Chapter – II

The Movement From Alienation To De-Alienation In The Plays Of Christopher Fry

You make us to be the eternal alien in our own world.

- Thor, with Angels

Existentialism and alienation are inevitable in today’s world. Northrop Frye observes that the radical of today moves towards the first steps of commitment through the revolt against the absurdity that confronts him in the shape of an impersonal environment. This contemporary feature finds expression in literature. Several writers believe that alienation has no solution. Yet other writers look back to Geminschaft or organic society and commitment as opposed to Gesellschaft or mechanical society that causes alienation. Fry believes that commitment, selflessness, faith and brotherhood are the ways in which alienation can be grappled with and solved.

Alienation can be defined as the act or the result of the act through which something, or somebody, becomes alien to something or somebody else. Richard Schacht observes that “Alienation is neither a disease nor a blessing but, for better or worse a central feature of human existence” (15). Arnold Kaufman notes that when a person is alienated it can be claimed that his relation to something else has certain features which result in avoidable discontent or loss of satisfaction. Alienation is a term that is derived from the root word ‘alienus’ which means ‘belonging or pertaining to another’ which in turn is derived from ‘alias’ which signifies ‘other’ or ‘another’. Thus alienation implies the sense of being separated from or totally unrelated to someone or something.
Existential philosophy considers alienation as an inevitable condition of human beings. It sees man as one who must choose his character and goals through acts of pure decision. While the Marxist concept attributes man’s sense of displacement to mass manufacture and his inability to come to terms with his own scientific creations, the Christian view is that alienation is the result of man’s voluntary estrangement from God. Commenting on the sense of dislocation of modern man, Robert Kreyche notes: “Not only has modern man lost his vision of the reality of God, but of his own basic nature as well. What is necessary therefore, is the double recovery both of himself, of his own nature and of the knowledge and love of God” (193). It is a spiritual void that man experiences and this has to be resolved by affirmation. Michel Quoist believes that unless man makes his life meaningful and authentic he is in danger of being torn apart by the agony which follows the suspicion that life is meaningless and absurd.

In this plays, Fry too pleads for an authentic life. His views concur with those of Kierkegaard. For Kierkegaard, to exist implies being an individual, who strives, considers alternatives, decides and commits himself to acts of value. His view of alienation and reintegration is essentially the Christian concept which is that man’s essential nature entails his relation to God and his existential alienation is a consequence of his estrangement from God. The solution to alienation lies in man’s actualization of his essential self in God. Commitment is a necessary and vital factor for self actualization. This commitment is not arbitrary but an act of faith which is the gift of grace.

Erich Fromm describes an alienated individual as one who is out of touch with himself as well as with any other person, with experiences that have no relatedness to himself or to
the world outside productively. The estranged person feels guilty for being himself and yet not being so, for being alive yet an automation and for being a person and a thing. Fromm also notes that in its almost total presence in society, alienation “pervades the relationship of man to his work, to the things he consumes, to the state, to his fellow man and to himself” (123). Thus there is a breakdown of the human spirit when confronted with an order less world. Fromm believes that the sense of alienation can be overcome by mental health or the ability to love and to create. He calls for a productive orientation in which love is the force that brings about man’s active and creative relatedness to his fellow man, to himself and to nature.

This fear of nothingness is a psychological state or inner condition which fills man with dread and often starts the religious quest. Man has to face nothingness and overcome it by a spontaneous adherence to the law of love which will change his condition from alienation to de-alienation whereby his unawareness or avidya will be replaced by awareness or vidya. Similarly Morse Peckham states that man’s consciousness of his isolation from nature, society and his environment is the orientation from which he can move towards an act of value or commitment. Peckham also observes that comedy is the best vehicle to demonstrate that in the face of troubles, man is adequate, for “Comedy says, ‘Be consoled. If this very ordinary person can succeed, you can” (369).

In his comedies, Fry makes use of the Christian concept of commitment as the answer to the problem of alienation. This implies the belief in the unseen Reality or the invisible. Fry believes in the mystery of life and that comedy can reach out to this mystery.

According to Fry comedy shows “that groaning as we may be, we move in the figure of a dance, and so moving, we trace the outline of the mystery” (16).
Fry’s understanding of commitment involves oneness with other men. Hegel says in the section on the self-alienated spirit in the Phenomenology that man’s relation to other men and to the world are explicable in terms of self-alienation. Hegel suggests that man’s reunion with other men can be achieved through love. Malraux also believes that though man’s destiny is suffering and death, these can be defeated by affirming human dignity and participating in a sense of brotherhood with other men. This view of communion with others is reaffirmed by C.S. Lewis who observes that each man needs others physically, emotionally and intellectually as well as to know himself. Ortega Y Gasset sees a cyclic movement in human history which takes place in three different stages. They are the sense of loss or shipwreck, a return into himself or taking a stand within the self and final stage of action according preconceived plan. That man can triumph over alienation is thus stressed by many a writer. Malraux notes. The greatest mystery is not that we have been flung at random among the profusion of the earth and the galaxy of the stars, but that in this prison we can fashion images of ourselves sufficiently powerful to deny our nothingness.

Erich Fromm observes that the disintegration of love in the modern mechanistic society has brought about estrangement. Thus the movement towards de-alienation can be effected by love. It is to be noted that Fry’s resolution for the problem of alienation is at variance with that of Camus and the Absurdists. Camus sees man’s apprehension of nothingness, and the impossibility of reducing anything to a rational system, as evidence of the absurd. Camus has little sympathy for the leap of faith. To him it is no more than a desperate hope at variance with reason. The absurd denies any possibility of transcending the state of meaninglessness that culminates in death.
Paul Tillich comments that non-being threatens man’s self-affirmation and induces anxiety which appears in three forms, anxiety of death, anxiety of meaninglessness and anxiety of guilt and condemnation. This existential anguish of man has been portrayed in the depiction of existential revolt in modern drama and it is a cry of anguish over the insufferable state of being human. Robert Brustein observes that the dramatist of existential revolt is a missionary of discord and instead of myths of communion, he offers myths of dispersal, instead of consoling sermons, painful demand, instead of a liturgy of acceptance, a liturgy of complaint.

On the other hand Fry offers his audience the drama of commitment and faith. His conception of faith concurs with James Fowler’s definition that faith moves one into the force field, giving life a coherence and relationships with others meaning and purpose. In making manifest the need for acknowledging the mystery of life, the characters in Fry’s plays persevere, striving against the existential condition. Fry presents different types of characters who include both the atheist existentialist as well as the theological existentialist. Fry shows that the clash between the inner invisible world and the tangible foreign outer world can be solved only when the deeper levels of the consciousness rise to the fore. Like T.S. Eliot and Ugo Betti, Fry maintains that the despair of modernism and man’s estrangement are basically spiritual phenomena. He thus depicts the need to recognize and accept the supernatural in experience. Fry’s view that fragmentation can be overcome and that man’s wonder at creation and the universe can help him, is affirmed by the dialogues John Bowker conducted with people of different faiths in Britain. Fry is aware that man can develop a sense of fatalism at times shunning human
contact and bringing out the Judas in himself. But he firmly believes that man can overcome this by faith and a God-centred humanism.

Brian Baxter notes that in the relationship of God and man, God is seen as the most complex Other. Baxter observes that “The particular quality underlying God’s power as an Other is that He can be both adored or reviled by man” (13). When man worships and adores Him, he sees Him as a force of Omnipotent Benevolence who protects man. Thus he believes in total submission to God’s will and his actions are Other-directed. Man can also regard God’s domination as an unwelcome burden and a threat. Thus he exhibits indifference or hostility towards the other and his actions are for the self’s own ends. In the former the self is non-autonomous and in the latter the self is fully autonomous. A compromise not found in primitive religions has also arisen where God appears as a supportive friend with whom one can enter into a dialogue. In such a case the self is said to be semi autonomous and the actions are jointly attempted or other supported. Though Fry does present God as an Omniscent Power working His Divine Will on earth in The Firstborn, Providence is seen largely as a friend and supporter to man, in the majority of his plays. Fry believes in self-actualization and his views are concurrent with those of Maslow who believed that self actualization could only take place “through the medium of the Other as a base from which the self could work” (14).

Fry’s stance is also the Judeo-Christian tradition which holds that Adam’s disobedience in the Garden of Eden brought about his fall and estrangement from God. This can be regained only through God-directed activities. Like De Chardin Fry believes in the semi-autonomous relationship where a supportive reciprocity emerges between the Self and the Other akin to the relationship between a loving father and his child. Fry is aware
that the more technological society becomes, the greater the distance between man and
god and this is of man’s own making. The way to solve this is to acknowledge the
mystery of life and of God. It is this which prompted him to say when writing *The
Lady’s Not for Burning*: “I could see no reason though writing such a comedy, why I
should not treat the world as I see it, a world in which we are all poised on the edge of
eternity, a world which has deeps and shadows of mystery, in which god is anything but a
sleeping partner” (Qtd. in Derek Stanford).
Fry thus makes evident in his plays that man must use God’s assistance to support his
present condition and extend the possibilities of his self. In analyzing the character’s
movement from alienation to reintegration in Fry’s plays it is relevant to use Kenneth
Keniston’s categories of form, mode, agent and replacement. These four elements
explain what the alienated person is alienated from, how the alienation is manifested,
what the agent of alienation is and what replaces the old relationship, if any. Fry’s view
is that the working of Providential will along with man’s awareness of the wonder and
mystery of life will effect a replacement for man’s sense of fragmentation or existential
anguish.
Fry’s plays are fundamentally comedies but he acknowledges the experience of
alienation. He makes it clear that the solution for or way out of alienation is out suicide,
the death wish or desire for isolation. He does not offer an answer through “vulnerable
optimism” but depicts man’s struggle in life as “an angle of experience where the dark is
distilled into light” (16). In Fry’s plays the number of men who undergo alienation and
their degree of alienation are greater than the number of women who undergo the same
with lesser intensity. According to the extent of fragmentation undergone, the characters
are as follows- Richard Gettner of *The Dark is Light Enough*, Thomas Mendip of *The Lady’s Not for Burning*, Robert Bruno of *A Yard of Sun*, Cymen of *Thor, with Angels*, Moses of *The Firstborn*, David King of *A Sleep of Prisoners*, Tegeus of *A Phoenix Too Frequent*, Henry Plagenet of *Curtmantle*, Seti of *The Firstborn*, The Duke of *Venus Observed*, Shendi of *The Firstborn* and Edgar of *Venus Observed*. In *The Boy with a Cart* there is potential for the growth of alienation, which does not take place in Cuthman due to his faith. The alienated men move towards de-alienation with agents or instruments that guide them to reintegration, namely, women, love and belief in God. The women who undergo alienation are Rosabel Fleming of *Venus Observed*, Dynamene of *A Phoenix Too Frequent*, Jennet Jourdemayne of *The Lady’s Not for Burning*, Eleanor of *Curtmantle*, Miriam of *The Firstborn* and Grazia of *A Yard of Sun*. There is a difference in the depth of fragmentation experienced by the women from that of the men. In the majority of cases except in Henry’s and Shendi’s, where there is no replacement, Fry makes manifest that de-alienation is process that can occur after man’s awareness of nothingness or meaninglessness in life, with the working of love. Love can take varying forms such as Divine love or *Agape*, *Eros* that borders on divine love, Compassion or the acknowledgement of man’s isolation, and surmounting this to re-affirmation of life.

*The Dark is Light Enough* centers on Countess Rosmarin Ostenburg, who through her pacifism and compassion converts the alienated Richard Gettner inspite of the various dangers he puts outsider or an existentially alienated individual. Gettner demonstrates alienation from people or society, from self, from the universe and God. In his attitude he can be compared to Camus’ Meursault who is alienated from individuals, society and its norms and conventions as well as from the human predicament in the universe.
Gettner’s alienation from individuals is manifested in his treatment of people as tools. His estrangement from self leads him to regard himself as a worm. His isolation from the wonders of the universe finds expression in his indifference, bitter cynicism and sarcasm and the belief that all human beings are born for failure. His need to live is a selfish one, totally self-centred, without feeling for others. He regards Providence in a half-mocking, half-jeering attitude. The agent of alienation in Gettner is his ego or love of self, as well as a distrust of all others. The change wrought in Gettner is due to Countess Rosmarin’s compassion or selfless love. This makes him come to terms with himself, accept life and start on the first steps towards reintegration.

Initially when Gettner enters the lives of the Ostenburgs he is a deserter from the Hungarian army. Countess Rosmarin rescues him after a lonely and dangerous ride in the snow. Gettner shows no gratitude for the succour but regards it as his due from his erstwhile mother-in-law. That Gettner is a man disliked by the others is evident in the attitude of the Countess’ friends Jakob and Belmann. Belmann is indignant that Gettner has brought danger to the Countess. He characterizes Gettner as.

That rag of hell
Richard Gettner that invertebrate
That self-drunk, drunken, shiftless, heartless
Lying malingerer Richard Gettner (TDLE 70)

He bluntly confesses that he has no heroic opinion of him, while Jacob asserts that no good will ever come of Gettner. Gettner reacts to this attitude with nonchalant indifference and self mockery.

