Chapter III

Causes and forms of Alienation
Chapter Three

CAUSES AND FORMS OF ALIENATION

The most serious illness that afflicts human beings is not physical ailment but the psychological malaise born out of the gnawing insecurity of being lonely, unwanted and neglected. The sense of isolation and alienation as a result of this is more pronounced in individuals of the modern world. The term alienation defies definition and is aptly pointed out as “one of the most difficult words in the language” (Williams 1976, 33). As a term, it is fully loaded and encompasses overlapping possibilities. In general, it connotes a sense of loss, a state of isolation or estrangement springing from a condition in which the self is placed in a position of anxiety, insecurity and anguish. Though emphasized in literature of the past, man’s suffering due to alienation is very much a theme of concern in works of modern times.

Man’s alienation could be traced back to the act of disobedience and distrust of the first Man in tasting the forbidden fruit of knowledge. For Christian theologians like St. Augustin and
Martin Luther, this is the first instance of man's alienation from God's grace. Subsequently, events of interpersonal estrangement are shown in the book of Ephesians in the Bible thus: "They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts" (1987, 4:18). This passage about the heathens of the time throws light on alienation in the theological context. For centuries together the term continued to have theological significance. Frank Johnson points to its different dimensions when he says "man is seen as not only separated from God but as separated from meaningful experience with men, institutions, nature and himself" (1973, 8).

In the modern age, alienation as a term is widely used in the subjects of theology, philosophy, sociology and psychology. It is Hegel who gave a philosophical orientation to alienation by imbibing the "concept of alienation from pessimistic Protestant theology" (Wittgenstein 1953, 117). Subsequently Ludwig Feurback and Karl Marx have transformed alienation from the philosophical and theological perception to mean a secular and materialistic idea. Marx stresses in his early writings two forms of alienation: alienation from labour and from the products of one's labour. Walter Kauffman is of the view that Marx was greatly concerned with man's dehumanization, "his loss of independence, his improvement, his
estrangement from his fellowmen and his involvement in labour that is devoid of any originality, spontaneity or creativity"(1970, xiii). Marx views that these factors are responsible for man’s alienation from his essential nature. Bertolt Brecht, the modern dramatist coined the term Verfremdung to mean in English disillusion, estrangement or alienation and used it as a technique in his plays.

Economic expansionism under favourable conditions of scientific and technological advancement in the recent centuries broadly divided man as workers and capitalists, creating two opposing classes in the Marxian sense. Exploitation of labourers by capitalists, colonization, slavery and other repressive acts witnessed all over the world widened the chasm, alienating each class from the other further. In the rural sector too man had to live in hostile conditions. While struggling to meet his basic needs, the sheer drudgery of the monotonous and meaningless life in the industrial sector fostered alienation. In the rural sector, repressive and dehumanizing living conditions, hunger, poverty and exploitation of every kind contributed to the alienation. This condition of the modern man is aptly summed up by Erich Fromm in Escape from Freedom thus: “Modern man is an automation and while being alive biologically, is dead emotionally and mentally”(1969, 281). This exactly sums up his alienated life.
These conditions reduce man to the level of a competitive animal fighting for survival and in the process losing his real self. He stands bewildered and baffled at moments of crisis in his life. Sociologists call this condition 'sociological alienation'. Melvin Seeman sees alienation manifesting itself in five inter-related operational conditions like "powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self-estrangement" (1959, 789). Another sociologist, Taviss, speaks of two kinds of alienation, namely the social and self-alienation. Social alienation emanates from the discovery that social systems are oppressive or insufficient to one's aspirations and ideals. Self-alienation refers to the loss of contact of the individual self with any inclination or desire that is not in agreement with the prevailing social patterns. As a result, the individuals are forced to compromise themselves in accordance with the social demands or feel incapable of controlling their actions. The effect of self-alienation on the individual psyche is potent enough to impede his mental makeup and hence is more deleterious on individuals than social alienation. Psychologists call this condition 'psychological alienation'.

