CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION
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(1)

Now we can re-assess our observations on the communication of dramatic experience as the communication of a total configuration, a gestalt, a pattern, a structured whole in which each element through a process of dynamic participation transforms itself into a constituent of the whole, and imparts to the whole a dynamic characteristic of self-fulfilment. This dynamic attribute of self-fulfilment in the dramatic experience in a gestalt is in a symbiotic relationship with the mode of consciousness of the audience. The audience is drawn to the theatre with certain expectations, and an awareness which incorporates both its past tradition and obsession with the present. Apart from this mode of consciousness, the audience brings into play its faculty to empathise which results in imaginative role-playing, and the faculty of withdrawal leading to an objective-critical assessment of the situation. It is through the manipulation of the twin faculties of empathy and withdrawal that a modern dramatist creates the aesthetic distance between the audience and the microcosm of the stage to evoke the type of response he wants.
A playwright like Arthur Miller might evoke a total involvement of the audience as he does in *The Crucible*. This is essential because the social and moral problem, witch-hunting, in modern society demands the audience's involvement in the issue. Rather, the witch-trials of Salem are so powerfully and successfully dramatized, the problem is stated so explicitly at the level of dramatic action that the audience cannot but involve itself. But audience involvement alone does not lead to a comprehension of the significance of the dramatic experience which in this particular case lies in self-annihilation and destructiveness, a kind of internal blood-letting which the witch-hunting leads to. It is in the fulfilment of the total form that a meditative attitude about the significance of the experience is impregnated in the minds of the audience.

Sometimes a playwright induces a feeling of contrariety in the audience about his central character, and consequently a total involvement of the audience is not possible. May be the play does not need such an identification of the audience with the characters because a mood of ambiguity is essential to the comprehension of the play, as in the case of Jimmy Porter in *Look Back in Anger*. If John Osborne had attempted to create only a conflict of generations or class conflict, the play might have ended as merely polemical. But Jimmy Porter existed in the collective unconscious of the people and when Osborne
concretized him in dramatic terms, he fascinated and repelled the audience as very few other characters in modern drama have done. Jimmy's enigmatic behaviour, "a disconcerting mixture of sincerity and cheerful malice, of tenderness and free-booting cruelty," as the stage directions indicate, creates that ambiguous response which guides us through the play. He displays a sadomasochistic tendency when he hopes that Alison, his upper-class wife, "will have a baby, and that it will die," and when this actually happens, it becomes impossible not to hate his monstrous cruelty in wishing it, and pity him in his misery. If Jimmy were fighting only against a generation or a class, this fascinating paradox would not have arisen. Jimmy is a man divided against himself and in the process creates a feeling of indecisiveness and uncertainty in the audience.

Sometimes, a modern playwright without operating a pattern of empathy and withdrawal in the audience, simply holds a horror at a distance and by its very contrast with the audience's own experience creates a response in it to reconsider that experience and the environment that created it. That is how the dramatic experience of Beckett's play Endgame could be appreciated. With a trifling resemblance to life in the beginning of the play, the audience is led through a fascinating horror which ricochets the audience to the security of its known familiar
world. Yet *Endgame* as a dramatic experience would not have communicated successfully unless it had already become submerged in the audience's consciousness. What the audience experiences is something emerging out of its own self—hence the fascination and the horror. Dramatic communication takes place when the audience already embodies that experience in a submerged, disorganized form, and when it finds its own experience being shaped, concretized in dramatic terms on the stage. The meaning of the play is comprehended with the thrill of 'Eureka.' No dramatist can lead an audience step by step, logically, to the final solution. The meaning of the play is comprehended in a flash, as a whole. Neither the situation, nor any particular character holds the meaning. They may guide our responses as do the blind Ham and crippled Cloc,cribbed Nell and Mag, but the play alters or heightens our consciousness only when we have gone through that nightmare. *Endgame* is a unique play in the sense that the playwright calls for very little empathy and yet implicates the audience and communicates his vision.

However, the dramatic communication becomes groggy when the dramatic experience sheers off the audience as does Strindberg's *The Road to Damascus* where the audience has to make efforts in following the zigzag chaotic course of rich, expressionistic dramatic events where Stranger is in search of his true identity. In this pilgrimage he
finds isolated, distorted, aspects of his own personality which assume ghastly forms and create a nightmarish effect but do not constitute an experience which the audience can recognize as the road to enlightenment, the Stranger's conversion. This failure in dramatic communication raises an interesting question as to why the audience's faculty of creative imagination does not melt and fuse - as Coleridge argued - the diverse and the disparate, the chaotic and disorganized impressions into a whole.

Psychologists use a term called "Reversible Gestalten" according to which if only a part of a total configuration is present the individual tends to complete a gestalt. They call it a "Closure Tendency" and give the example of a cartoon with a bare outline which our creative mind completes. Why does not this "Closure Tendency," "Reversible Gestalten" operate in the case of The Road to Damascus? The answer to this question lies in the fact that the audience's imagination cooperates only when that particular experience already lies buried in the audience's subconscious. Empathy comes into operation when the mind perceives the arc of dramatic possibility passing through its own consciousness.