The intellectual soul
Of Europe comes down to the stream to drink. What’s this
Floating belly upwards? A dead fish?
Gettner by God; (TDLE 76)
For him the Countess is a means to effect his escape and the residents of her house are bound to help him. He has no scruples about attempting to seduce Gelda when she tries to make up for what she believes is her earlier failure as his wife. Though she is married to Count Peter Zichy, he has the effrontery to kiss her and comment that he regards her husband worthy. Even here he exhibits self-love. Peter is nothing to him but a man who, he jeeringly thinks, is too perfect. Peter’s voluntary acceptance to become a hostage in his stead moves him little. His attitude is that this man too is but an instrument to save his own life.

Gettner has an avid greed for life and thus does not seek to commit suicide. His excessive love for life is completely self-centred and he clings to life even if it means risking the lives of others. Strangely enough his greed for life does not create in him a regard for the human spirit. He is ready to be thought of in the worst possible terms.

I’ll get down on all fours, foot kissing
Dust licking, belly crawling,
But any worm can have me for an equal
Rather than I should have no life at all (TDLE 186)

The extent of his alienation from existence is seen when he remarks that failure is inevitable in man’s life.

No one has ever failed to fail in the end
And for the very evident reason
That we’re made in no fit proportion
To the universal occasion which, as all
Children, poets, and myth-makers know,
Was made to be inhabited
By giants, fiends and angels of such size
The whole volume of human generations
Could be cupped in their hands; (TDLE 108)
When Gelda tells him that no one mocked him in his marriage to her he says

Reality itself, with wonder and power,
Calls for the sound of great spirits
And mocks us with a wretched human capacity
I wrote frustration syllable by syllable (TDLE109).

He is aware of the gulf between what he should be and what he is. The malcontent outsider thinks the worst of people because he is aware of the vast gulf between what man believes he ought to be and what man actually is (77). His own frustration and failure convince Gettner that man will always fail. He can only see ‘man’ as himself and even if he does see virtue in others he jeers at it. When peter wishes his safety Gettner thinks it is a whim. He distrusts Stefan and when he says so, Gelda diagnoses the sickness within him: “Why should you trust anyone? It’s unlikely /You can draw from the world what you never paid into it./ Some people doubt most what they lack most” (TDLE 106).

It is this lack of trust that makes Gettner say “I’II not die to oblige anybody” (TDLE 86). Yet Gettner seems to be humiliated at the terms of existence. Gettner’s condition is similar to that of Cross Damon’s who feels a directionless anger and an underworld sense of betrayal. Gettner directs his anger at the world, at all the people around him and thinks that he is justified in betraying them if it will allow him to escape unscathed. Gettner is also alienated from Providence. He scorns virtues and mocks divinity. When the Countess places her trust in him he cynically comments: “God’s a woman. That surprises you, / But it’s perfectly evident in every aspect / Of the arrangement” (TDLE 129).

Being human and imperfect, he attributes to the Divine, human qualities knowing well the Countess’ sincerity and truthfulness, Gettner shamelessly prevails upon her to lie when he hears of the arrival of Colonel Janik and his troops. “Lie, lie; O Christ, lie for me; (TDLE90). Gettner thus shows himself to be an unbeliever not only in god but in
goodness too. He fails to take into account the entire range of his faculties and experiences in order to arrive at knowledge of Providence and contradicts himself in refusing to accept the testimony of the experience of his conscience. This is even clearer in his failure to acknowledge responsibility for injuring Stefan: “But then / I felt him shoot, and my body jarred / From held to foot, and my pistol fired” (TDLE 137). Gettner’s ego and self-centredness as well as his lack of belief in all other people and things set him out as an alienated individual unwilling to accept others and caring less for other’s acceptance. He is a rebel filled with self-loathing and self-destructive willfulness, refusing to control either and aiming to gain life at other’s expense, Gettner’s cynicism, pessimism and idea of evil are akin to that of Brother Anselm’s accusation against the Pessimist whose exaggerated notion of evil blinds him to good.(47)

The nature of Gettner’s frustration, exasperation and perversity can be compared to that of Hedda Gabler. Gettner’s alienation brings about a perverted self-love. It is not love of the self in the true sense, for her reiterates his worthlessness. He manifests his sense of isolation through his words and actions. Significantly Jakob and Belmann attribute animal qualities to Gettner. This implies that they detest him because he is a threat to the undisturbed world of the Countess. Gettner himself re-affirms his degeneration when he states that he is no better than a worm. Belmann commenting on the Countess’ rescue of Gettner notes; “But humanly I see no point of balance/ Between a man and a rat.” (TDLE98) Later he refers to him as an invertebrate. Gettner refers contemptuously to himself as “a dead fish”, a worm” and “a slug”, This is heightened by his use of the terms “foot-kissing”, “dust-licking” and “belly crawling” which show the levels to which he will descend to save himself.
But Gettner’s movement towards de-alienation is effected by an opposing force as intense in its strength as is his perversity. The Countess’ Agape’ or unconditional love brings about this change. Though Gettner regards being saved by her as his due, a slight puzzlement tinged with disbelief marks him when the Countess and her household do not surrender him to Colonel Janik. Even after causing harm to Stefan. Gettner flies, without consideration for the wounded horse he takes. When he returns, irked by the constant rumour that the Countess is dead, he declares that he should have ridden straight on. He misunderstands her compassion for love and suggests that she should marry him. The Countess sets clear his notions. He tries to leave but is prevented by the arrival of the Austrian troops. At the moment of escape he changes his decision and confronts the troops with the dead countess by his side. He thus makes the ultimate resolution of becoming a changed man.

You never showed
Any expectations of me when you are alive,
Why should you now?
This isn’t how I meant that you should love me!
Very well, very well
Be with me. (TDLE 166)

Throughout, countess Rosmarin treats Gettner’s perversity as the nature of a recalcitrant child or a man who helplessly does not know who to accuse for his own faults. She firmly believes: “Life has a hope of him / Or he would never have lived” (TDLE 118). She reacts to all Gettner’s perversity and selfishness with a grandiose retaliation that of a selfless giving of herself with no expectation of anything from him. This ultimately shows the seeds of regeneration, for with her death, Gettner’s isolation begins to be replaced by a sense of awareness of his true self and ability to face reality without
flinching. In Gettner’s facing the Austrian troops, Fry envisages the change wrought in the alienated individual through love.

In *The Lady’s Not for Burning* the action centers round two events- the death wish and the practice of witchcraft. Though set in the fifteenth century, Fry skillfully manipulates characters and actions against this background to convey that the modern age too has not yet been set free from irrationality and fear, isolation and the death wish. He asserts that the therapeutic quality of love can change individuals, attitudes, society and ultimately the world. Thomas Mendip is the central figure of the first of these two related events while Jennet Jourdemayne is the chief character of the second.

Mendip’s sense of alienation is very intense. He is alienated from society. This is because he has witnessed evil, dishonesty, lust, avarice, red tape and indifference, all of which are perpetrated by man himself. But he is not alienated from God. He regards God as one who protects or preserves. Mendip’s alienation is manifested in his desire to be hanged. It is also seen in his attempts to show others where they err. His redeeming feature is that he is drawn to me, because of his ideal of man. The agent of alienation is war. As a discharged soldier, he is able to recall men’s callousness towards each other and the cruelty and meaninglessness of war. But in the end Mendip’s attitude of mind helps him to replace his sense of isolation with that of belonging. This is brought about by Jennet Jourdemayne. Mendip falls in love with Jennet who has been falsely accused of witchcraft. Though he fights against love he is defeated by it. Mendip is made aware that life can be lived, with love. Yet his a grudging admission for he has seen too much of man to convince him of miraculous changes. He accepts life but remains conscious of the gap between what man should be and what he is.
Existentialism is a movement of protest, an outcry of human freedom against the
depersonalization, the dehumanization of man. (64) Regarding the condition of man.
War has made him bitter and he is acutely aware of the gap that exists between the ideal
of man and his existing state: “I’ve never seen a world/So festering with damnation”
(TLNFB 117).
As he believes that the world cannot be changed he resolves to leave the world, but to
leave it in such a manner as to jolt other men into a realization. Mendip has a faint hope
that in other men into a realization. Mendip has a faint hope that in his voluntary
hanging, men will realize their mistake and seek to change their ways.
Albert Camus commenting on man’s choice of suicide when confronted with the absurd,
notes
Every solitary suicide, when it is not an act of resentment, is in some way, either
generous or contemptuous. But one feels contemptuous in the name of something. If the
world is a matter of indifference to the man who commits suicide, it is because he has an
idea of something that is not or could not be indifferent to him. (7)
Mendip is resentful that the world does not measure up to what he thinks it should be. He
feels contempt for the earthiness of man which most often descends to downright
sensuality. As hitting his head against a wall, Mendip’s contempt is transferred to
himself. Thus he looks on man’s body as the instrument of all vice. He has a
subconscious hope that in the punishment of this individual body, others will realize that
the desires of the body should be shunned for the growth of the soul and hence man’s
ideal realized.
John Gassner states that Mendip’s condition is an existential one. “The anguish of the
skeptical savior of the ‘witch’ actually resembles the existentialist sense of isolation and
disillusionment present in the plays of Sartre and Camus” (732). Gassner adds that
Mendip’s despair is a watered down existentialism which dissolves in the light of Jennet’s love. For Mendip the world is damnation and the body is hell. He describes the world as

A world unable to die, sits on and on
In spring sunlight, hatching egg after egg,
Hoping against hope that out of one of them
Will come the reason for it all, and always
Out pops the arid chuckle and centuries of cuckoo-spit. (TLNFB 127).

Yet Mendip wants reaction and not indifference from society. Thus he tells Margaret Devize: “Oh, be disturbed, Be disturbed madam, to the extent of a tut / And I will thank God for civilization /This is my last throw, my last poor gamble /On the human heart” (TLNFB 128).

He wishes that the people will not clamour for the witch’s death but let pity allow her to live. When Mendip understands that the townspeople and authorities want Jennet burnt at the stake, he is more convinced that ever before of man’s brutality and failure to rise to ideals. This heightens his desire to be hanged. He claims that he, and not Jennet has killed Skipps. But superstitious Mayor Tyson does not believe him. To him, Mendip is a nuisance whose demand to be hanged, cannot be answered within the framework of the known law, Resolved to go to the gallows, pity for Jennet and an overwhelming love which he cannot fight against place him in a quandary. Love is to him a “mantrap” and when Jennet confesses that she cares whether he lives or dies his reaction is to shy away from all attachment. He presents the world as a filthy place, the heart of no consequence and man nothing, but a loathsome decaying vegetable thus demonstrating his alienation from man and from human existence: “The heart is worthless, /Nothing more than a pomander’s perfume / In the sewerage” (TLNFB 172).
This serio-comic picture of man has the existential overtones that evoke nausea. He bids Jennet:

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Just see me,
As I am, one like a perambulating
Vegetable, patched with inconsequential
Hair, looking out of two small jellies for the means
Of life, balanced on folding bones, my sex
No beauty but a blemish to be hidden Behind judicious rags…
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(TLNFB 173)

Mendip is convinced that life is grotesque and a continual process of slow decomposition.

Man thinks nothing of “using The name of unconsidered God as a pedestal On which I stand and bray that I am best Of beasts, until under some patient Moon or other I fall to pieces, like A cake of dung” (TLNFB 173).

The decomposing vegetable figure of man is reinforced in the reference to “a cake of dung”. He also refers to himself and Jennet a “caddist-flies” and their bodies as “worm cases” (TLNFB 65). To Mendip flesh is grass. Humphrey’s licentious offer to Jennet increases his cynicism. “Man’s mistake/ Lug-worms, the lot of us.” (TLNFB 201) These pathetic-comic comments denote humour but also a melancholy that arises out of pensive thoughts and a brooding on the ways of mankind. (131) Mendip displays a kinship with the absurd protagonists of twentieth century drama, in his ability to employ wry jesting and irony at himself which in turn stands for mankind. But Mendip is not alienated from God. He acknowledges his belief in Providence when he says: “I’m a black and frosted rosebud whom the good God/ Has preserved since last October.” (TLNFB 120). He is conscious that God’s creation is a wonder for he says to Jennet: “I can pass to you/Generations of roses in this wrinkled berry.” (TLNFB 171) He is aware
of the mystery of the universe and declares that it is wasted on Jennet who wants only facts.

We have given you a world as contradictory As a female, as cabbalistic as the male, A conscienceless hermaphrodite who plays Revolving in the ballroom of the skies Glittering with conflict as with diamonds: We have wasted paradox and mystery on you When all you ask us for, is cause and effect: (TLNFA 169)

Basically Mendip believes in the essence of man for he firmly states that man is a child of God. His obloquy is against what man in his complacency, fails to awaken to, or achieve. In this sense he is an authentic and sincere individual who is conscious that man has to change if the world is to become a better place for mankind. Mendip’s awareness, his melancholy and his mockery at himself can be termed dukkha which is a cognizance of a despair that comes as a result of his perception of man’s waywardness and complacency. The horror of war is the instrument of alienation in Mendip’s case. He carries with him memories of man’s cruelty to man in war. His desire to obliterate these images is defeated as he sees similar acts of cruelty in the everyday world committed by Lustful, avaricious and superstitious men. The final straw is Jennet’s condemnation. In a bid to rescue her and to shock others he takes on the blame of murder. All his actions are manifested as the result of his love-hate relationship with the world. In dying to the world he unconsciously wants to die for it.