From the psychologists' point of view, self-alienation manifests itself in an individual's acts of estrangement, withdrawal and detachment. They also view alienation as one's inability to
adjust to the environment. The lower the adjustment, the greater the alienation. The mentally ill person is diagnosed as one experiencing intense alienation and when it worsens it is termed 'schizophrenia'.

Thus, while Hegel deduced the concept of alienation from theology, Marx modified Hegel's concept and introduced alienation in a sociological context to refer to the estranged labourer. In course of time, this concept was observed to give a psychological dimension to the problem of alienation. In short, the sociological context of alienation presents the essence of all views. This concept of alienation is central to the discussion of the problem of alienation in the select plays of O’Casey and Odets. The Depression plays and the Dublin trilogy reflect the respective societies where alienation springs from social causes and issues. Since the characters in these plays are inalienable part of society, it is worth discussing the sufferings inflicted by alienation on these characters.

It is commonly agreed that effective characterization of an estranged individual is possible when the writer in question himself experiences a sense of alienation in his literary career. From the perception of psychologists, it is the inner turmoil of the writer’s personality which is the only fact behind his fictional creations. Therefore, knowledge of the artist’s inner turmoil during the process
of creation, against the background of his social situation will give us an insight into or understanding of the problem of alienation. Hence it is pertinent to trace the experience of alienation suffered by O’Casey and Odets during the creation of these plays.

A sense of disenchantment, disillusion, dismay and utter helplessness marks O’Casey’s character throughout his life in Dublin. The controversy that marred the production of the last of the Dublin trilogy, The Plough and the Stars, saw him standing completely alienated from the nationalists, the religionists and the fellow writers. Recalling this bitterness due to the controversy, O’Casey declared thus: “I was an alien in my own land” (1985, 140). He was pained by the fact that the nationalists are misleading the masses who are trained to look with suspicion those who differed with the leadership. O’Casey himself was active in the movement before the Easter Rising. He was alienated from the nationalist movement when the leadership of the ICA fell into the hands of James Connolly. Earlier O’Casey felt comfortable to work under Jim Larkin, for he too shared his view that, “An injury to one is the concern of all” (qtd. in Krause 1960, 9). Larkin’s departure to America paved the way for the organization being taken over by the extremist bourgeois nationalists under Connolly’s leadership.
O’Casey was bewildered to see the very enemies of the working class who thwarted the labour revolt of nineteen-thirteen, now steering the movement away from the cause of the labour. His fond hope was that the labour movement would educate and liberate the workers from misery and ignorance. This was belied. His alienation was more marked when the liberation movement’s leadership led the workers to tragic turns of violence, bloody wars and death as manifested by the Easter Rising, the guerilla war and the civil war. Thus, the welfare of the common masses no longer concerned anyone. As a playwright committed to the welfare of the suffering ones, O’Casey bemoaned his powerlessness to stem the rot. His autobiographical volume, *Inishfallen Fare Thee Well* bears ample testimony to his bitterness and alienation.

The failure of the national liberation movement to serve the genuine needs of the suffering masses by educating, mobilising and providing the right kind of leadership alienated the masses from the very movement itself. The ignorant ones were defeated by illusions, myths, false and worn out heroics, petty prejudices and were thus obliged to survive in, “inhuman conditions of poverty and ignorance in which they, as workers, were obliged to exist” (Mitchell 1980, 20). Thus they stood alienated from reality of every kind and these repressed masses have become characters in O’Casey’s Dublin plays.
These characters in turn reflect the very traits of the alienating society. Though the estranged O'Casey quit as secretary of ICA in 1914, its impact on his personality and art is pervasive.