That brings us back to the question of Harry's conversion in T.S. Eliot's play The Family Reunion. Almost every critic has complained that Harry's conversion is not
dramatised. T.S. Eliot's friend and the director of his plays, G. Martin Browne convinced him, as their correspondence shows, that Harry's conversion should be shown in dramatic terms. Here again the question could be asked as to why the "Closure Tendency" of our mind does not complete the process, as it does in case of a half completed cartoon? Is it because conversion is not so universal an experience that the audience could complete the process left unfinished by the playwright? But the very insistence of the critics, spectators, and readers that Harry should have been shown as "converted" shows a longing, an awareness, a possibility of mystical experience which makes a play like Murder in the Cathedral a successful experience though the playwright by giving it explicit contemporary political overtones made it extremely familiar and exciting.

A modern playwright does not allow the audience to make up its mind so easily, because he wants to place the audience in a constant state of tension by bringing its mind into a dialectical opposition to feelings. The moment we begin to settle down with something familiar on the stage, we have the sudden invasion of the unknown which turns our world topsy-turvy and obliges us to review our sympathies. Again, the hidden face which reveals itself in the familiar becomes dramatically significant because this too is a part of the experience of the audience, as, say, in Harold Pinter's The Birthday Party. Stanley Webber
is a down and out pianist who neither washes, nor goes out
and has buried himself in a sea-side boarding house kept by
a matronly woman, Meg, and her deck chair attendant
husband Petey. This is a familiar scene though our feelings
even at this point are not certain. Meg, in the opening
scene, treats Stanley as if he were her school-going son:
"Stan! I am coming up to fetch you if you don't come
down! I'm coming up! I'm going to count three! One!
Two! Three! I'm coming to get you." Afterwards, she says,
"So he's come down at last, has he? He's come down for his
breakfast. But he doesn't deserve any, does he, Petey?"
When Petey goes away, Meg plays a seduction scene with
Stanley who instead of responding to her grotesque gesture,
creates a fear in her mind that she would be carted away in
a wheelbarrow. Two mysterious characters Goldberg and
McCann erupt in this familiar though uncertain relationship.
They insist on celebrating Stanley's birthday and give a
murderous party at night in which, in a game of blindman's
buff, Stanley is hunted down like an animal, loses his
bearings, is brainwashed and next day in a clean business
suit is marched off into an unknown destiny.

Twentieth-century man, both in the East and the
West, is familiar with this type of experience and also the
method of cross-examination which reduces Stanley to an
animal-like incoherence.
Stanley: Uh-gugh...uh-gugh...caahhh-geg... (On the breath). Caahhh...caah...

(They watch him. He draws a long breath which shudders down his body. He concentrates).

Goldberg: Well, Stanny boy, what do you say, eh?

(They watch. He concentrates. His head lowers, his chin draws into his chest, he crouches).

Stanley: Uh-gugh...uh-gughhh...

McCann: What's your opinion, sir?

Stanley: Caahhh...caahhh...

The terror of the unknown in the open society of the West and in the closed society of the East has become a part of the modern man's awareness and Pinter's play through the Absurdist's convention of cross-talk and the elements of the theatre of cruelty communicates that experience successfully because we cannot withhold participation from a world which claims acquaintance with us.

How does a playwright evoke the response of an audience which has become so familiar with an experience, say war and oppression, that its sensibilities are deadened? John Arden, in Serjeant Musgrave's Dance, turns Act III into a veritable theatre of cruelty in order to defamiliarize the situation and heighten the awareness of the audience. The mass media has made the people so familiar with various aspects of every problem that it is difficult to evoke a response. Serjeant Musgrave, in order to bring the message of war and oppression to a coal-mining
town in Northern England brings the skeleton of a soldier who was recruited from that town. If at the end he fails to convince the townspeople of his anti-war message it is because he wants to convert them at the point of a gun and refuses to see oppression in the strike-bound coal town. When the men are not hungry, when the strikes are over, when the atmosphere of violence and oppression vanishes, then the anti-war message of the deserters should be heeded.

The audience does not identify itself completely with Sergeant Huagrove because his peaceful armour shows a chink. Rather, John Arden evokes a complex response from his audience by widening the anti-war issue to embrace other issues, societal issues like strikes and hunger. The play has built-in "complex seeing" for the audience to have a critical objective view of the whole range of the problem. It refuses the audience the comfort of judging one issue in isolation. A commonplace, tired theme like war and oppression is embodied in a refreshing dramatic experience.

Similarly Genet makes his audience look at the French-Algerian Colonial war in *The Scapegoat* from the point of view of the most degraded and down-to-earth people. The play, as we have noticed earlier, is presented at several stage levels and the impression is so diffused that the audience cannot identify itself with anything except to develop a general disgust with a war like this.
Today the playwright has the freedom to use several conventions from the 'imaginary museum' to call up a pattern of responses from his audience willingly cooperates provided the dramatic experience has resonance with what is buried in its subconscious. The playwright, then, can expand and contract the aesthetic distance between the stage microcosm and the real world, that is the audience, in accordance with the equation of involvement and objectivity his play necessitates. But doesn't this balancing of involvement and withdrawal neutralize the audience and leave it unaffected? We might best answer this question with the help of I.A. Richards:

We cease to be oriented in one definite direction; more facets of the mind are exposed and, what is the same thing, more aspects of things are able to affect us... At the same time since more of our personality is engaged the independence and individuality of other things becomes greater. We seem to see "all around" them, to see them, as they really are; we see them apart, from any one particular interest which they may have for us.... To say that we are impersonal is merely a curious way of saying that our personality is more completely involved."