Mendip’s sense of alienation is replaced by acceptance of life wrought through love. But it is not an easy resignation. When Jennet suggests that she will let him go, after fifty years he wonders if he can endure for that space of time, “hypocrisy, porcous poposity, greed, Lust, vulgarity, cruelty, trickery, sham And all possible nit wittery” (TLNFB 211). Jennet acts as the force by which Mendip adopts a new stance towards the world. He confesses realistically “Girl, you haven’t changed the world Glimmer as you will, the
world’s not changed. I love you, but the world’s not changed perhaps I could draw you up over my eyes for a time But the world sickens me still.” (TLNFB 211)

But love does enable him to be more open to men, creation and God. Mendip’s experience is similar to that of twentieth century man who experiences alienation which is an unavoidable condition and who wisehs to detach himself from a society which perpetuates such a condition (284). In spite of this men are willing to accept the challenge of existence and Mendip’s ultimate decision is to live in the knowledge that man is nothing in comparison to the Infinite, an All in comparison with the Nothing, a mean between nothing and everything (101).

_A Yard of Sun_ deals with the changing fortunes of the Bruno family and how its members try to rehabilitate themselves after the war. Their neighbours, the Scapares, also do the same. Angelino Bruno and his two sons, Roberto the doctor, and luigi the reporter still suffer from the effects of war. The third son Edmondo returns with his wife Ana-Clara and tries to bring a new order in their lives, overnight. He meets with resistance. Meanwhile Cesare Scapare, betrayed as a deserter is released and returns home. The time coincides with the restoration of the Palio, the horse race which is symbolic of the resurgence to life of the parish. Set against this background, the Brunos, the Scapares, Cesare’s son Alfio as well as the materialistic Edmondo learn to set aside mistrust and suspicion and to gracefully accept changes without being forced.

Roberto Bruno is exceedingly aware of the gulf between the ideal and the real. The play is set in 1946 in Sien in Italy. The Bruno family and the rest of the city are painfully moving towards a recovery from the trauma of war. The war has left scars and in Roberto they are especially deep. The one-time revolutionary and doctor by profession
undergoes the agonizing process of alienation that is experienced due to war and its aftermath.

Roberto is alienated from the members of his family though he loves them all. He nurses a hostility towards the rich, and has an axe to grind with the government and the municipality that do not work. He is impatient for change, which fails to come with the speed he desires. The doubts, fears and suspicions accumulated during war spill into his normal life and as a result the manifestation of his alienation is seen in his angry, bitter sarcasm aimed at family, municipality and government. He displays an open hostility towards his rich brother Edmondo and his wife Ana-Clara. His actions are aimed at hurting them. His redeeming features are his consuming love for his family that borders on over-protectiveness due to dread of war and his sincere concern, as a doctor, for his poor patients. The agent of alienation is war and the doubts, fears, conflicts, suspicions and horror that it has sown in his mind. The memories of war pursue and plague him. Cesare Scapare’s betrayal by an unknown person increases his guilt and the failure of socialism tries his patience.

Love, compassion, and true understanding cause a change in his life and effect de-alienation. In this process, the women, Ana-Clara with her broad and compassionate outlook and Giosetta Scapare with her sincerity and love help Roberto. This results in this genuine understanding of his family and realization of love for Grazia with the disappearance of suspicions and fears. There is in Roberto a conviction that life can be accepted and the world bettered.

Roberto is unable to reconcile himself to his present situation which seems to be extension of the privations of war. His rebellion is thus born of his awareness of the
irrationality in the shape of an unjust and incomprehensible situation in the wake of war (10). His words and actions are protests or demands which insist that the perplexing and unsatisfactory state of affairs be brought to an end. Even at the start of the play Roberto’s antagonism is marked. Tired of the inadequacy of the administration, each day to him summons in “a dirty world”, he declares “I want an efficient water supply and not/A hackneyed parable of modern life” (AYOS 2). His simmering anger is like that of Jimmy Porter in Look Back in Anger. Roberto is obsessed with the war-torn years just as Angelino his father and Luigi his brother want to forget them. Recalling Luidi’s caprices during the war, Roberto says “I have so much useless anger, /I could crack apart.” (AYOS 7) He disapproves of Luigi’s one time involvement with the Fasists and Angelino’s indulgence, when Luigi wishes to forget it. He thus accuses Luigi and Angelino “That’s the way! Don’t let memory interfere in your pleasures Either of you. Ignore the uncomfortable.” (AYOS7).

In contrast to Roberto’s obsession with the past and desire for retribution Luigi lightheartedly wants bygones to be bygones. Roberto harbours suspicions that Luigi might have betrayed Cesare. He feels estranged from all rich people as he suspects them of having exploited the poor during war. When he hears that Angelino has lent out the Palazzo he cynically notes. “So we’re enemy-occupied territory again;/ That’s a cheerful prospect”, (AYOS 3). His belligerence finds expression in refusing to allow a churn of water for the expected inmate: “We don’t yield a drop to the enemy.” (AYOS 23). Roberto also exhibits a deep-seated fear. He hopes that the revival of the past and the Palio will not bring a repetition in history or a recurrence of war. He is incensed and embittered to know that Edmondo has been selling wolfram to both the Allies and Axis
with characteristic unconcern for the victims of war. Convinced that Edmondo has been selling wolfram to both the Allies and Axis with characteristic unconcern for the victims of war. Convinced that Edmondo has not suffered during the war he has a deep desire to shake him out suffered during the war he has a deep desire to shake him out of his complacency into realization. “…We’ve not been tormented By flies, but bloody torture of the spirit. This land has fought and suffered, do you know what that means? While you were pilling up profits, however you did it (AYOS 44).

Roberto resents Edmond’s re-entry into their lives as he is the unaffected individual attempting to effect a change in the war scarred life of the Brunos, by trying to buy them over into the old “discredited welter of greeds” that they have been fighting against. As Roberto is unable to discover Cesare’s betrayer, and feels that it is the rich like Edmondo who have caused hardship in their lives, he focuses all his anger, cynicism, sarcasm and vengeance on Edmondo and ana-Clara in particular. His antagonism towards Ana-Clara is instantaneous at her sudden unannounced arrival. It is intensified by the knowledge that she is Edmondo’s wife. He is attracted to her as a woman, senses her response and unconsciously starts to use her as a weapon against Edmondo. Ana-Clara is very intuitive and understands his aim. Having experienced poverty herself, she sees through his game, as well as the genuine attraction he has for her. Thus she astutely remarks. “For a second you would have used me as he has used people, to convince himself of his strength. (AYOS94).

Edmundo too senses Roberto’s nature when he notes casually, that Roberto might wish to steal his wife. The antagonism breaks out into the open at a meal, when Roberto expresses shock at Edmondo’s callousness in selling wolfram to all countries in the war.
“Anybody willing to buy; My God, don’t you/Believe in anything in life except money”.

(AYOS 77) Edmondo’s answer contains an insinuation. “At least there’s no blood on my hands, like some people. It’s not bad to have made a good life in a world gone crazy.”

(AYOS 77)

Roberto actually threatens to kill Edmondo but is restrained by Angelino and propriety.

Luidi describes his brother aptly when he says. “Bobo, the trouble with you is you only see life through a rifle-sight and only hear it through a stethoscope you’re always either killing or curing.” (AYOS7)

But innately Roberto defines himself when he says “I set out to be a healer not a killer.”

(AYOS 7) Circumstances and actions of individuals as well as fear and suspicion have made him constantly on the defensive. He has a sincere love for his family and this he reveals in his talk to Giosetta who he believes understands him. “O God, Giesetta, why can’t they see? I care What they think and do, my bloody family Haven’t we all learnt enough, without Going back to learn it again?” (AYOS 50)

He is protective towards his family and so too towards Grazia who he says is the purest among them all. As a doctor he evinces a genuine interest in his patients and they love him. Ana-Clara notices, “You somehow changed each room/ Into a little ark bobbing on the flood”. (AYOS 60-61) War is the agent of alienation which makes Roberto suspicious of individuals, fearful of changes, angry at the rich and biter and helpless at the plight of the poor. He does what he can as a doctor but feels that he can do even more as a rebel. He does not understand that others do not want to or cannot feel as he does. Since there is inherent goodness in Roberto, the way to de-alienation is made easier once suspicion and fear are erased from his mind. He sees both others and himself clearly
when Grazia makes her confession that she had told of Cesare’s return to Rosa Levanti. Grazia’s reluctance to reveal her tormenting secret, her despair and her fear of losing love open his eyes.

It is then that Roberto realizes that truth has been lost in useless anger. He becomes aware of what has troubled all of them; “We all felt in some way self-accused/For Cesare’s arrest all of us.” (AYOS 84). Cesare’s return and plea to Roberto also usher in a change in Roberto’s attitude. Cesare pleads that his generation should not be remembered as a lifeless dirt-marked and terror-stricken race and Roberto understands that memories of war are best forgotten and if remembered; only kept in mind to avoid a repetition. In his personal life Ana-Clara helps him to see light. He understands that despite his being attracted towards her, it is Grazia that he truly loves. Though unwilling to agree initially he realizes that it is true as he had leapt to her defence in front of Edmondo. Through Grazia and Ana-Clara, Roberto realizes where he has been blinded by anger, suspicion guilt and fear. He thus understands his family better, no longer suspects Luigi and accepts life and the human condition with more grace. He is deeply immersed in anguish but is pulled out of it. His experience is real but Fry shows that such an alienated individual need not stay within the circle of his isolation (64). Self-realization can bring about a use of a man’s qualities in the Self-realization can bring about a use of a man’s qualities in the right way when directed towards human fulfillment. In Roberto is seen an emerging from dark depths into light.

In Thor, with Angels Fry presents the struggle through the dark night of the soul for the protagonist Cymen who is brought into the light by his acceptance of a compassionate God. In order to make clear that the belief in a loving God is relevant for all time, Fry
sets the play as early as 596 A.D. when the Jutes in Britain follow a primitive form of worship of the heathen gods. Cymen, a Jute warrior, returns from war strangely changed. His sons Quichelm and Cheldric are ashamed that the had not killed the Briton Hoel who had killed the Jute earl Eccha. Cymen takes Hoel prisoner, believing he hold the key to the mystery. Cymen’s strange behaviour in the battlefield and his unaccountable fits of humility and depression, incomprehensible to himself, force him to demand an answer from the gods. He is estranged from his traditional gods and belief when he fails to get a response. During this time he becomes isolated from his family which fails to understand his dilemma. He is on the verge of becoming an atheist existential outsider, but is brought back to a satisfying belief in a new order with Merlin’s prophecy and St. Augustine’s arrival. In Cymen is seen alienation from the traditional gods and this is manifested in his breaking of the altar which is sacrilege to his family. The agent of alienation is the failure of an answer from the heathen gods. Cymen’s alienation is peculiar in that God brings about his fragmentation through the three near-miracles, Cymen saving Hoel, Cymen drinking a toast for peace and his sword turning towards his own son. The replacement for the old relationship is seen in Cymen’s new faith, in the belief of a loving and compassionate God who has sacrificed himself through the Crucifixion and who no longer needs any sacrifices from men. The estrangement that Cymen suffers is a religious one. He finds no meaning in existence and sees the gods as enemies, at the height of his alienation. His recognition of himself and the world as having a meaning is established only with his affirmation of his new faith.

At the beginning of the play it is evident that Cymen and his family are in awe of their gods. The ontological relationship of man to God as the other is seen as non-
autonomous existence with the other. All actions are other-directed and more than adoration, is manifested awe and fear of the gods. Awe and fear of the gods’ punishment makes the family live in a state of perpetual uncertainty. Its members have created gods in a personal image seeing them as tyrants ready to thwart human effort, to punish and to destroy at the slightest provocation (105). For them the kindness of the gods in the heavens contains an element of force. (7) Consternation grows with Quichelrm’s revelation that Cymen had blasphemed against Woden and claimed that a blinding light had broken his sword. Clodesuida voices the general fear of blasphemy. Her purpose is to live, well thought of by the gods while Martina’s is to placate them. Fear increases when Osmer discloses that Cymen has shouted as he prevented Hoel’s Killing, “The gods can go and beg for blood;/Let’em learn of us”; (TWA 64) Clodesuida’s remark “It’s certain they heard” (TWA 64) only serves to emphasis their belief in vengeful gods who watch keenly for an opportunity to punish erring man. As the rest of the family are unwilling to be punished by the gods, they consider Cymen’s strange behaviour cowardly and dangerous. Fearing nemesis they admonish him and warn Cymen to return to the accepted norms of behaviour and belief. Cymen himself senses his control to speak and act unlike his war-like self. In his slow estrangement from his family, he suspects the working of some ancient, damp god of the island. He begins to hate Britain. His helpless anger is aimed at the mysterious force. Cymen’s slight is one of unease and fear, for the potent and Hoel the Briton can remove the dark that has enveloped him. He knows no defence against this dark which paradoxically is a “Burst of fire”. Thus what motivates Cymen to act the condition of his existence and the situation in which he finds himself. Calling for mead he declares that he will dispel all fear and fight the dark: “I’ll send fear
sprawling, By the zenith, I’II set / My foot on the neck of the dark and get the gods /
Again” (TWA 70).

Cymen shows reluctance to leave the known world he cherishes, meet the dark. Cymen
is unwilling to undergo the birth that to transform him. He is unaware that each individual
has to dergo a series of births, for the whole life of a person consists of the process of
giving birth to himself. (26) Cymen is ignorant that he is being led towards light by
unknown power which he alter realizes is god. In his state of unawareness, he resolves to
sacrifice to the gods, defying the darkness, yet, uncontrollably he ends his oath with the
unseeming words: “Let us love one another.” (TWA 70). This astounds his family who
believes he is in a delirium. He refutes this and declares he is sound. He determines to
kill Hoel but his sword turns towards his son Quichelm convincing them of his insanity.
Cymen declares that he will “master this mystery”. Even the oblivion of sleep eludes him
for “the glare of the brain” persists. Cymen questions Hoel and Merlin to discover the
reason for his fear. Sacrifice seems to be the answer. Yet Clodesuida knows .

