incapable of focusing clearly on external reality and the device of having three different divorce clients played by the same actress forces us inside his muddled mind. The Outsider's failure in interpersonal relationships and his solipsism make him see his own predicament being reflected in all his clients. This blurs the difference between the individual clients and makes them appear identical. According to the stage-directions on p. 77 and p. 82, Mrs. Gamsey, Mrs. Tonks and Mrs. Anderson are all to
be played by the same actress. When Mrs. Garnsey describes her husband, his withdrawal from everyone and "everyone's drawing away from him," (p. 55) Bill sees himself in the mirror. The interview with the second client Mrs. Tonks is

a stylized interweaving of quotations from the divorce petition, read by the woman, and from a reply of her husband's read by Bill, so that each point is answered as it's made and each answer seems to apply both to Mr. Tonks and Bill.211

This interview is more stylized than the first and ends inconclusively with Bill not having contributed any valuable suggestion or legal advice to his client. She is hurriedly dismissed to make room for Mrs. Anderson. The third interview is even more unrealistic. While Mrs. Anderson reads her "statement", Bill responds sometimes mechanically sometimes irrelevantly and always as if he was thinking aloud or talking to himself, following lines of thought remotely suggested by her words. Their exchange is like inter-cut monologues which never become a reciprocal dialogue. This fusing of the three women clients into one and the doubling of Jones the clerk and Maples the fourth client serve a dramatic purpose. As John Russell Brown points out,

The continuing presence of the one actress and the merging of Jones with Maples ensure that the audience views the stage with something of Maitland's own obsessions, seeing a continuing confrontation.212

The Outsider's gradual alienation from reality and from people is brought out in these interviews which are increasingly unrealistic and non-communicative. The alienated consciousness of the Outsider is here seen to affect the dramatic structure and the dialogue.

When Maitland's daughter Jane arrives, she is just a silent listener, the target of the Outsider's tirades against others, against contemporary society and particularly against the younger generation. Just as in plays with malcontent Outsiders certain characters were introduced merely as butts of the malcontent's satire, here she seems to be introduced primarily as an object at which Maitland's helpless and ineffectual rage may be directed. The long monologue extending over five pages starts with his earlier fantasy about the rapport which he had yearned to establish with his daughter and which he had never really succeeded in doing. The first half of the monologue reveals
the deep hurts endured by him as he was ignored by everyone including his own father and his wife's parents. The second half of the monologue is a totally unwarranted tirade against the younger set to which Jane belonged. The attack is malicious, envious and vindictive, a desperate attempt to hit back at youth which hurts him by its indifference to him and by its own vitality and vigour. The monologue which does not draw any response from Jane reveals that the give-and-take of communication has broken down in the Outsider who is becoming increasingly incapable of two-way conversations. This monologue is a dramatic device to demonstrate the Outsider's isolation and alienation from other people.

The Outsider's unsteady, faltering grip on reality is effectively brought out by the skilful use of telephone-conversations, which, when represented on stage are inevitably one-sided. Osborne's stage-directions clearly indicate the ambivalent nature of these telephone conversations, delicately poised between the real and unreal.

This telephone conversation and the ones that follow it, and some of the duologues should progressively resemble the feeling of dream and unreality of Bill's giving 'evidence' at the beginning of Act I. (p.59)

More than ever the ambiguity of reality is marked, of whether the phone is dead, of whether the person at the other end exists. (p.63)

The telephone is stalked, abused, taken for granted, feared. Most of all the fear of being cut off, of no sound from either end. (p.63)

It is this obsessive fear of talking into a telephone which is dead at the other end that makes him implore Liz to be at home always to receive his calls. When an acquaintance refuses to talk to him over the phone, Bill can actually hear him saying, "Oh, tell him I'm out or something. Anything" (p.89). Here the telephone becomes an accomplice with others in hurting him. His wife Anna exists only as a telephonic character and is consequently a nebulous figure on the border between reality and the unreal. We only hear Bill talking to her and never hear her reply and cannot be quite sure that Bill is really talking to a flesh-and-blood person. His precarious hold on reality is brought out when he tells Anna over the telephone that she is his only grip left. But finally it is he who cuts off connection with her. The telephone is thus used as a dramatic device
of conveying the Outsider's sense of unreality and his final cutting away from all human contact.

Inadmissible Evidence thus provides clear proof that the Outsider figure affects and even controls dramatic structure. The Outsider's sense of unreality dictates the use of the dream structure while his isolation and inability to communicate with others finds expression in monologues and pointless conversations. As John Russell Brown observes, "The stylistic changes depend directly and solely on his mode of perception." The play's structure becomes the objective correlative of the protagonist's predicament as an Outsider. In Hayman's words,

As the hero breaks down everything is seen disintegrating; including the play, through the disintegrating vision of Bill.  

In this play as in most other plays featuring Outsiders, the dramatic conflict assumes the one-versus-all pattern. However there is a difference in that the Outsider is not attacked by others but is deserted by everyone. While the former attitude indicates that the individual is still considered to be a force to be reckoned with, desertion reveals the indifference of the others towards the Outsider. It is almost as if he no longer exists as far as the others are concerned.

Bill Maitland is thus Osborne's variation of the British dramatic image of the defeated Outsider. While Pinter's defeated Outsiders are vanquished by the hostile forces in an absurd universe, Bill actively contributes towards his failure by his own withdrawal from others, which further incites them to abandon him. The most important difference between Pinterland and Osborne's play universe is that Maitland does not live in a totally absurd, meaningless universe, but in a world where the cause-effect link is not yet wrenched apart. Hence even though there may be alienation at all levels and a surrealistic dramatic structure, the play cannot take its place among absurd drama. In the words of Simon Trussler, Osborne's play poses no metaphysical problems, attempts to construct no absurdist microcosm: rather it assumes the existence of a recognisable 'reality' and sets one man at odds with it.
In the European drama of the second half of the twentieth century, the Outsider appears as an absurd protagonist who refuses to accept the absurd and yet is unable to do anything concrete about it. This is followed by the defeated Outsider figure in British drama who is broken by a hostile universe and by the evil within himself. These Outsiders arise from an age which has lost its religion and God, an age devastated by war and the threat of a nuclear holocaust. Man's altered vision of the universe due to the advance in science, psychology, anthropology and linguistics is incorporated in the plays featuring these Outsiders. The impact of the Outsider is felt on the dramatic structure and the use of language in drama. Since in the absurd universe the laws of logic are denied, in drama there is no continuous plot embodying a causal sequence of events. New forms are forged in drama to express the new vision of the Outsider. The structure of drama approaches that of a dream or a nightmare as in Rhinoceros and Inadmissible Evidence. The linear structure of cause and effect is replaced by a circular or spiral structure which probes a situation in depth as in Waiting for Godot or The Birthday Party. The main focus shifts from characterisation to situation. Techniques and effects from the puppet-show, the mime, the circus and the music-hall are used increasingly in drama because they provide a release from the rational. The plays are open-ended without any definite conclusion. The Outsider's fate is left inconclusive at the end of the play.

From the Outsider as power-seeker in Shakespeare to the defeated Outsider in Pinter, the Outsider figure in drama has undergone various mutations, influenced by the intellectual, economic and socio-cultural conditions of the intervening ages. The Outsider arises out of an age of crisis and affects the dramatic structure in a significant way.