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Cliff: What is it, lovely?
Alison: Nothing.
Cliff: I said, what is it?
Alison: You see—(hesitates). I am pregnant.
Cliff (after a few minutes): I will need scissors.

-Look Back in Anger
Granting that a modern playwright has a pre-disposed audience that has the experience embedded in a latent form in its subconscious self, he encounters another barrier to dramatic communication which is peculiar to modern times. Today's audience is widely disparate and fractured and the playwright finds it difficult to use a dramatic idiom which can transcend the limitations of a heterogeneous audience. Yet modern plays like Waiting for Godot, Mother Courage, The Chairs, have found international audiences and have joined the pantheon of classics of modern times. The modern playwright has crossed this barrier to communication by adopting a comic pose, a pall of comicality and hilarity which is pre-literary and has its source in popular entertainments which cut across nationalities. When Gogo's trousers slip down his ankles the laughter will be as uproarious in Red Peking as in capitalist New York. When Edward's friends in The Cocktail Party plot to make him happy by cooking his dinner while his wife has run away, the mirth and amusement goes beyond class stratification. Imagine how any audience would be thrilled when Grusha in The Caucasian Chalk Circle is being married to a dying man in the hope that her adopted child Michael may be legitimised, and then the dying man gets up after he learns that war is over. Or when Judge Azdak says, "I accept," the audience would feel captivated anywhere. The modern playwright has
not only used the liberal and illiberal jokes of the circus, music-hall, the Commedia dell' arte which have a broad audience appeal, but he has turned the commonplace and the trivial into dramatic material to communicate with a disparate audience today. As J. L. Styan says,

The Modern movement has been to admit triviality into human stage behaviour, and to make drama of it. The hero of twentieth century dark comedy is the character who makes the grand speech, but who has to clear his throat and scratch his nose. The dark comic dramatist tends to make special use of the duller elements of human personality in order to extend the content of drama; stupidity, boredom, callousness, doubt, disappointment, caprice, reluctance, vacillation, bungling, mediocrity — everything that seems paltry in us. All the virtues and all the vices have their commonplace aspects; courage can be accidental, pride can be humiliating, love can be animal, revenge can be spiteful, just as cowardice can be understood, avarice can be pathetic, and selfishness and petty vanity can be amusing. The dark comic dramatist suggests it is a mistake, whether moral or aesthetic, for us to see the trivia of life, the gewgaws and baubles that bedeck the human spirit in public and in private, as unimportant.

It has already been mentioned how Genet uses the most trivial and disgusting aspects of human behaviour in The Screen in order to create the experience of suffocating nausea against the Algerian War. In one scene the French soldiers in order to give native air and burial to their dead officer stand near the officer, fart on his face turn by turn with a mock ritual. Maddy Rooney in Beckett's All That Fall wants Tyler to unlace her behind
the bush. When the old man and the old woman in The Chair say that they have invited all and sundry, the learned and the landed, the wardens, the bishops, the chemists, the boiler-makers, the violinist, presidents, constables, the public buildings, penholders, the chromosomes - ripples of laughter would pass through any audience anywhere. Yet it would be wrong to assume that the modern playwright has stooped to conquer. On the contrary modern drama is essentially serious; it is metaphysical. Behind the "screen of laughter" and trivia the playwright has a grim purpose which saddens the laughter and raises the trivia to a new meaningfulness. The dramatists discussed in this study, have a worldwide seminal influence, and are ultimately concerned with the human predicament. T.S. Eliot's recurrent theme is the renewal of life through self-knowledge and sacrifice; Brecht is in search of Utopia; Beckett rejects the optimistic view and shows man's ultimate absurd condition which has to be accepted; Ionesco's theme is the impossibility of communication and the pathetic desire to attempt it; Genet's, illusion within illusion, the impossibility of understanding reality; all use, with great gusto, the grossest music hall jokes and the wildest circus tricks to communicate the dramatic experience. This empty gaiety of knock-about farce, and through it, letting out the horror and boredom of modern life is a characteristic feature of modern drama, but these elements do not stand
alooe. It has been repeatedly stated in this study that a dramatic element assumes its specific form and function by dialectical differentiation from and incorporation of what it is different from. Each element conditions others and is conditioned in turn. No dramatic element exists by itself and everything exists within a system of mutually conditioning elements. This mutuality, the structured whole has dynamic characteristic of self-fulfilment with a remorseless inevitability. The laughter in modern drama which carries on its wings a load of grimness ceases to be that full-throated laughter which we get from burlesque. This laughter is conditioned. It is sad.

Today's protagonist is a sad clown, a reluctant "quasi-clown" who has eaten the forbidden fruit and is aware and this self-knowledge tugs at his laughter. Through a continuous dialectic of laughter and pathos, language and silence, a modern playwright through a process of forward and backward movement carries his audience on a relentless wave and concretizes the dramatic experience, subliminal and dormant, in the audience.

It is through this comic-pathetic dialectic that Tennessee Williams communicates the intense drama of Blanche - a charming mixture of contradictions who rocks our emotional balance to and fro. In her birthday dinner scene she anticipates with joy the arrival of her man Mitch.
whom she hopes to marry to start another phase of her life, to forget and escape her past. As Hitch is awaited she sings as happily as a bird:

It is only a paper moon,
Sailing over a cardboard sea.
But it wouldn't be make-believe
If you believed in me.