I wear myself out securing us to the gods
With every device that’s orthodox, sacrificing
To the hour, to the split minute of the risen sun.
They’re being displeased by the rest of you.
It isn’t Easy to keep on the windy side of woden
As anyone knows. (TWA 77)

Clodesuida’s fears make her believe that the gods may strike at their enemies yet

“everyone knows, how carelessly they aim. The blow/May fall on us.” (TWA 82) But

Cymen questions:

Am I to sacrifice without end and then
Be given no peace? The skirts of the gods
Drag in our mud. We feel the touch
And take it to be a kiss. But they see we soil them
And twitch themselves away. Name to me
Who mocked me with a mood of mercy and therefore
Defeat. Who desired that? (TWA 82)

The gods who demand sacrifice do not seem appeased and Cymen feels them growing
distant. He does not understand Merlin or Hoel. The darm grows darker. He
comprehends to a certain extent the nature of the new force that invades him. Even after
Hoel saves the sheep from the wolves’ attack, Tadfrid and Osmer are unforgiving.
Cymen is unwilling to kill Hoel, yet underirous of angering the gods. Silence on the part
of his gods fills him with a grim resolve to sacrifice:

I will sacrifice
I’ll pay off whatever dark debts there are
And come to the morning square. I am tired, tired
Of being ground between the staring stones
Of air and earth, I’II satisfy the silence. (TWA 93)

At the altar Cymen’s cry is that of a man who is confronted with the absurdity of life. He
sees the gods as beings who turn a deaf ear to human misery: “Boding gods, Who broad
in the universe consume our days / Like food, and crunch us, good and bad Like bones./
What do I do by sacrifice? (TWA93)

Sacrifice seems a futility for it brings nothing but blood, “despair” and “desperation”
(TWA 93). Life is senseless and nothing brings a response from the gods. They keep
aloof, separate entities who will have nothing to do with the mortals who plead. Cymen’s
cry is form the depths of existential anguish. His awareness of the meaninglessness of
life is seen his words which speak of the unavailing monotony of sacrifice: “The death of
death is done and done and always / To do, death and death and death; and still / We
cannot come and stand between your knees why?” (TWA 94). Cymen longs for the
relationship to be a supportive one. The height of his alienation is manifested in his
words which form an impassioned request to and a bitter rejection of the gods as he
breaks the altar stones. This signifies his break with the angry gods:

By what stroke was the human flesh

Hacked so separate from the body of life

Beyond us? You make us to be the eternal alien

In our won world. Then I submit. Separation

To separation; Dedicated stones

Can lie as under until the break is joined. (TWA 94)

The family is horrified. After breaking the altar Cymen demands:

Answer, then, answer; I am alone, without hope.
The outlaw, no longer the groveller on the knee.
Silence me! Come down and silence me:
Then at least I shall have some kind of part
With all the rest. (TWA 94)

Punishment would have assured him of the presence of the gods. When no lightning or
thunder strikes him down, Cymen is filled with a total sense of absurdity: “Is separation
between man and gods so complete? Can’t you even bring me to silence?” (TWA 94).

Cymen’s plight when he thus faces this egregious condition of life is that which modern
man is familiar with. Albert Camus notes:

. . . in a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger.
He is an irremediable exile, because he is deprived of memories of a lost homeland as
much as he lacks the hope of a promised land to come. (5)

Modern man has the alternative of choosing to be unaware or committing suicide in such
an instance, if he has no faith to hold on to. Existential philosophers seek to show, that
man endowed with a will and consciousness is an alien in the midst of a universe which
has neither. He stops with his awareness of the absurdity of life, blaming the fates or
choosing death. Caligula in Camus’ play and Orestes in Sartre’s *Flies* stop with rejecting the cruel and manipulating gods shaped in man’s image. But Fry’s providential vision of the universe goes beyond the existential impasse. Cymen moves on to a realization of the God of mercy, love and compassion. God answers the anguished cry of Cymen through a messenger from Ethelbert of Kent who summons Cymen to hear Augustine who has come to spread Christianity in England.

On his return Cymen is no longer the puzzled angry Chieftain but a man blessed with understanding. Having crossed from the darkness into light, with tranquility of mind and infinite comprehension he says:

… The fearful silence
Became the silence of great sympathy,
The quite of God and man in the mutual word
And never again need we sacrifice, on and on
And on, greedy of the gods, goodwill
But always uncertain: for sacrifice
Can only perfectly be made by God. (TWA 108)

Thus is established the doctrine of the salvation of man through Christ’s sacrifice on the cross:

And sacrifice has so been made by God
To God in the body of God with man,
On a tree set up at the four crossing roads
Of earth, heaven, time and eternity Which meet upon that cross. (TWA 108)

Cymen learns of the one God and His compassion and realizes that God is man’s working partner in life. He now upholds the qualities of forgiveness, mercy and compassion and believes that

… if we could bear
These three through dread and terror and terror’s doubt,
Daring to return good for evil without thought
Of what will come, I cannot think
We should be the losers. (TWA 109)
Cymen is thus ushered into the light by the belief in a loving God and the play ends with the promise of Cymen imparting to his family how to live life in love, faith and humility. Fry demonstrates that God can and will put the urge to pursue Him in his subject. (11) Man will thus undergo spiritual darkness, the soul will be deprived of natural understanding but in the process be purified like gold in a crucible to contain the divine light that will ultimately enter. Though Cymen experiences a “boundary situation” (116) where he can make no sense of the infinite vastness of what is beyond his grasp. Fry’s belief in the salvation of man, is evinced in transcending the situation. Cymen undergoes a symbolic death, dying to the old order and being born anew into a new life of semi-autonomous relationship with God. Through the phenomena of religious conversion and the establishment of a new faith Cymen crosses from darkness into light.

In *The Firstborn* Fry dramatises the Exodus and depicts Moses’ conflicts as he saves the Israelites. Moses undergoes alienation at three levels. He experiences estrangement from God, from his own people and from the Egyptians, the degree of alienation in the case of the three being in an ascending order. His relationship to God as the Other is one of total submission. His is a non-autonomous existence and his actions are Other-directed. At the moment when realization comes to him that Rameses is to die, God is seen as a hostile force against whom moses is pitted. But this is momentary and Moses is reconciled to God’s will again. In Moses’ isolation from his own people can be seen his keen desire to serve them and the failure of many of his people to understand him. Moses’ sense of separateness is manifest in Miriam’s and Shendi’s grudging attitude towards him. Moses’ total identification with his people is not stated in the play and this is suggestive of future trials for him. His alienation from the Pharaoh deceives the
Israelites. But Moses retains a tenderness for Anath and Rameses even as he knows that
his way and theirs are irrevocably apart. As he resolves to lead the Israelites Moses
observes: “It is the individual man / In his individual freedom who can mature / With his
warm spirit the unripe world” (TF 69). Suppression of the Hebrews and the increase of
their deaths agonise Moses. An answer has to come from Israel and he is the means to
her life: “I am here to be a stone in her sling, out of her gall.”(TF 76)
Thus in Moses is seen not the helplessness of the individual before the overwhelming
forces in the world, nor the meaninglessness and futility of the individual’s action, but the
commitment of an individual to a course of action, and belief in the fruitfulness of the
individual’s endeavour. Moses’ faith reinforces his conviction that he can lead his people
to a new life. This he tells Aaron.

Somewhere, not beyond our scope, is a power
Participating but unharnessed, waiting
To be led towards us. Good has a singular strength
Not known to evil. (TF 85)

Moses has a benevolent providential vision of the universe. This is in direct contrast to
the absurd vision of man’s helplessness in a hostile or indifferent universe.

But Moses’ attitude towards God changes a little when he carries the dead Israelite boy to
Seti’s palace, claiming that he is compelled to action. The cracking of thunder creates in
him a momentary glimpse of God as an interfering power in human affairs: “Am I given
the power /To do what I am? / What says the infinite eavesdropper?” (TF 96). These
disturbing phrases reveal Moses’ subconscious resentment of God’s interference. But
this is only a passing mood in Moses, He declares that God will not abandon his people:
“He, the God of my living, the God of the Hebrews, / Has stooped beside Israel / And
wept my life like a tear of passion / On to the iniquity of Egypt” (TF 119).
But the realization that Rameses must die, is for Moses a “boundary situation,” when he
stands on the brink of existential alienation. He is helpless before the fact that if the
firstborn are to die Rameses is a victim. The sudden realization makes him declare to
Aaron, that he ahs blundered into an ambush and unseeingly brought about Rameses’
death. Feeling trapped he declares: “God is putting me back with the assassins/Is that
how he sees me?” (TF 128). At the palace, unable to fight death, he is helpless and
impotent. He undergoes a moment of bitterness and regret and experiences a sense of
betrayal and disillusionment. To him the final act is wrong: “All was right, except this,
all, the reason,/The purpose, the justice, except this culmination” (TF 138). He feels that
good has turned to evil:

Good has turned against itself and become
Its own enemy. Have we to say that truth
Is only punishment? What must we say
To be free of the bewildering mesh of God?
Where is my hand to go to? Rameses,
There’s no more of me than this.
This is all: I followed a light into blindness. (TF 138)

Rameses’ death leaves Moses with a sense of total loss. Death is seen as the ultimate
evidence of the absurd. The experience fills him with a profound world weariness. He
regrets being a disaster to Anath and Egypt. He fails to understand why God sends grief,
and would willingly die: “The blame could impale me / For ever; I could be so sick of
heart / That who asked for my life should have it.” (TF 140). It seems to him that he will
see man’s life move forward guilt by guilt and Rameses’ death etched in memory. But
Moses does come out of this existential anguish to affirm and accept the Supreme will, to
find meaning in life. He observes: “The wilderness the wisdom / And what does eternity
bear witness to If not at last to hope?” (TF 140). That he has transcended the state of
anguish is evident when he tells Anath, “We must each find our separate meaning /In the
persuasion of our days / until we meet in the meaning of the world until that time” (TF 141). Emerging from sorrow, disillusionment and the sense of meaninglessness of existence after grappling with them, he renews his quest for meaning in life believing that God’s power will help him in making life meaningful.

On another level Moses is not completely accepted by his own people. Though he tries his best and is convinced that he quarters. His sister Miriam and nephew Shendi resent Moses’ re-entry into their lives. Miriam believes that Moses still swears allegiance to Anath and Egypt. She prefers to live a life of suppression which has become a pleasant habit. Shendi is loath to give up his commission and sees his uncle as the cause for Israelite rebellion and the Pharaoh’s determination to punish them. Moses’ attitude is one of sorrow at their disbelief in God and his chosen deed as well as resignation that they see him as an alien still. The hesitancy of the Israelites to change their lifestyle causes this estrangement. But Moses ignores this in his belief in God’s power and is ready to lead them on aware of the trials ahead.

Moses’ relationship with the Egyptians undergoes a change with his killing of the Egyptian soldier as reported in the play as well as his knowledge of the need for Hebrew freedom. Moses is further estranged by seti’s orders to kill Hebrews, his mindless tyranny over them and his deception. Seti persists in treating Moses as the means to asserting Egypt’s power. Moses retaliates with the power of God, through the curses, culminating in Rameses’ death. Though painful, Moses makes a break when he says, “Death and life are moving to a call/I turn from Egypt” (TF 141). He however retains his love for Egypt and Anath but greater love for his own people and their freedom consumes him. Through Moses’ trials Fry seeks to show that the will of God is a movement of His
love and wisdom which drives forward in its own time and way to effect His purpose on earth and in the lives of men. It is this will of God that lifts Moses from the abyss and sets him on the path to reaffirm meaning in life.

In David King of *A Sleep of Prisoners* Fry presents the modern man’s mental agony and frustration when confronted with a hostile universe. The play is set against the background of war. The four men David King, Peter Able, Corporal Joe Adams and Tim Meadows are taken prisoners by the Germans. They are frustrated and ill at ease. Their prison is a church. The attitudes and reactions of the men are shown in their actions while awake and their thoughts and desires translated into dreams. Of the four men, David King undergoes the greatest frustration and agitation. By nature he resembles Roberto Bruno in his angry young man stance. David is furious because he has been taken prisoner. His anger and sense of helplessness find expression in various ways.

Being in a church, he openly declares his animosity towards God. He feeling of estrangement is clearly seen in his hatred for the place of imprisonment. He is hostile towards Peter’s playing of the organ, his mock sermon as well as the reading of Biblical verses. His estrangement is manifested in his regarding God as a jailor and a tyrant. In captivity his venom is directed towards his German captors. He believes they ought to be destroyed. He is momentarily alienated from his friend Peter as he thinks that Peter’s amiability towards his captors is perverse and a betrayal. He comes near to killing Peter in his rage. This distrust of Peter’s compassion is also manifested in his dream. But even David succumbs to the order of love and brotherhood as undergone in the common dream experience of the four prisoners. One of the themes that Fry deals with is the experience of loss and realization of the absurdity of man’s existence as well as man’s reaction to it.
David’s reaction is that of a sensitive man to a condition contrary to his nature and sanity. (19) Fry also makes it clear that man devises weapons against his enemies while the real enemy is within him. (19)

David Kind vocalizes his pent up rage and agitation. He longs for action, and is convinced that the Germans must die. He sneers at Peter’s light-hearted acceptance of Germans and suspects his passivity. David’s condition forces him to condemn good. To him good does not work in a world gone awry and so he chooses to rebel against anything connected with god, religion and good. The church becomes for him a “festering idea for a prison camp” (ASOP 9) where the smell of cooped up angels worries him. He resents Peter’s “no complaints” attitude. When Peter reads the Bible, he is irritated. He rebels at Peter’s passivity.