Another institution that betrayed the Irish poor as well as O'Casey was the Church. Ever since the movement for liberation was launched, the Catholic establishment in Ireland was hostile to the interest of the working class poor and was more pronounced in its affinity to the bourgeois and capitalists. It ruthlessly hounded Dr. Michael O'Hickey and Dr. Mc Donald, the two ardent churchmen for standing firmly for truth, liberty and commitment to the cause of the poor. When they espoused the cause of the Irish language and evinced interest in the labour causes, the church establishment castigated them for putting principles before prudence. Even earlier, the Church had not taken kindly to Parnell, the home rule movement leader and drove him to his grave. It stood by the employers when Larkin launched his labour movement. During these days the Church establishment justified "the right of ownership" as "one of the teachings of the Church" (Krause 1960, 13). Thus, the Church instead of guiding the flocks, sided with the wolves and helped harass its own flock. The poor stood alienated from the Church. O’Casey and many churchmen were bewildered by the merciless dictates of the alienating Catholic Church.
At the same time the other two movements, the Gaelic League and the Irish Republican Brotherhood in which O’Casey was actively associated with, too betrayed him. The self-professed patriots in these movements earlier sided with the Church in denouncing Synge’s *Playboy of the Western World* as immoral. Now they silently supported the Church in its organised protest against O’Casey’s play *The Plough and the Stars*. Thus, by this time O’Casey stood, “alienated himself from the organizations” (Krause 1960, 30) on which he had pinned his hope. Being frustrated further, he nursed his inner turmoil for over a decade and finally settled for voluntary exile from his own land. In another interview to Joseph Halloway, he admitted in 1926 as follows: “I have to find a place for my feet somewhere” (qtd. in Hogan 1967, 269). This search for the self and home continues in his characters too, as the plays exemplify.

In *Clifford Odets: Playwright*, Gerald Weales gives a scholarly analysis of the playwright’s nature, his plays and society and concludes that “he was a restless man” (1971, 187). Many a critic iterates the uncertainty and search for roots in Odets and this points to how alienated Odets was in his personal and artistic life. As the son of Jewish immigrant parents, this instability, search for roots and endless quest for his self was inherent in him as was in the
Jewish immigrant writers in America. Odets's alienation was psychological whereas O’Casey’s was sociological in nature.

The sense of estrangement began at home. As a youth he had a stormy relationship with his father. This was as a result of his artistic inclination and his father’s desire to see him attain material success like him. This conflict heightened his anxiety and he felt estranged from his father and his home. Thus, leaving his home, he sought refuge at the Group Theatre which gave him a feeling of belonging and provided him an extended home. Gabriel Miller’s work, *Clifford Odets* shows how Odets lost the sense of protection and goodness when the Group Theatre finally collapsed in 1941. His disenchantment and sense of frustration was further induced by the social and economic calamity inflicted by the Depression. At the height of his artistic success given by the Depression plays, he was stricken by the inherent vacillation, and went in search of another home in Hollywood. It was a kind of sell-out and ironically Hollywood was more a centre of alienation than any other.

In her biographical study, Margaret Brennan Gibson, the psychologist throws more light on his sense of discontent and alienation. She projects Odets’s problems, his endless quest for a place, his unhappiness and threat to quit and his obsession with the
broken middle-class as factors responsible for disenchantment. Also, the haunting thoughts of his mother who died of a broken heart and the often repeated attempts to commit suicide, are factors that have made him a disgruntled and divided man. Most of these traits are revealed in his characters too, as the Depression plays show. Odets equated his search to the “search of millions of Americans for some way out of a horrifying dilemma” and the “extraordinary ferment around him” (Mendelsohn 1991, 59-60). In the same interview, he stated about his early plays are thus: “painful attempts to not only find my identity -- not only to locate myself -- but to write down the nature of the neurotic illness to try to come to some clear, objective sense of myself and my inability to handle and deal with life” (Mendelsohn 1991, 71). This strengthens the view that his was self-alienation.

His repeated confessions and candid admissions at every stage of his life are more a revelation of the sense of estrangement. The urge to escape was also prominent in Odets during the early days of his career. In his own admission, he attempted suicide at three different stages of his life. It was more of an obsession and a ploy to seek release by death to escape the alienation. At least one character each in the plays *Awake* and *Paradise* takes recourse to death by suicide as a way of release. His search for home through marriage
also ended in estrangement. His love and subsequent marriage to the reigning Hollywood star Luise Rainer in 1937 ended in their separation within two years. Again, his second marriage to Bette Grayson in 1944 could last only for seven years, till he got a son and daughter through her.