The extent of her joy is communicated to us through the breathless cries and peals of laughter from the bathroom while outside on the stage Stanley is telling Stella how he has already informed Hitch about the private life of Blanche at the Hotel Flamingo and she will not come to participate in Blanche's birthday dinner. The horror let out by Stanley is sharply contrasted with the loud hilarity which is overflowing through the bathroom door. As she comes out of the bathroom she instinctively feels the horror and shrivels:

A hot bath and a long, cold drink always gives me a brand new outlook on life! (she looks through the portiere at Stella, standing between them, and slowly stops brushing.) Something has happened! what is it? (...The distant piano goes into a hectic breakdown).

That's how a modern playwright lets out the truth. In an atmosphere of gaiety, songs and birthday cake, Stanley's revelations are let out. While the mirth becomes
melancholy we are able to face squarely the truth about Blanche and hold our equanimity.

Harold Pinter prepares us for a birthday party in which a game of blindman's buff turns out to be a bitter bit:

The lights!
What's happened?
The lights!
Wait a minute.
Where is he?
Let go of me!
Someone's touching me!
Who's this?
It's me!
Where is he!
Why has the light gone out?
Where's your torch?
My torch!
Oh! God!
Where is your torch? Pick up your torch!
I can't find it
Hold me. Hold me.
Get down on your knees. Help him find the torch.
I can't.
It's gone.
(Silence. Grunts from McCann and Goldberg on their knees. Suddenly there is a sharp, sustained rat-a-tat with a stick on the side of the drum from the back of the room. Silence. Whispers from Lulu).

The anticipation of fun and frolic of a traditional joyous occasion is contrasted sharply with the theatre of cruelty as it turns out to be. After the nightmarish party we begin to review the group relations on the stage and apprehend the comedy of menace that is The Birthday Party.

It is through these ironic contrasts that the playwright controls the emotions of the audience and guides its responses. We, the audience perceive the situation in an objective critical manner and can re-assess our own attitude. In Act III of The Cocktail Party, as we have noted earlier, the martyrdom of Celia Copleston is related amidst the laughter and gaiety of the cocktail party but by its very contrast it helps us to evaluate the quality of life which Edward and Lavinia have opted for. In a modern play the audience is swept along and then asked to halt and ponder over the issue. Ultimately the audience makes the choice. In Murder in the Cathedral, the audience receives a jolt when the knights begin their polemical speeches. The martyrdom of Thomas Becket assumes a greater significance when it is contrasted with the world the knights represent. When Miss Julie is seduced by Jean in
his room, the peasants of the village dance a Midsummer's Eve dance. The action of Miss Julie speaks loudly and forebodes the tragic consequences.

These contrary patterns of feelings following each other or clashing with each other, create not only high excitement but leave the audience in a detached mood. This is a novel mode of communication which the playwrights of today have adopted. The idea is not to give comic relief as we find in the traditional drama but offer what Brecht called a complex seeing, to deepen our feelings and add new dimensions to the situation, as we find in Pirandello's Right You are If You Think So where Signor Ponsa's view of the truth about his wife's death is contrasted with Signora Frola, his mother-in-law's view about the same woman. At the end the audience begins to question the meaning of truth. What is deception and what is truth? What is illusion and what is reality? As Genet asks when he puts his characters in a mirrored hall with no exit and makes the audience laugh at the stage microcosm which recoils against it.

In a world where there are no certainties, no ultimate values and no final virtues to be attained, where everything is tentative and transitory, a world of probabilities without any rock-like faith to lean upon, how can a man be a hero? He can be only a clown and it is through his clowning that the playwright dramatizes his vision. Then the clown acts heroic he crumbles causing a pathetic
laughter as does the character in Beckett's *Act Without Words I*, buffeted this way and that, tantalized and dazed till his reflexes cease to work and he does not move. When the whole action is conceived as comic-pathetic the characters too will act in a comic-pathetic manner since the microcosm called drama has mutually conditioning elements. The schizoid protagonist of today arises from this quality of action which is dubious and complex. Apparently it might seem chaotic and confusing but if a play's experience finds an echo in the audience's psyche its synthesizing creative imagination makes a whole of the variegated plurality and the play achieves the final unity - "the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities," as Coleridge said.

(III)

Recalling that a microcosm of mutually conditioning elements constituting dramatic experience is communicated in totality we can re-examine how modern playwrights especially those whom we have studied in this essay, use dramatic language in conjunction with other elements. We find that the choice of dramatic language has been determined not only by the philosophical attitude towards language, but also by the way in which the theme has been conceived. For instance a dramatist who discards plot and character-motivation as found in traditional drama will use language in a different manner from the one whose whole ardour in life is to preserve a particular way of life. The former might turn
language into verbal nonsense to be subordinated to the language of the theatre as some of the Absurdists do, it while the latter would preserve and cautiously innovate.