Any damn where he makes himself at home,
The wind blows up, there’s Peter there in the festering
Bomb hole making cups of tea. I’ve had it
Week after week till I’m sick. Don’t let’s mind
What happens to anybody, don’t let’s object to anything
Let’s give the dirty towzers a cigarette,
There’s nothing on earth worth getting warmed up about. (ASOP 10)

Peter’s mock sermon calling for love among all men is the last straw. David breaks down and his pent up fury seeks release in his attempt to strangle Peter. Compared to David’s “wall –eyed bulldozer” attitude, Peter is forgiving, bears no ill-will towards David and dismisses the whole episode as arising from his own “absent fisted” nature. David regrets his hasty action and questions Peter: “Why don’t /You do some slaughtering sometime? Why always Leave it to me?/ Got no blood you can heat Up or something?” (ASOP 13).
David’s action is a defensive one, a biologically adaptive aggression as he sees a threat to his interest. At the same time fear and anxiety cause him to become aggressive. Later David nurses guilt. But the reaction of his subconscious mind is evident in the dream that follows the men’s retiring to bed. David’s view is self-justifying for he sees the act as a justifiable punishment on a disloyal one. A chance remark by Adams, “Good night King of Israel” (ASOP 15) works on David’s mind and he sees himself as king David whose son Absalom has joined forces with his enemies. The real life David becomes King David and Peter becomes Absalom. He regards Absalom as “The nightmare”. This shows the incipient fear and anxiety that David’s mind harbours. Absalom meanwhile considers his father’s enemies as his friends and delivers a sermon admonishing Kind David. David in the conscious state feels that Peter has to learn to become a soldier. This is repeated in his dream where he bids him general Joab (Adams) to make Absalom fit for conflict. King David decides that Absalom is an enemy and has to be punished. He orders Joab to kill Absalom. Contrary to the real life incident where adaaams rescues Peter, David sees Adams as Joab killing Absalom and even in the dream, is objective and he sees David’s act as a violent brother’s hostile attack on a gentle one where Cain kills Abel. Peter’s view of the same deed is compassionate understanding towards David whom he sees as Abraham having to sacrifice Isaac. In the final dream which is a common experience shared by the four men, David’s initial hostility and doubts are finally cleared. Though he states that he must know on which side he is, his understanding and ordeal by fire assure him, “I can see / To be strong beyond all action is the strength/ To have” (ASOP 53). He realizes that hatred is wrong and goodness is strength, through the dream, David is taught a lesson in patience, acceptance and hope.
The man who nursed anger against God and Church and sees the Almighty as “God the Jailor, God the gun” (ASOP 25) retiers to be with the words “God bless” (ASOP 57). Fry thus makes good the fact that alienation from God, man and universe can be surmounted. The plays of the Absurd theatre present individuals who are appalled by the meaninglessness of existence. Unable to find a solution they lead a sisyphian existence or they drift along in a void or disintegrate with the loss of their sanity or take away their own lives. Fry points out that alienation is a phenomenon undeniably present and more so during war. But he believes that there is a solution for it. Hope, faith and belief in good and god are the way. These can effect a change from doubt, anxiety and despair to hope and a deeper vision. Knowledge of the self is necessary for the knowing self to act. Fry establishes that man cannot truly find himself without making a gift of himself. (67) He believes that the roots of peace must be in man’s heart. As long as man treats his fellow man as a being to be feared, mistrusted, hated and destroyed there can never be peace on earth. Man has to think in terms of one world and one family as man to man is irrevocably knotted. Fry thus calls for the religion of awareness and love, wisdom and compassion, of truth and love, which can lead man from darkness to light.

Love’s victory over death and despair features in *A Phoenix Too Frequent*. Based on a story by Petronius, it depicts how a young widow of Ephesus, intent on fulfilling her death wish at her husband’s tomb, is rescued by a vigorous corporal. Fry adapts the story to show how the corporal is in turn saved from suicide by the widow’s is love. In the play, Tegeus Chromis, the corporal, undergoes fragmentation in two stages. A Roman soldier, war and soldiery have taught him that cruelty and strife are the order of life. He is thus estranged from this nauseating vision of life. It is manifested in his gloom and
disinterest in life. The discovery of Dynamene mourning at her dead husband Virilius’s tomb inspires him. He begins to think that the world has its compensations. He falls in love with her, believes that she is destined for him and in the process draws her out of her death wish. This preoccupation with love blinds him momentarily to duty. The loss of one body from the six he is guarding convinces him that he is destined to die. He resolves to commit suicide but is saved by Dynamene. In the first experience the agent of alienation, war, finds a replacement in love for Dynamene. In the second struggle, the letter of the low causes anguish which leads to contemplation of suicide. This is transcended by Dynamene’s revitalizing love. The is symbolic of death and resurrection. The characters undergo a burial and resurrection, as it were. Tegeus’ estrangement is a ‘death’ from which he rises anew, fortified by love. James woodfield remarks that Tegeus’ name suggests the term ‘tedious’ and reflects his disenchantment with corrupt world. His disquietitude finds expression in his words to Dynamene when he reveals that her act has convinced him of goodness, “I’d begun to see it as mildew, verdigris / Rust, woodrot, or as though the sky had uttered / An oval twirling blasphemy” (APTF 18). Though Dynamene’s rejoinder is that death is all, Tegeus begins to be convinced that she is a source of inspiration, which has renewed his faith in human nature. The tomb becomes for Tegeus a place of blessing and a fountain of confidence in an arid world. Dynamene is attracted to Tegeus and calls him Tegeus- Chromis. He reveals his love for her but she assures him that it is not worth waiting for her. To him her darkness is an act of light. His movement towards her seems to him “a journey from the wrenching ice/to walk in the sun.” (APTF 36) When Dynamene finally admits that she too has been
overpowered by love, Tegeus-Chromis is ecstatic and declares that his feelings are that of the gods. He remembers after an interval that he is on guard duty. He is sickened by the discovery that one hanged body is lost. Bitterness, cynicism and total helplessness replace ecstasy. Fear and shame that he will be demoted and hanged, fill him. His sense of vitality of life discovered in love is replaced by a fatalistic resignation and deep anguish. Thus he asks “Why did I see you, / Why in the name of life did I see you?” (APTF 44) where Dynamene fails to comprehend him he pours forth his anguish.

I mean that joy is nothing
But the parent of doom. Why should I have found
Your constancy such balm to the world and yet
Find, by the same vision, its destruction
A necessity? We are set upon by love
To make us docile to fate. I should have known:
Indulgences, not fulfillment, is what the world
Permits us. (APTF 45)

He declares that the law will not allow him to escape with life. Dynamene hastens to assure him that his life is his own but with total sense of defeat he determines to die.

At the best we live our lives on loan,
At the worst in chains. And I was never born
To have life. Then for what? To be had by it,
And so are we all. But I’ll make it what it is,
By making it nothing. (APTF 45)

It is this juncture that Tegeus faces the absurdity of life and is convinced that life mocks him. Life is ‘nothing’ but death and so he decides to take away his own life make it culminate in culminate in ‘nothing’. When thus confronted with the absurd, an absence of order or sense in the world where the mind needs unity,(36) Tegeus’ obvious response is suicide. Bred as a soldier cannot brook dishonour and prefers suicide to being stripped and hanged. The least he can do is to die on the wave of life. He declares that law is
supreme: “It is determined in section six, paragraph three, of the Regulations / That has more power than love. / It can snuff the great Candles of creation” (APTF 48)

But Dynamene’s love is selfless and she offers to substitute the lost body with that of her dead husband, Virilius, so that through his death, there is the power of life for her and Tegeus. Love thus is the life force that binds and creates. Tegeus’ initial response to the world verges on the negative. He moves towards acceptance with the discovery of his love for Dynamene. But fear of dishonour stemming from neglect of duty fills him with a “fatalistic resignation” (266) and his rebellion to it is the decision to commit suicide.

Thus is seen withdrawal from life and finally participation brought about by love. This rebirth into a new life is brought about by love. This rebirth into a new life is brought about by love which is eros or sexual love which has the overtones of agape or compassion. Thus Fry depicts the reintegration of an estranged individual through love which rises from the merely physical to the spiritual. The replacement of the lost body with Virilius’ body is symbolic of the selfless sacrifice of Christ for man’s salvation.

Redemption for man comes through the flesh or the finite and comic redemption of one individual is effected through the sacrificial love of the other, which dispels all darkness.

Fry also presents men of power who undergo alienation. One such is Seti the Pharaoh in The Firstborn. He is a power seeker who tyrannises the Israelites to establish Egypt’s supremacy. Seti becomes alienated from Moses and the Hebrews. He tortures the Hebrews and is indifferent to their suffering. The agent of alienation is his over-reaching power to maintain Egypt’s sovereignty. Seti ultimately faces loss in the death decline of his earthly power.
Though Moses had been exiled for killing an Egyptian, Seti finds that he needs Moses to put down insurgency in the far reaches of his kingdom. Seti trusts Moses’ prowess as a soldier and general but fails to realize that Moses’ loyalties are with the Hebrews. Seti is overpowered by self love and pride. His love for Egypt is centred on the continuance of its greatness, pomp and glory. The Israelites are a means to help him achieve his cause. He desires Moses’ return for Egypt’s political stability. He believes that Moses will come back if he himself is willing to overlook his crime. “He is essential to my plans.” (TF 61) In order to achieve his ends he tells Moses “The past is forgotten/ You are a prince of Egypt” (TF 66). Thus Seti treats people as objects to be used to serve his own purpose. This usage only increase Moses’ and the Hebrews’ sense of alienation. Moses realizes that Seti wants to use him as a pawn. Seti is thus confronted by a determined Moses who will not allow himself to be used, as he has already realized his mission as an instrument of God. An opportunist, Seti says that Moses has come on his own initiative. His hardness of heart makes him totally indifferent to the number of Israelites killed. He callously asks Aaron, “Am I to compose the epitaphs / For every individual grave of this trying summer? / I have my figures. I do not need yours. (TF 69)

Seti also treats Moses’ belief in his God’s purpose, with contempt. When Moses reveals that Egypt herself suffers from disunity and strife, Seti’s anger reveals his refusal to face reality and shows him as a tyrant who claims undisputed authority, obstinate in his beliefs and hence an image of tyrants through the ages. His deceptive nature and craftiness are revealed in his breaking of promises. He refuses to accept the blame for the plagues. His rejoinder to Anath’s accusation of deceiving Moses shows his sense of pride. He refuses to face reality when Rameses requests him to allow the Hebrews freedom so you
also are afraid of magic and believe that this tall Moses can make a business out of
curses.

Total refusal to accept his faults and his ego cause him to say that though all are ranged
against him only he can protect Egypt. He regards himself as Egypt as he hands over
power to Rameses. “I am not/but I am always” (TF 134). He pursues his policy of
suppression and tyranny over the Hebrews, failing to acknowledge a greater power than
his own. In so doing he alienates himself even from his loved ones to a certain degree.
Consciousness of his own wrongs and acknowledgement of the supreme power comes to
him only with Rameses’ death. As a powerseeker Seti choices to alienate himself through
his desire for supremacy and the refusal to acknowledge the power of God. He thus
carries the guilt of Rameses’ death which increases his sense of isolation.

In *Curtmantle* Fry shows the conflict between secular and religious law. Henry
Plantagenet’s slow but sure alienation is the result of his pursuit of secular law to the
exclusion of all else. Henry undergoes fragmentation due to his overriding ambition of
establishing secular law in England. Henry becomes estranged from Thomas Becket,
from his wife Eleanor, his sons and his people which bring about Becket’s murder, in
Eleanor’s arrest, in is use of force and in establishing his decree. The agent of alienation
is secular law which brings him into hostile confrontation with spiritual law and all other
norms of life. The final outcome is that Becket’s death haunts Henry’s life though he
tries to clear his conscience through repentance. Eleanor leaves him and he earns the
mistrust of his sons. His own people at Le Mans do not mourn his death. Henry’s
obsession with secular law results in his isolation. He begins to doubt their firmness and
at his death the only compensations are the loyalty of William Marshal and he love of his illegitimate son Roger.

Those who rule are called to love and to serve (19) but Henry in his keenness to serve the people with secular law that will withstand the test of time, obliterates all other fields of experience. History records that Henry was adamant in reducing his affairs to order and those who opposed him were met with unrelenting unscrupulous resolution (181). Fry portrays how Henry’s adamant nature estranges him from spirituality, family and people.