Modern playwrights display both these attitudes, though it is worth noting that none has been able to escape the word or the WORD implicitly or explicitly. As Andrew Kennedy says:

The value of the words in drama - to begin by drawing a big cheque - seems to be vindicated. Language survives as an essential element in drama under various, often extreme, pressures: from outside, the pull of non-verbal or anti-verbal theatre, the unscripted, "happening," the physical or "concrete language" (of Artaud and his successors) freed from writing, speech and dialogue; from within, the critique of language, the intensification of doubts about words as a living and workable medium. In the broad sense, one concludes that language renews itself each time a dramatist succeeds in bringing the "talking animal" to life in the demanding context of the play. Action and the act of speaking - men speaking to men, or one man speaking to himself or to God - are contrapuntal."

The important point is not that 'the value of the words in drama...seems to be vindicated' but that a common attitude is discerned in some major dramatists of the century like T.S. Eliot, Brecht, Beckett, Ionesco and Genet who regard language as an inadequate means of dramatic communication and attempt either to heighten it by the use of chorus, song, incantatory verse, ballad, poetic subtitles etc. or denude it to poetic simplicity, infold it, concentrate it, make it implicit; or stretch it, distort it,
rub it, till it becomes incandescent; or use it as a rhetoric to heighten the mock ritual. The use which Ionesco makes of the language is different from that of T.S. Eliot.

In fact, Ionesco is an interesting case in point. In *Rhinoceros* where his aims are primarily polemical, as discussed earlier, he has not done away with the traditional language of the drama which comes close to naturalistic dialogue:

Berenger: You're very kind, Miss Daisy.
Dudard (aside): Very kind indeed.
Berenger: I don't know how to thank you.
Daisy (to Dudard): Would you care to stay with us?
Dudard: I don't want to be a nuisance.

The whole play is written in this near-naturalistic mode. It has a plot-line and the protagonist shows character motivation. The play unfolds itself in a traditional linear manner and language retains its traditional role. As Gareth Lloyd Evans says in a slightly different context: "In the true dramatist, then, what the characters, 'are,' what they do, are an inseparable part of what happens (that is, plot). To imagine Macbeth turning up in the romantic complications of *Twelfth Night* is as ludicrous as to envisage Viola as the fourth witch. Language dictates reality of character and character is conjugated with plot."

When a playwright conceives his theme in terms of plot
and character, as most dramatists, throughout history, have done, the use of language, representative or expressive, is inescapable, as we find in such plays like *Deathwatch, The Maids* or *Rhinoceros*. However, when plot-character line is discarded and the theme is visualized as a pattern (Waiting for Godot), a progression of intensified states (The Lesson), or a succession of spectacles (The Balcony), the words assume a subordinate function. They are not the bearers of meaning because they become part of the total language of the theatre. Subordination of words to other theatre elements is a movement towards pure theatre, the tendency we observe in the Theatre of the Absurd. But words, to whatever use they are put, are parasitical upon the normal day to day language. As Gareth Lloyd Evans says, "Even in contemporary theatre where, sometimes to our chagrin, dramatists seem somewhat parsimonious or eccentric or out of sorts about words, their creative presence is absolute. The famous Pinter pauses could not happen unless they were bracketed by words. Samuel Beckett's disturbing safaris into non-verbal territory have meaning only because we know that verbal exists; more important Beckett's meaning depends on his own awareness that we are bound to make a tacit connection between his dramatic silences and the language that we could fill them." That's how Lucky's speech in spite of increasing repetition of contentless syntax-phrases, without completion of any
sentence, becomes comprehensible. "Given the existence... of a personal God... who... loves us dearly... and suffers... with those who are plunged in torment, plunged in fire..." The role of words here is not traditional - that of carrying forward the movement of the play. The action of Waiting for Godot has a to-and-fro movement, pendulum-like, where words do not play a significant part, a commanding role. Or again, take the long speech of the old man in The Chairs when the orator has arrived to deliver the message. It is ridiculous on the face of it but has so many reverberations that it seems impregnated with meaningfulness: "...Our existence has found its final consummation... Thanks be to Heaven that we have been granted so many long and peaceful years... To the world or rather to what is left of it... To you, ladies and gentlemen, my dear friends, the left-over scraps of humanity, from which good soup can still be made..."

In Ionesco's The Future is in Eggs, again, the language is dislocated, fractured, and distorted, yet the broad meaning is conveyed but it has no traditional function in the play. Mother-Jacques inquires of the future of the children for which Jacques and Roberta are hatching the eggs. Then follows verbal nonsense which does not vindicate the use of words in theatre but clearly is an example of pure theatre where words have other than their traditional roles. The offspring, says the family, would become
sausage meat, cannon fodder, omelettes, athletes, diplomat, knitting wool, onions, bankers, pigs, opportunists, nationalists, internationalists, radicals and radicals, and aspirin and matches, etc. The language is being treated as a kind of stage property. It is the pattern of sound which begins to impress us, for instance, in The Bald Soprano, where language becomes meaningless and comic:

"A middle class English interior, with English armchair. An English evening. Mr. Smith, an Englishman, seated in his English armchair and wearing English slippers, is smoking his English pipe and reading an English newspaper, near an English fire." Or again, as in the following scene, language changes from an initial comprehension to a bizarre no-sense:

Mrs. Martin: I can buy a pocket-knife for my brother, but you can’t buy Ireland for your grandfather.

Mr. Smith: One walks on his feet, but one heats with electricity or coal.

Mr. Martin: He who sells an ox today, will have an egg tomorrow.