At the commencement of the play there is an amicable relationship between Henry and Becket. The Chancellor disposes with his cloak when so asked by Henry and this is an instance of dramatic irony as Thomas will not be so pliable when the church is threatened by the state. Becket’s letter announcing his relinquishing of the Chancellorship drives the men apart. In the heated argument that follows both men maintain their stand and Henry rebels at when he senses is Becket’s contradictory power (C 210) which obstructs all his moves. When Becket admonishes him and says that he owes the Church obedience Henry retorts: “I owe no obedience to a man who cheats my trust in him /
None at all to an ostentatious humbug / Who dragged himself up by the shoulder of the kingdom / And once up, kicked it away” (C 211). Henry causes greater estrangement when he takes away young Henry, Margaret and Roger from Becket’s care. Fry makes use of images such as “fog” dullness and dreariness to show symbolically the animosity and conflict between Henry and Becket in act II. Thus Becket is seen as groping in the murk. When the Bishops take Becket’s part Henry’s anger knows no bounds. The use of the “unnatural light” which renders faces distorted and shapes grotesque, carries further the idea of conflict and Henry’s estrangement and an impasse.
Henry resolved in his plans, says “The labouring is most dark alone” (C 232). Things take a worse turn for Henry with the birth of Philip Augustus of France. The gulf widens with Becket’s return to England when he excommunicates all who have taken part in the crowning. It is at this juncture that Henry raging with torment asks, “who will get rid of this turbulent priest for me? Are you all such feeble lovers of the kingdom? “(C 249) though he orders the recall of the men who left the court at his words, fear touches his heart:

Dear Christ, the day that any man would dread
Is when life goes separate from the man,
When he speaks what he doesn’t say, and does
What is not his doing, and an hour of the day
Which was unimportant as it went by
Comes back revealed as the satan of all hours,
Which will never let the man go. (C 250)

He acknowledges that

Sprung from the smallest fault,
A hair- fine crack in the dam, the unattended
Moment sweeps away the whole attempt,
The heart, thoughts, belief, longing
And intention of the man. It is infamous,
This life is infamous, if it uses us
Against our knowledge or will. (C 251)

While Henry waits for the messenger’s return he is in anguish. When word does come

Henry is in the shadows and this reveals his reluctance and fear about facing reality.

Henry’s agony increases and he himself knows instinctively that Becket is dead. The “deep, low cry from the darkness” (C 252) records his anguish. His appearance into the light like a madman declaring.

No men are fit to live, no one in the world’
Foul and corrupt, foul and corrupt. All
Contagious. All due for death. Why should I spare
A man who can bear life and bring its messages?
They have made the king’s name death. (C 252)
is similar to Caligula’s awareness of the absurdity of life and the inevitability of death when Drusilla dies. In guilt he nurses a faint hope, “There’s been news, nothing was said, / It’s only here in my head, it’s only here / Behind my eyes- only is my thoughts?” (C 252).

Marshal’s negative answer makes Henry’s isolation complete as seen in his words “Let no living come near me” (C 252). This is Henry’s moment of alienation from the world, from family his people and from himself. The process of de-alienation is worked out in the play through Henry’s repentance of three years when he believes that the night has been crossed and he is free from the loathing of the world as well as self-sorrow.

But Henry’s obsession with secular law alienates him from Eleanor. He refuses to see Eleanor as an individual capable of contributing to nation building. In a counter move she establishes her Court of Love. But Henry has her arrested and there is no reconciliation in their marriage. Henry is also deserted by his sons. Richard allies himself with Philip Augustus when Henry is on the verge of defeat and demands his provinces. Henry’s belief in his son John is broken when he hears that John is Richard’s ally. Left with Marshal and Roger with the anxiety that his laws will not hold. At death he is stripped by his own people. His only allies are Marshal and Roger who give him his due as king and Father. Henry’s alienation is caused by what Fry himself term “his dedicated suffering for in ideal.”(86) Henry has the power to form an ideal but in his consuming desire for law he loses the power to see the difference between the right and wrong and also to discover a greater law than his own. (80)
In *Venus Observed* Hereward, Duke of Altair who has had relationships with many women decides to take a wife towards the autumn of his life. He leaves the choice to his bashful son Edgar. He invites three women, his old flames to watch an eclipse hoping to make an extravaganza of the occasion. When the Duke chooses young Perpetua he arouses Edgar’s discomfort and despair. But he is made to understand that age must retire gracefully before youth. The Duck’s isolation comes about due to his failure to accept reality as well as his egoism. He believes that he will remain young and thus refuses to accept the reality of aging. He isolates himself from society and believes that affairs of the heart will solve loneliness. His loneliness is manifested in his desire for rootedness in the autumn of his life when he summons three of his old loves and desires his son to choose one as his wife. His lack of awareness and indifference to others’ feelings are clear in his blindness to Rosabel Fleming’s love as well as Edgar’s hopes for the future. The agents of his estrangement are his egoism and inability to accept reality. But through the instrument of love as shown by Rosable’s passion and Perpetua’s confession the Duke accepts old age and waits for Rosabel’s return from Jail.

Fry shows that the man-woman relationship is a vital one and this is seen in the Duck’s search for female polarity. But his discovery of true love is delayed due to his narcissism which blinds him to reality. He prefers to live in a world of fantasy designed to protect his psyche from pain. In the process he fails to recognize that he causes others pain. He first embarrasses Edgar by making him choose from among the three women Hilda Taylor-Snell, Jessie Dill and Rosabel Fleming. He also hurts Rossabel whose introspective nature and diffidence makes her shrink from the crowd watching the eclipse. She bitterly resents the Duke’s unaffected nature while she loves him intensely.
The Duke decides that he must have the young Perpetua Reedbeck as his new love never heeding Edgar’s love for her. Perpetua is forced to accompany the Duke to the observatory as she fears that her father’s iniquities will be discovered. The Duke is perfectly described by Rosabel: “What can the darkest bruise on the human mind /Mean, when nothing beats against you heavier /Than a fall of rain?” (VO 169). Thus she sets fire to the observatory. This opens the Duke’s eyes to love and to the inevitable onset of age. He forgives Rosabel who he realizes has loved him beyond her strength. He is reconciled that Perpetua loves Edgar. He is content to share the rest of his life with Rosabel “sharing two solitudes” (VO 247). Thus isolation that results from a wrong notion of happiness in sexual love, is remedied by the acceptance that eros alone will not answer human need. The Duke’s cognizance of a mellow life is simultaneous with his awareness that “desire- prompted love is octopus- love” (64) which can totally destroy true love and beget hate. He transcends this with his forgiving of Rosabel and she in turn realizes that eros coupled with greed and possessiveness cannot lead to a higher consciousness. Fry stresses that acceptance and give-and-take are necessary for the success of relationships and the negation of alienation.

As a result of the Duke’s earlier actions, Edgar, his son, undergoes an unpleasant experience of alienation from him. But Edgar’s filial love prevents a direct confrontation. His love for Perpetua and Jessie Dill’s encouragement prevent further estrangement. Edgar experiences insecurity and feels helpless before his father. He cannot seem to do anything better than him. His disquietitude is seen when he regards himself as an extension of his father and not a person in his own right. “… Five feet
When Perpetua arrives Edgar’s love forces him to become more assertive. He discloses his jealousy to Jessie Dill, good-humouredly.

And any man
Who has to follow him (me, for instance)
Feels like the lag- last in a cloud of locusts,
By the time I come to a tree it’s bare
As a hat stand. Talent, conversation, wit
Ease, and friendliness are all swallowed up in advance.
And just at present I feel depressed about it. (VO 194)

Hilda assures him that there is place for both of them. Jessie instigates him to shoot his arrow and excel his father in archery. This Edgar does and it is symbolic of his confrontation with his father for Perpetua’s love. His fixity of purpose is clear when he acknowledges that there is a contest between them and he hints that his father should not seek to get what he aims at. But gentle Edgar realizes that his father in his elements is a threat to him and so asks him to forgo his animation for his sake. Though Perpetua does not accompany his to the All Halloween dance the ordeal through fire assures Perpetua that it is Edgar she really cares for as he does for her. Edgar’s declaration of love is marked by humility when he questions if he seems to be only a sort of postscript of his father. With Perpetua’s affirmation that he is a person in his own right Edgar’s doubts are cleared and all tension between father and son is dispelled. Thus Edgar’s uncertainties and sense of isolation are negated when love makes him aware of his own abilities and that he is not a shadow of his father.

Shendi of _The Firstborn_ is akin to the existential outsider of modern times. Shendi is estranged from the Hebrew way of life and resents being part of a hunted race. There seems no answer for the troubled life the Hebrews lead. His alienation is manifested in his desire for a better life. Thus when Rameses gives him a commission he grabs it,
eager to leave behind a life of torture. He declares that with this new life “hell” is over and done with. Moses’ order that he should refuse the commission angers Shendi and he hits out at Moses who he claims desires popularity in Egypt, “But in spite of that, / In spite of that, generous brother of my mother, / We hope to live a little” (TF 103). He sees Moses as an obstacle to his happiness. Shendi’s distaste for Israel and Hebrew life is seen when he beats the Israelites. He claims to Moses “I’m an Egyptian!” (TF 127). He decides to leave the tent though death is predicted for the firstborn. He still believes that they have trapped him from the city. When he hears the shuddering of wings he tears off his Egyptian uniform thinking that he will die. Though assured by his mother that he will live, he refuses to accept the Israelite way of life which he claims is not life but a death from the beginning. Thus Shendi experiences alienation from his own way of life and his race as that life is in total opposition to his ideal of freedom. Shendi is a contrast to Moses in his lack of belief in the will of Providence as well as his inability to face life as it is. His despair comes with the discovery of a world which to him is a broken one and helpless.

In *The Boy with a Cart* Fry dramatizes the story of Cuthman of Sussex, a shepherd who becomes a saint. When Cuthman loses his father, property and house he leaves his village carrying his mother in a cart that he makes. Pulling the cart with rope made of withies, he resolves to stop where the withies break. Despite numerous trials, Cuthman grows in faith and grace and succeeds in building a church at Steyning.

Fry asserts that man is resilient, that like Job of the Old Testament every man can have faith in himself when supported by Faith in God. Initially Cuthman is filled with faith that God will never let his sheep stray. When his father dies he is shaken. The people of
South England, the chorus, voice the doubt of the ages when they question him, “How is your faith now, Cuthman?/Your faith that the warm world hatched” (BWAC 13). Their subtle questioning “Cold on the roads,/Desperate by the river/Can faith for long elude Prevailing fever?” (BWAC 14) refers to the contemporary situation and is a question whether faith can survive the prevailing fever of skepticism, meaningless-ness, and alienation from God and religion. But Cuthman clings to his faith and longs for a truer sight of God. He then receives word that his Mother is sick and his house sold. Rather than this breaking him he carries his troubles and with firmness and implicit trust in God moves forward. He leaves with his mother carrying her in the cart he has made. He undertakes a journey rejecting negation and absurdity and despite trials establishes a church at Steyning. That man can grow with God’s hand guiding him is established in Cuthman’s words, “The church/And I shall be built together.” (BWAC 28). The suggestion is that “Cuthman probably met with the same reception from his companions as he would in this year of grace;” (30) facing laughter and hostility he went on with it all. The seeds are sown for possible alienation and Cuthman faces the absurdity of life with the three trials that beset him. His reaction is a greater faith. Thus Fry’s belief in God being anything but a sleeping partner in man’s life is clearly seen. God tests the believer. Kierkegaard observes that God brings his believer into all kinds of torments and then bestows the gift of miracles. Cuthman faces a boundary situation when the three troubles plague him. There is likelihood of alienation from others, society, oneself and God. Cuthman succeeds in making the leap of faith and accepts pain as a blessing. Fragmentation is also experienced by the women characters in Fry’s plays. The women are seen to be more resilient than the men. The depths of alienation which they plumb,
though deep, are not as intense or overwhelming as that gone through by the men. They emerge from isolation faster mainly due to their capacity to love. Among the women Rosabel Fleming of *Venus Observed* undergoes the greatest sense of isolation. She is alienated from the Duke, due to his indifference to her love, and to an extent from society because of her diffidence and insecurity. This is manifested in her unrequited love giving room to frustration, hatred and desire to destroy resulting in the burning of the observatory. Rosabel also exhibits an unwillingness to mingle freely with others. The agent of alienation is the Duke’s failure to realize her love. The new relationship that takes place is her understanding of her self and her needs which comes as the result of the Duke’s forgiveness. A reconciliation with the Duke is envisaged at the end of the play. In Rosabel there is a movement from the darkness of self love and narcissism to the light of self-realization, self acceptance and understanding of another. The process of alienation is painful but she emerges a finer person. Rosabel’s realization comes through stages. They are the expectation of love from the Duke, his indifferent rejection of her and a sense of alienation which motivates anger and frustration engendered by hurt. The action she takes to transcend these feelings is her setting fire to the observatory. She then realizes the wrongness of her deed. This realization and the Duke’s magnanimity in forgiving her brings about her self-acceptance.

Initially, when summoned to the Duke’s house, she arrives with much expectation as she loves him a great deal. An actress, she needs security and this she had found to a degree in what she believes is the Duke’s love for her. Unlike Hilda Taylor-Snell and Jessie Dill, she has no understanding husband. She is a mediocre actress as her comment on her lack of work shows. She has thus reached a stage when she craves for love and
encouragement. Expecting to be alone with the Duck she is dejected at seeing the other women present for the observing of the eclipse. She hastens to leave but the Duke’s entry prevents her. She begins to doubt the wisdom of her coming. The strange method of choice of a wife proposed by the Duke takes her unawares as she has not understood his nature completely. Her inability to apprehend his ways is evident. She feels out of place and fails to understand the significance of Edgar giving her the apple. She feels claustrophobic in the observatory and longs to leave. The Duke’s indifferent comment that she used to enjoy the room at night results in an explosion of her pent up feelings. She accuses him of lack of feeling.

How can you know, and what, if you know, can it mean,
What can the darkest bruise on the human mind
Mean, when nothing beats against you heavier
Than a fall of rain?
You’re a devil, a devil, a devil, a devil. (VO 169)

She exposes his callousness, berating him.

Your moments of revelation! I only wonder
What we revealed. Certainly not
What goes on in other hearts than your own
That’s as remote to you as a seaside lodging-house
To a passing whale. (VO 171)

The Duke’s continued insensitivity increases her frustration and hurt. All her expectations turn bitter, her self-esteem shatters and her pride is wounded. She experiences a sense of alienation. Her self-love and failure to understand the Duke increase this. Her love then turns to hate. With hate comes the consequent urge to destroy. Erich Fromm’s explanation is applicable to Rosabel.
Rosabel begins to admire destruction and the capacity to destroy. Her excited remark to Perpetua confirms this: “Whatever you loathed, you destroyed? / Why, that was admirable, superb, the most / Heavenly daring!” (VO 179).

Her desire for vengeance, and to hurt the Duke is intensified when he laughs at her longing to be destructive. By the rejection of love she suffers from the most severe psychological wound which a human being can bear. The dominating emotions are now her anger at the blow to her self-esteem and the desire to see the Duke suffer and acknowledge his mistake. Hers is a defensive response, an adaptive aggression to transcend insecurity. She believes that she alone can effect a change in the Duke, as her words to Jessie Dill reveal:

Nothing matters
Except that he should be made to feel. He hurts
Whoever he touches. He has to be touched by fire
To make a human of him, and only a woman
Who loves him can dare to do it. (VO 25)

She adds

Indeed, I can’t do less!
And nothing less will do to open his eyes
On the distances that separate him
From other people. (VO 26)
Rosabel thus decides to blaze a trail that would bring the Duke to humanity. When she knows that her action of setting fire to the observatory has nearly killed the Duke and Perpetua, she is full of remorse and realizes the enormity of her mistake. She now wishes to avoid the Duke and more than that she desires punishment. She tells Dominic: “I want harshness. / I want hatred if you would hate me it might help me to bear / To think of myself” (VO 26).
When Dominic suggests she give herself up to Sergeant Harry Bullen she hastens to do so. Meeting the Duke she confesses to him only to have him disbelieve her initially. She admits that she did not know of his presence in the observatory and says, “To-day, this awful day, the violence of a long unhappiness rocked / And fell, and buried me under itself at last. / How vile it was I know. I know for life” (VO 28).

Her realization stems from her horrified comprehension of the destruction she has brought about. The Duke retaliates merely with a quite sorrow that, that which he has loved lies in ruins. He understands that Rosabel has been hurt and the veil of his self-complacency lies torn. When Dominic reveals that Rosabel has given herself up to the law at his instigation, The Duke’s acceptance of reality and of Rosabel’s action are seen in his words “Loved me beyond her strength” (VO 241). He sets out to save her from the law and later discloses to Reedbeck that he will marry Rosabel when she is released from custody. Love thus brings the cognition of Rosabel’s hurt, to the Duke. He sees Rosabel as a person who has cared and who has suffered. Fry points out that both Rosabel’s consciousness of her wrong action as well as the Duke’s realization are the steps that make possible Rosabel’s rehabilitation. Rosabel can be healed only with love and acceptance. There is a suggestion that the negative elements in her are on the way to being replaced by positive ones, with the promise of love. It is also envisaged that the evil done to Rosabel will be transformed by her love into good if she is willing to live and love. Thus love is the healing medicine for the individual soul. Fry makes clear that real love begins only when one person comes to know another for who he or she really is as a human being, and begins to like and care for that human being. Thus alienation in
Rosabel gives way to the beginnings of reintegration due to self awareness, acceptance and love.

Dynamene in *A Phoenix Too Frequent* suffers estrangement from life with the death of her husband Virilius. Fry depicts realistically how the death of a loved one can cause fragmentation, but also that love can effect a solution in its own time. Dynamene is alienated from life as she mourns for Virilius. Having lost her familiar world her sense of alienation manifests itself in her death wish. She undertakes to mourn to death at Virilius’ tomb. The agent of alienation is Virilius’ death. But Dynamene’s death wish is not effected, due to Tegeus’ entry and subsequent confession of his love which she accepts. Her newly discovered love for Tegeus brings back her desire to live. There is re-affirmation of life and when Tegeus desperately seeks death in his turn as a result of shame at neglected duty, she fills him with hope and shows the way out of an impasse. Thus, in Dynamene can be seen a breaking away from alienation, to light and the resultant love engendered in her brings about reintegration after isolation of another, namely Tegeus- Chromis.

Dynamene’s well ordered world with Virilius, is rendered a chaos with Virilius’ death. This leaves her totally destabilized and lonely. Her only solution is to mourn and die at Virilius’ tomb. Sorrowful and unable to find logic in life she says, “He made the world succumb To his daily revolution of habit” (APTF 9). Her keen awareness of the loss of his supportive presence is manifest in her lament: “I am lonely, Virilius. Where is the punctual eye / And where is the cautious voice” (APTF 22).

This sense of loneliness and yearning for the strengthening and reliable relationship with her husband causes alienation from the world around her for she realizes the irrationality
of the world. Thus the death of Virilius with its implications of the transitory nature of human existence serves as the boundary situation which precipitates the afflicted Dynamene into despair after her encounter with the absurdity of the world. The death wish is due to her utter helplessness in a world where life has become meaningless. That Dynamene is alienated from life is evident from her deep grief, her refusal to come to terms with the need for living, and her eager longing to be reunited with Virilius in Hades.

Dynamene’s attitude to life is totally changed with Virilius’ death. She now desires only death through which she believes she can be reunited with Virilius. Her death wish is result of her inability to face a disordered world, to seek the sanctuary of the familiar world of Virilius. It is the desire for perfect order and an insulation from disparities. (34) This is often the reaction of men and women to certain situations that create a tension too hard to bear. Dynamene’s rejection of light and cheer is almost obstinate when she tries to send Tegeus away. She says, “I wish it could be otherwise. Oh dear, /They aren’t easy to live with.” (APTF 22). There is a suggestion to the reader that reintegration will come quite easily to Dynamene as her natural instinct is to accept life symbolized in her acceptance of wine offered by Tegeus.

Her initial belief that Tegeus is a shade from another world is proved wrong when she realizes that he is a practical soldier wonderstruck that one so young would die, so faithful to love. Tegeus is drawn towards Dynamene as her act of a willing death is a reaffirmation of goodness in a world which Tegeus had begun to see as “mildew”, “verdigris”, “rust” and “woodrot” Fired by such constancy and fortified by this great sacrifice he is charmed and believes that this is his destiny. He confesses that it has
renewed his faith in human nature. Dynamene assures him that the tomb is no place for him. Tegeus’ answer confirms the changing influence of love which acts as the life force. He expresses his desire to follow her to Hades and restore her to her husband and admits that he cannot bear to return alone. Then come his confession “I love you/Dynamenme” (APTF 32). Dynamene now looks on Tegeus as Tegeus-Chromis for his name signifies the life force in the shape of love giving her wine and bread and thus sustenance. Tegeus is convinced that he is born to love her. Though Dynamene tries to forestall him her own response to his confession is strengthened. But her conflict is clear in her questioning.

Love threatens to be a greater force than her death wish and she is not averse to it. Love triumphs over her sense of alienation as she confesses to Tegeus-Chromis.

O, all
In myself; It so covets all in you,
My care, my Chromis. Then I shall be Creation.

It is at this point that love fills her with a resurgence of life. From the stage of loss of rootedness, fear of life and a profound fascination for death she moves into the stage of love and the need to live for love. Her declaration that she will be creation marks the point where her name takes on a deeper and fuller meaning. The root word “dyna” signifies “power” and once filled with love; this life force gives Dynamene power. To act, to live and to give life to Tegeus. Thus her sense of alienation is replaced by a new relationship of love. With her new awareness of love comes a sense of her in the extension of her own grief, which is a crime. When Tegeus returns with the terrible news that one of the six bodies is missing and he must needs die for it, she uses all her new-found power to convince him that he must live. This is in contrast to her earlier
apathy to life and the death wish. Thus when Tegeus laments that life has never been his and that he has to die she asserts that it is Tegeus- Chromis the person she loves and not the Corporal. In contrast to her earlier desire to die, is seen her avouchment that love and life will triumph:

Love you for death to have you?
Am I to be made the fool of courts martial?
Who are they who think they can discipline souls
Chromis, love is the only discipline
And we’re the disciples of love. (APTF 48)

Tegeus is adamant in his pursuit of death, since he cannot face dishonour. As he prepares to kill himself he admits he cannot bind her to constancy to him. It is at this point that Dynamene makes a supreme sacrifice of her old love for the new and offers Virilius’ body in place of the lost one. Though Tegeus finds this hard to accept he does so when she declares that it is Virilius’ life that she has loved and not his death: “And now we can give his death/The power of life.” (APTF 49. In Dynamene’s case her love for Virilius and consequent helplessness at his death brings about alienation and the death wish. But Tegeus’ love evokes a response from her so that this new found security restores her desire for life. Her reintegration is so strong that she is able to give up her old love to nourish the new. The new relationship of love for Tegeus is fortified by her practicality and selflessness. It is clear too that Dynamene is more inclined to life and hence her sense of alienation is dismissed when she is accepted and assured of love by Tegeus. Relinquishment of alienation results in affirmation of life.

Jennet Jourdemayne of The Lady’s Not for Burning also undergoes intense alienation. her ability to overcome it is due to her strong love of life and a rediscovery of its unbelievable beauty and mystery. Dragged into a vortex of mob suspicion and hate by an
irrational society which sees her as a witch, she is alienated from the immediate circle of
the residents of the Mayor’s home and the citizens of Cool Clary. Brought up on facts
and rational thinking, the irrational outlook of the citizens and the elite opens before her a
glimpse of the absurd. The agent of alienation is the people’s desire to burn her. Her
sense of isolation only kindles in her a reinforced desire to live. But she is confronted by
Mendip who is keenly aware of the mystery of life and yet wants to die. This assures
Jennet that life is not built on facts alone. Her awareness of Mendip’s willing sacrifice
coupled with his love-hate relationship with the world assures her of love. The return of
her so-called victim Skipps assures her of life. Thus the replacement in her is her new
relationship with Mendip. She will not willingly let him go. Her awareness of the
wonder of life is heightened and she resolves to make Mendip happy through her love.
Jennet Jourdemayne’s scientific minded father leaves her with a legacy of a love for
facts. Totally independent, her companions are her poodle to which she talks French and
a peacock which eats at her table. Her way of life arouses the citizens’ suspicion. They
believe Jennet has had dealings with the devil and changed Skipps the rag-and-bone man
into a dog. Jennet is initially amused and humours the townspeople’s foolishness. She
soon realises that their feelings are a threat and she rushes to Mayor Tyson’s residence
which she believes will be a haven of rationality and good sense amidst the chaos.
Having been shaken out of her belief in the logical world she is near to tears. She cannot
understand or accept the irrationality of the world and declares matter of factly that the
dog they speak of is actually an appealing bitch. She searches for friendly wisdom and a
logical world. The superstitious nature, suspicions and blood lust of the mob has not yet
wholly penetrated into her mind. Nicholas Devize fascinated by the so-called “which”
offers her a seat and Jennet unsuspectingly believes the world is reasonable. Jestingly she says that she will not leave any signs of black magic, mice, beetles or demonology behind her. Surprised by Margaret Devize’s question as to if it was the fashion to die, she unhesitatingly answers that she seeks the protection of laughter, “They accuse me of such a brainstorm of absurdities/That all my fear dissolves in the humour of it.” (TLNFB 39) Convinced that she will be answered with sanity, Jennet good-humouredly related the accusations of witchcraft the people have piled on her unaware that Tyson, as superstitious as the townspeople himself, becomes convinced of the validity of the charge against her. Tyson’s ingrained sense of conformity to the letter of the law and his own suspicion bring form him a warning that all she says will be used as evidence against her.

Jennet becomes conscious that she may not be freed, yet is incredulous:

Do they really think I can charm a sweat from
Tagus Or lure an Amazonian gnat to fasten
On William Brown and shake him till he rattles.
Can they think and then think like this. (TLNFB 142)

At this point Jennet begins to realize that her ideal of the world and the world itself do not coincide. She thus has a glimpse of the absurd, which is heightened by all but Richard’s St. Joan can be traced here. When Joan hears that she is to burnt at the stake she exclaims in horror: “But you are not going to burn me now.”117 Later Jennet learns from Mendip of his existential vision of the world. As they converse, Tyson decides that they are indulging in blasphemy, and that Jennet has traces of “spiritu maligno”. When he orders Richard to fetch the constable to arrest Jennet despite Richard’s protest, she realizes that her belief in the rational human mind and the people’s innocence is wrongly placed. She learns that people believe that Mendip is the Devil and she, his accomplice. Mendip attempts to
draw attention to himself, sickened by the irrationality of the world as well as afraid of his new-found feelings for Jennet. Jennet appeals to the rational mind of the Mayor to rise above superstition.