Mr. Smith: The Pope elopes! The Pope’s got no horoscope. The horoscope’s bespoke.

Mrs. Martin: Bazaar, Balzac, Bazooka!

Mr. Martin: Bizarre, Beaux-arts, brassieres.

While in the earlier plays Ionesco was emphatic about the use of language from initial sense to final no-sense, later
on, from _The Chairs_ to _The Killer_ he communicated his ideas not through linguistic distortion but proliferation of matter. Furthermore, the next four plays _Improvisation_, _The Miller_, _Rhinoceros_ and _The Pedestrian_ which are long plays, show a substantial development in the story line, have at least one character with motivation and embody ideas in an explicit way, that is, language retains its sanity, and words are not allowed to display the dance macabre of the earlier plays. In _The Exit the King_, which is a long play, with six characters, the language is not at all repetitious, non-rational or amusing. The speeches of the character, with a few exceptions, are reasonable. Ionesco could distort and dislocate language from sense to no-sense when he dealt with simple situations, with puppet characters. But as he developed from simple to complex situations where he had to use several characters he was not only forced to develop some semblance of story line but also use normal language — sensible language as we understand it, which proves our contention that in order to make non-rational use of language or to do away with it altogether, a playwright has to invent a simple situation with shadowy flat characters, but as soon as he makes an explicit statement, the use of words in a rational manner is vindicated. Genet's development so far has been the other way round, that is, from explicit rational language of _Deathwatch_ and _The Maids_ to the ritualistic rhetoric of
The Balcony parallel to his reverse development of storyline to a sequence of spectacles where characters are only metaphor and exist for the sake of pattern which is the meaning.

A playwright’s freedom to use a language is limited by the demands of the structured whole or the totality of vision. For instance Beckett’s playwriting comes very close to what is described by Northrop Frye as archetypal masque which seems to separate its settings from time and space and “we find ourselves frequently in a sinister limbo, like the threshold of death in Everyman, the sealed underworld crypts of Maeterlinck, or the nightmares of the future in expressionist plays.... The action of the archetypal masque takes place in a world of human types, which at its most concentrated becomes the interior of the human mind.”

Since this is the direction in which his plays tend to move, Beckett’s dramatic language is a “sustained attempt to create the words for such an archetypal action, in a setting of limbo or skull.”

In this world of silence and solitude, language is denuded of all superfluities, is minimal, abstracted, compressed and non-rational, and if it is still meaningful, it is because it is dependent upon the normal rational world; for instance, the following voices from Beckett’s play show how the impression of the
limbo-like solitude is created:

M: When first this change I actually thanked God. I thought, It is done, it is said, now all is going out —

W: Mercy, mercy, tongue still hanging out for mercy. It will come. You haven't seen me. But you will. Then it will come.

W2: To say I am not disappointed, no, I am, I had anticipated something better. More restful.

We have noticed in an earlier section that the cyclical pendulum-like movement of Waiting for Godot necessitated a language which after passing through the improvised style of music hall and Commedia dell' arte to Biblical and literary quotes and half-quotes repeatedly comes to a still point "Let's Go," and they do not move, which has as much meaning as Pozzo's first and last word on the stage "on." The nature of language subsists and subserves the pattern, which is the action and the meaning. When a different dramatic pattern is unfolded, language in dynamic participation with other elements assumes a different role as in Endgame where a traditional dramatic language is used because the play is primarily a man-centred nightmare. In All That Fall language could not but be explicit because it is a play for voices where other theatre elements cannot participate.

In an earlier section it was stated that the dramatic experience cannot be communicated unless that experience or
the likeness of it in nebulous or subliminal form is already a part of the audience's psyche. This statement now can be extended also to the dramatic language, which apart from being a dynamic participant in a mutually conditioning environment, can exist meaningfully only when it has correspondences or resemblances with the normally recognized speech. When a playwright uses incantatory speech, no-sense words (Ionesco: monster-monster), pastiche or collage from the museum of past languages, parodies literary styles, compresses, abstracts, infolds the language, breaks or brutalizes it, he depends upon the known recognizable speech for any sense, but with a difference that he invites his audience to participate in the "intolerable wrestle with words," thereby drawing it deeper into the play experience. But when a playwright is committed to the salvation of the individual in the framework of Christianity as T.S.Eliot is, or when he, like Brecht, envisions a utopia within the bounds of social realism, language avoids any tendency towards implicitness, abstraction, contraction or concentration. The tendency is towards poetic intensity in a traditional manner or towards making it more explicit as the action demands. The important point is 'commitment' because without commitment there cannot be any certitude and faith and the ultimate moral strength arising out of it. Once a playwright is committed he will make a precise statement on the stage in dramatic terms and in a traditional language.
A mute theatre is a possibility (I do not mean the cinema); the ballet is an actuality (though under-nourished); opera is an institution; but where you have 'imitations of life' on the stage, with speech, the only standard that we can allow is the standard of the work of art, aiming at the same intensity at which poetry and the other forms of art aim...

The essential is not, of course, that drama should be written in verse... The essential is to get upon the stage this precise statement of life which is at the same time a point of view, a world—a world which the author's mind has subjected to a complete process of simplification.