Tyson arrests Mendip and Jennet and the latter’s appeals fall on deaf ears. Jennet’s youth and belief in rationality affect Mendip and he demands to be hanged; “For God’s sake hang me, before I love that woman.” (TLNBB 150) Jennet’s sens of the absurd continues during her captivity in the cellar. She cannot reconcile herself to what confronts her now, for her world is no longer placid or familiar. Though Mendip tries to get her to laugh Jennet begins to be convinced that there is no hope for her, “horror is walking round me here/Because nothing is as it appears to be.” (TLNFB 166) She believes that her alchemist father lived and died for a deram. As a rationalist, she needs only facts. When they are not forthcoming, she is bewildered. Her faith in the world presents a danger to Mendip and he uses cynicism and sarcasm to persuade her that life is quite worthless. He is also aware that Jennet is the “mantrap of love” for him and that she has her own “damnable mystery”. As he fears, Jennet confesses that she has been caught in the net of his eccentricity. Each is undeniably attracted to the other and there is care concern for each other. Despite jennet’s awareness of the absurd, her appreciation of Mendip’s sacrifice’ is intense and she says “It means I care whether you live or die. (TLNEB 172) Try as he might Mendip’s self- portrayal as a “perambulating vegetable” ultimately reduced to nothing does not horrify Jennet. Instead his attempts at self- abasement only evoke her forthright response.

She adds that even if he is decayed flesh or as corrupt as ancient apples she is willing to harvest corruption. That her love for him cannot be fought against is evident in her
remark, “you are Evil, Hell, the Father of Lies; is so/Hell is my home and my days of
good were a holiday.” (TLNFB 174) Affirmation of life is hinted at in Jennet’s reaction is
towards love and life. She is stirred out of her factual complacency and sense of self-
sufficiency and made aware that Mendip is no ordinary individual but one who seeks the
ideal world. But Jennet has more trials to undergo. Tapperoom misunderstands her
confession of love as her admission of guilt. Humphrey’s lascivious nature prompts him
to offer her freedom on the condition she gives herself to him. Mendip’s declaration that
she cannot yield only provokes her to answer that it does not matter, when death is the
end. When Mendip grudgingly confesses his love, Jennet knows that Mendip’s battle
against his feelings is lost. Though Mendip declares that the world still sickens him,
Jennet assures him that his death cannot change the world.

Jennet shows a deep understanding of Thomas Mendip’s existential anguish. She gets a
taste of the irrationality of the world in the citizen’s wish to burn her. Thus Jennet
understands Mendip’s agony at the difference between his ideal world and the real. She
too is confronted with an illogical world to which she had ascribed rationality and sanity.
She begins to understand that life cannot move on facts alone and one has to be aware of
the wonder of life. Thomas Mendip awakens this sense of mystery in her. Both Mendip
and Jennet suffer persecution in different ways. “Jennet discovers in herself a love of life
in the abstract as ardently argumentative as her pre-destined victim’s love of death.”
She is ready to lessen Mendip’s anguish and he accepts her in the end for he confesses
that he is loath to forgo one day of her. Thus Jennet’s sense of alienation is replaced by
awareness and in this movement, she helps Mendip to distance himself from his original
aim of death through hanging.
In *Curtmantle* Eleanor of Aquitaine suffers alienation due to lack of love, acceptance and understanding. Though initially Eleanor has the greatest admiration for Henry, Henry’s failure to accept her as an individual in her own right and his preoccupation with secular law cause a rift between them. Henry recalls how he won her hand and the tremendous awe that he had for her. She leaves Louis of France, becomes Henry’s wife and bears him sons. But Eleanor is certain that being a queen means much more. She sees herself as Henry’s helpmate in matters of Eleanor envisages a great future if the three of them, Henry, Becket and Eleanor herself get together.

Between us, by our three variants of human nature
You and Becket and me, we could be
The complete reaching forward  (C 226)

But Henry ignores her. Her sense of hurt at his failure to regard her as a capable individual is expressed in her words to Marshal.

You saw Marsha, how he turned away from me?
Am I no more distinct than the men who walk in the fog?
If I think I am a woman of flesh and blood,
And unmistakable spirit, He will soon undeceive me.
He turned away As he would from his shadow on the wall.  (C 227)

Thus she no longer sympathises with Henry. She is able to smile at the birth of Philip Augustus to Louis, as she feels that Henry cares nothing for her. Her sense of estrangement is conveyed in her words,” And now I am nothing in this land/Nothing but your occasional whore.” (C 231) She declares that she cannot remain a mere name.

You expect me to abandon
The inheritance of brain and heart
Which I received from my ancestors,
Who for generations have been a race of men
Born to act on events like sun on the vine.  (C 231)
She thus resolves to stay faithful to her laws in contrast to which Henry’s vows are “lawless”. She also determines that she must leave Henry and awaken to her own reality. At the Court of Poitou Eleanor seeks a world of love and constancy. Her taste of marriage with Henry convinces her that marriage restricts the woman. Thus when Henry comes to arrest her, her alienation from him is beyond all recall. She accuses Henry of confining his sons, Becket and all others to his laws. When she is arrested she declares that her spirit will not be a prisoner.

Thus the estrangement is complete. Eleanor prophecies Henry’s anguish. Fry presents the inevitable alienation of Eleanor from Henry. Her sense of alienation is manifest in her desire for recognition as a competent individual as well as the establishing of her own court at Poitou. The agent of alienation is Henry’s desire for secular law to the exclusion of all else and there is no reconciliation between Eleanor and Henry.

In Miriam of *The Firstborn* can be seen apathy towards life as well as an increasing sense of alienation from her brother Moses. When Miriam learns that Moses’ return to Egypt is not on merely a visit to her, she begins to put up a wall of defence, “I’ve had/Enough of trouble.” (TF 73) Chagrined at Moses’ concern for the dead Israelites she remarks, “Your sister, for example, is still alive/ Figuratively speaking.” (TF 73) As she senses his intention she wants to have nothing to do with it and declares that he is a “dangermaker”. Her resentment against Anath reveals itself in her words, “A king’s daughter/ Swallowed him and spat out this outlaw.” (TF 74) She fears that Moses will cause Shendi to rebel and so declares that she will keep her son safe at all costs, even if it is live as a suppressed people which way of life has become a habit and a kind of pleasure. She understands that Moses is working for the Hebrew’s freedom but wants no trouble. Thus
when Shendi is given an officer’s commission she supports him and refuses to listen to Moses’ advice that he should refuse the commission. Her alienation stems from her conviction that they are a condemned race, and her jealousy of Anath. Though she leaves with Shendi she returns, unable to watch as he lives his new life. She is Hebrew enough to say that she cannot witness him.

Her antagonism towards Moses continues as she regards him a “madman”. When shendi returns to take her back she bids him wait in the tent for the passing of the angel of death. But Shendi’s own anguish drives him out and as his mother, she pursues him. Miriam remains in the state of uncertainty and estrangement. Fry does not present a new relationship in her case.

Grazia Scapare in *A Yard of Sun* suffers isolation mainly due to her sense of guilt and failure to understand that love is forgiving. But her sense of alienation is dismissed by the support and understanding from her family and the Brunos. Cesare Scapare, Grazia’s father, returns home from war, only to be betrayed as a deserter. After the war, though she longs for a brighter future, all her actions are ridden with a sense of guilt. Though Grazia does not speak of it her unease is evident. When Alfio declares he will punish Cesare’s betrayer, Grazia accuses him of being like a dog scratching for an old bone. She expresses her aversion to his attitude. Alfio is surprised at her vehemence. Grazia’s avoidance of the subject of the betrayer is due to her knowledge that she has spoken of Cesare’s return to Rosa Levanti. She is convinced that Cesare has been betrayed because of her revelation. Her sense of remorse rides her. Thus when Edmondo offers her a new life as a model she grabs it. In her happiness, which she senses is brittle, she tells Roberto: “But I’ve been to trouble’s funeral. Poor thing/She’s dead. For a while,
anyway.” (AYOS 49) Later when Alfio is in trouble she confesses that she wishes she had told him news regarding Cesare. She gives vent to her feelings of anxiety which she has borne alone:

Her sense of isolation arouses in her a need to be an anonymity in Rome, a fancy person and not herself. She reveals that she had told Rosa Levanti of Cesare’s return and she would have disclosed it to others. As the family supports her and tells her to forget her guilt she reveals how her conscience has troubled her: “If I had told you, whenever we were together/I should all the time have known it was in your mind” (AYOS 84).

Roberto and Ana-Clara rally round her. Roberto declares that fear had become an ogre of certainty and she had suffered from self accusation. Thus with the support of the family, reassurance of its love and ultimately Cesare’s return, Grazia is cleared of her doubts. Roberto helps her and she believes that she can depend on him. Thus begins her new relationship with Roberto, strengthened by news of Cesare’s return.

It is seen that Fry depicts a variety of characters who experience alienation. All of them are ushered into light by God, faith, love, commitment, or perseverance. Richard Gettner, the atheist existential outsider becomes a changed man ready to understand his own worth. Thomas Mendip, the existentially alienated his own worth. Thomas Mendip, the existentially alienated individual, painfully conscious of man’s failings and acutely aware of God’s greatness, accepts life fortified by love. Roberto Bruno is guided away from anger, frustration and isolation through love. Cymen’s sense of alienation from God is dispelled by his new-found faith in the new order of Divine Love. David King, the representative of modern man’s victimization by war soberly accepts changes for a world guided by God’s love. Tegeus triumphs over both world-weariness and the death
wish through love. Seti and Henry fail to overcome their sense of estrangement because of the former’s ego and the latter’s refusal to consider other issues besides secular law. The Duke of Altair relinquishes ego and a false idea of himself to consider the feelings of another. Edgar finds himself and realizes his worth through love whereas Shendi’s alienation finds no solution. Cuthman the Saint does to experience alienation due to his steadfast faith in God.

The women characters also experience estrangement. Rosabel Fleming overcomes frustration, anger and alienation through awareness and belief in a mature love. Dynamene rejects her death wish when love enters her life and in turn offers new life to Tegeus. Jennet Jourdemayne glimpses the absurd but becomes the instrument that helps Mendip to accept life, herself becoming conscious of life’s mysteries in the process. Eleanor’s and Miriam’s sense of alienation is not resolved. While the former’s assertion of individuality alienates her further from Henry, the latter’s state is one of anguish, caught between her own people, Moses and love for Shendi, her son, Grazia Scapare’s guilt complex and isolation disperse due to understanding and support from family and friends. War with its consequent destruction and destabilization is a recurring agent of alienation in the plays. War alienates Mendip, Roberto, David King and Tegeus. Gettner and Cymen become isolated due to their awareness of the absurdity of existence, Gettner in a greater degree due to his self-centredness. The agent of alienation for Henry and Seti is their desire for power. Henry’s ego combines with his pursuit of secular law, while Seti is a victim of pride and ego. The Duke suffers isolation due to narcissism. Among the women Rosabel alienation for Dynamene while for Jennet it is the glimpse of the resilience to alienation and are the instruments of love, affirming life.
Fry uses the vehicle of comedy to make manifest his vision of life but it is evident that he is acutely conscious of the phenomenon of alienation in man’s life. At the same time he is conscious of the wonder that is life. This dual awareness is neatly stated by Fry himself in *Can You Find Me: A Family History*: “If we stop pretending for a moment that we were born fully dressed in a service flat, and remember that we were born stark-naked into a pandemonium of most unnatural phenomena, then we know how out-of-place, how lost, how amazed, how miraculous we are” (128). Thus comedy and humour become the means by which Fry demonstrated the possibility of man overcoming alienation to assert life. In the portrayal of man’s weaknesses and his possibilities Fry’s works resemble the miracles and mysteries. George Thomas observers that “Comedy develops from within the pattern of obedience to God’s will…” (13) Fry believes implicitly in Divine Providence. Simultaneously he sees the need for commitment on men’s part, to harness the hidden reserves of man’s nature so that the real and authentic self emerges. The faith that Fry enjoins men to have is not passive faith, but one that sees every possibility of action within the realm of real possibilities.

Fry’s love for mankind can be compared to Leo Tolstoy’s. He is conscious of the weaknesses and faith in man, yet there are elements of the lovable in man. Fry’s awareness of this is reflected in his characters who apprehend the paradoxical situation for us all is that we have no idea what our situation is” (31). It is this situation of non-acclimatization and the consequent anguish is alienation. Fry traces this condition through the vehicle of comedy and especially humour which show the reader something beyond. Thus the majority of his characters show awareness of and accept the mystery of life though an act of faith or commitment. Through humour comes a cognition of the
mystery of man. Like Jaspers, Fry calls for contemplation and awareness of the world. Like Marcel, Fry believes that the subjective affirmation of Being derives its meaning from fidelity. This need for fidelity is particularized through the characters of the plays, who traverse the path from night to day or darkness to light. Fry’s plays can be termed “comedies of ambivalence” (38) as they juxtapose the ambivalent aspects of life. The absurdity of man’s condition and faith are the paradox of life and they form the mainstay of the plays. Unlike Absurd drama the protagonists who face alienation generally give vent to their feelings through monologues, dialogues or action. This self-expression is a means to the final transcending of fragmentation for the majority of the characters who are saved from catastrophe through love or commitment. The characters who represent man’s hostility towards the Divine are reconciled to a new relationship with the Divine and those who find the universe or society inimical overcome these feelings to re-establish broken links. “Kirsegaardian dread is the pathway of Caedmon’s pilgrimage” (5) and Fry deals with the inevitable sensation of death before the rebirth. Through comedy Fry shows that reintegration after fragmentation can occur if man takes himself, his life and happiness seriously, (250) is aware of the gift of life and will recognize the responsibility of commitment and fidelity.