With this certainty to "get upon the stage... a point of view, a world," as well as with a consciousness that he came to drama not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the drama from Aeschylus and within it the whole of the drama of his own country has a simultaneous order, T.S. Eliot could not innovate his language beyond certain limits; rather, again and again, he dipped into the vast storehouse of speech. When a playwright is tethered to the Graeco-Christian tradition his language cannot assume bizarre shapes, or be abstracted and contracted as in the Absurdist, especially when he wants to get upon the stage a precise statement. As seen before, T.S. Eliot is a cautious innovator of language, from one possibility to another, and also preserves what he received from naturalism. Much has been said about the gradual loss of poetic intensity in his dramatic language as he moved down from Murder in the
Cathedral to The Elder Statesman, but this has been in keeping with his quest for social usefulness in poetry which sustains the point of view of this essay that whenever a playwright is committed to social themes his language tends towards explicitness though needing to be enriched by the poetic intensity of songs, choruses, ballads, etc., from time to time in accordance with the emotional needs of the play.

Bertolt Brecht whose commitment to Marxism instinctively plays, especially those considered in this study—Mother Courage and her Children, Galileo, The Caucasian Chalk Circle and The Good Woman of Setzuan—was as genuine as that of T.S. Eliot to the Christian way of life, displays a similar abstracted clarity and explicitness in his dramatic language but in keeping with his dialectical theatre, the explicit direct language is used as contrapuntal to song, ballad, chorus, poetic titles, subtitles and placards. His play language is a dialectic of points and counter-points, as has been discussed earlier. When a playwright wants his audience to develop a cool rational attitude towards the problems so that a desire for change may arise, language has to be austere and explicit, but since Brecht was essentially a lyrical poet and a rebel he could not help imparting that intense lyrical spirit to his plays, though inspite of himself.

Of the five playwrights we have considered here,
T. S. Eliot and Brecht, who are committed in their own individual ways, use dramatic language which tends to be explicit as well as poetic. The Absurdist, who are non-committed, use dramatic language which has a tendency towards the bizarre, implicitness, inwardness, infolding, abstraction and concentration. Their plays are essentially metaphysical. However, when an Absurdist playwright wants to get upon the stage a precise state of life, as Ionesco does in Rhinoceros the dramatic language becomes explicit, traditional and close to our normal literary speech.

Modern playwrights display a persistent and consistent tendency towards what T. S. Eliot has called the 'mute theatre' and this predilection towards worldless drama, the exertion of pressure of the mime elements against dramatic language has provoked anxious protests from both sides of the Atlantic - more so when it is observed that the audiences everywhere have enthusiastically acclaimed the advent of such plays. One consequence of this tendency towards mute theatre is the dominance of the director as the creator of play experience. As Gareth Lloyd Evans protests:

The twentieth century has seen the triumph of another language; the language of theatre - a
concomitant, but a major partner, to the language of drama. The language of theatre, in which the power of the director is invested, is now a vast apparatus identified separately from the language of drama. It is at the command of the director who can, at will, use its energy in the production of a play. The energy, it must be emphasized, is at the command of the director's will, not the actor's, not the playwright's. It is the director who calls upon the oratory of sets, lights, costumes sound effects, to do their work.13

There is no doubt that the director's role has been increasing in the interpretation of the play to the audience, and there are instances where directors have tempered with the text to suit the play to their own production needs. A most renowned director of our times has raised the role of the director to the sublime height of the creator:

Now the lukewarm virtues of good craftsmanship, sound construction, effective curtains, crisp dialogue, have all been thoroughly debunked... It is a strange role, that of the director; he does not ask to be God, and yet his role implies it.14

A director has, no doubt, a god-like role in translating the vision of the playwright into a gestalt of the stage images which communicates that vision, but, the playwright's text controls the commanding heights. Throughout the four centuries of Hamlet's stage history, for instance, directors have given different stage interpretations of the play and in our times there have been filma
versions, television versions, apart from the Marxist interpretations of various hues, but no interpretation has altered the tragic vision embodied in the text, and to do that would be to create another play. Let us take Ionesco's The Chairs; the verbal elements, nonsensical and bizarre, are so fused with the theatrical elements, the proliferation of chairs, that the dramatic experience will be communicated only when the verbal and the non-verbal are allowed their fullest dynamic participation. A director has freedom - godlike if he likes - to shape the play on the stage as envisioned by Ionesco. To pursue this illustration further, The Chairs ends with the following stage directions: "For the first time human noises seem to be coming from the invisible crowd; snatches of laughter, whisperings, a 'Shh!' or two, little sarcastic coughs, these noises grow louder and louder, last just long enough for real and visible public to go away with this ending firmly fixed in their minds. The curtain falls very slowly."

The implementation of these stage directions is essential if the dramatic experience of concretizing nothingness into a total configuration is to be communicated to the audience. If the director uses his god-like freedom to let the curtain fall during the moaning and grunting of the dumb orator, as it happened in the first production, the audience will miss the meaning which comes from the
structured whole. Though the language of the theatre in this play, as in most of the modern plays, seems to be predominant, the decisive and critical part is played by the dramatic language, the dramatic words, even when they are used as no-sense words - because, as explained in a previous section, no-sense words, bizarre, dislocated and other kinds of language used by the modern playwrights, are parasitic upon the normal language for their meaning. Therefore, 'the oratory of the theatre' - sets, lights, costumes, sound effects, dance, kinetic elements - which is an increasing feature of modern drama exists to create an extension of the words containing the critical moments of the play. And it is surprising that Arthur Symons should ask whether the playwright is being reduced to the role of a prompter:

The question is this: Whether the theatre is the invention of the dramatist, and of use only in so far as it interprets his creative work; or whether the dramatist is the invention of the theatre, which has made him for its own ends, and will be able, when it has wholly achieved its mechanism, to dispense with him altogether, except perhaps as a kind of prompter?

Throughout more than two millennia of the history of drama, the theatre and play have undergone the chemistry of interaction, and even today the technology of the age has influenced the theatre which interacts directly with the playwright's art. The experts with their new theatre
technology,¹⁶ as mentioned earlier, have freedom to work and exert their influence in the stage transformation of the play under the limitations imposed by the text—the words which contain the critical, decisive moments which unfold the pattern or the story line. Modern playwrights create their dramatic vision incorporating the new vistas opened by new theatrical expertise and broaden their dramatic art rather than shrink under its assault. We shall briefly re-examine how the oratory of the theatre works in dynamic participation with the words to create the gestalt, the total configuration in Pinter's *The Birthday Party*.

The most engaging stage image of the play is at the end of Act II where McCann and Goldberg as the representatives of some mysterious outside power, Stanley Webber, the runaway, hiding in the womb-like security of a sea-side house, and Meg the house-keeper who regards the visitors as welcome guests, get together along with a neighbouring girl, Lulu, to celebrate Stanley's birthday which leads to chaotic violence after the game of blind-man's buff. Theatrically, with the maddening drum-beat, cries of 'light,' 'light,' shuffling of feet, cries for help, the scene is very powerful and the director could use all his technological ingenuity and 'the oratory of the theatre' to make the scene visually and aurally powerful. The meaning of the play is not contained in this 'oratory of
the theatre" but would be communicated by the whole play experience which begins with a meaningless naturalistic patter between Meg and Petey about cornflakes and nice the bits from newspaper in Act I, to the stylised pattern of the Absurdist way of talking which ends in the brainwashing attempt by Goldberg-McCann; and then the final departure, after claiming the run-away Stanley, of the agents of the other world, destiny, whatever you call it, with whom Stanley unwillingly cooperates. Throughout this pattern of the play runs a menacing refrain that this house is on the list:

Meg: This house is on the list
Petey: It is
Meg: I know it
Again,
Stanley: (...) I'm your visitor
Meg: You're a liar. The house is on the list.
Stanley: I bet it is
Meg: I know it is.

But soon Stanley's inquiry becomes panicky

Stanley: (turning). But why here? Why not somewhere else?
Meg: This house is on the list
Stanley: (coming down) What are they called? What are their names?
This continuous refrain about the sinister list stirs that submerged fear of the unknown in the audience which all human beings feel and which is made concrete in the dramatic experience. It is from this pattern of the verbal and the non-verbal, of which the game of blindman's buff forms the most enchanting theatrical moment, that a gestalt or structured whole emerges as something inevitable. The final image of the victim (dressed in striped trousers, black jacket, and white collar. He carries a bowler hat in one hand and his broken glasses in the other. He is clean shaven) and his reduction to aphasic grunts is the final fear in modern man who neither trusts the word nor believes in the WORD. And this can be created if the director uses his creative freedom to translate the text of the play into a stage microcosm.

The language of the theatre, due to various historical and technological reasons, has become an important tool in the hands of a modern director who has the freedom to deploy it in dynamic participation with the spoken words to create the total experience. But the original vision is embodied in the play's script and that has always a commanding position in the creation of the stage microcosm.

A modern playwright, in the ultimate analysis, is in search of an audience - a predisposed audience that has the
latent capacity to respond to the gestalt of aural and visual impressions, the total configuration of the flow of stage images, the structured whole constituting the dramatic experience. Dramatic communication, in other words, entails the liberation of audience's imagination from the shackles of reality, so that with the imagination set free the subliminal experience of the audience could be drawn into the stage microcosm. The degree of unreality, of distortion one might say, of the stage world arising out of the content and style of the play, depends upon the audience's response, its mode of consciousness. Since the modern audience is not a homogeneous entity that enables the playwright to foresee its response, "the dramatic activity of the twentieth century betrays a desperate search for new forms of play making and staging, in the uncertain hope of accommodating the fragmented nature of the contemporary theatre." 17

The playwrights of today, especially those considered here, have tried to transcend the limitations of the fragmented audience by adopting a facade of comicality from the tradition of the music-hall, the Commedia dell'arte, the circus, the silent film, gangster movies, and resorting to new uses of the word – from the poetic intensity of song and chorus to the no-sense sonority of the incantation. None has, however, escaped the word or the WORD, but the very struggle has bestowed upon their dramatic
creations a sense of wonder somehow reminiscent of the
response evoked by the Greek masters and Shakespeare.
Notes

6. Ibid., p.xi.
16. G.I. Evans says: "The age of technology has, with the relentless inevitability we associate with battery farming, brought the 'expert' into being. Experts in costume, set, paint, make up, sound, lighting,
synthetic material, script reading, publicity and so on. Some of these experts who have worked for and received acclaim, have improved their ideas, and their influence and their power has multiplied." Ibid., p.16.