Gibson’s observation on his tribe, the Jews in Philadelphia as, “homeless, and frightened, the Eastern European Jews had to manage their fear, their sense of isolation, estrangement and rejection” (1982, 17) points to his preoccupation with a sense of social isolation. This psychological schism which Odets inherited and carried along distanced him further. Another interesting case of his estrangement is seen in his association with party politics. He joined the Communist party in nineteen thirty-four, in search of an ideological affiliation so that he could get a new identity in response to the harrowing social upheavals of the Depression. But he resigned by the end of the year because of disenchantment and later confessed to the House Committee on Un American Activities that he “has no party to belong to” (qtd. in Weales 1971, 107). The brutal vehemence and the shrieking pain of loneliness that his characters reflect and experience in his plays could therefore be traced back to their own creator.
Commenting on the condition of life after the first World War, J.B.Priestly declared thus: "The World I know, the world worth living vanished in 1914, and since then we all existed in a series of vast mad houses shrieking with hate and violence, stinking of death" (qtd. in Knight 1962, 355). In an individual’s perception there is a craving for a life of peace and security after the Great War which had vastly disrupted human connections. The characters of O’Casey and Odets experience this and come to the tragic perception that they are left vulnerable in the world. This has become a potential factor for being estranged from their families, community and finally from their own selves. As modern social dramatists of the turbulent times, O’Casey and Odets give expression to these alienating factors in their plays.

Careful examination of the Depression plays of Odets reveal that the major factors that alienate his characters spring from economic deprivation. Other traits of social and self-alienation could be attributed to the sense of insecurity due to the havoc played by the Depression. The sudden collapse of the economy of the country due to the Depression is felt keenly by the families and persons in these plays. Joe in Waiting for Lefty, feels the heat of the shrinking economy of his family and laments over his inability to maintain the family and feed his children. Starvation, sickness and dispossession
loom large in his household. There is endless bickering between husband and wife. This episode is just a sample, showing the economic holocaust causing havoc and disrupting human relations in all other scenes of the play.

Squeezed of their energy, dignity and threatened with joblessness, homelessness, dispossession, repossession, hunger and poverty, these victims of the underside of New York city stand bewildered and distanced from every institution of value. Their moral life is severely tested as loveless marriages, denial and delay in marriage and broken families have become the order of the day. Losing every means of survival and every bond, six or seven characters representing different backgrounds and status but suffering alike, finally come to the centre of the stage and cry vehemently in unison which is aptly orchestrated by the similarly broken and disconnected audience.

Their is a cry of anguish, agony and frustration as they have been victims of exploitation under an unequal economic system that had cheapened their lives and which they had been taught to accept. What they experience is mental agony, wastage, feuds and perpetual rancour that alienate one from the other. Gabriel Miller sums up that the play abounds in words and "images of escape and flight vie with
overwhelming sensations of claustrophobia and constriction" (1989, 60). It is pertinent to note that the sense of alienation that begins from social factors culminates in self-alienation with dire consequences to their person and mind. As a result they fail to locate their place and are unable to handle and deal with life and hence experience neurotic illness.

Money is the most treasured object in American life during the Depression era. Inability to get it alienates human beings and the sense of loss reverberates in each and every activity of these individuals. It makes them melancholic and results in endless fretting and fuming. This depravity leads to quarrels, bickering and breaking-in of relations in the family drama of *Awake and Sing*. The internal injury and pain undergone by the confused and unhappy young people expose the fragile nature of the family in the play. The cause for estrangement is basically the family economy and the sense of deprivation is experienced by every member of the family. Amidst this chaotic life it is odd to see Bessie Berger proclaiming “I like my house to look respectable” (AS 59) and she is striving to defend the impossible as the course of the play proves.

It is respectability that is eroded when her aggressive actions force her alienated father to commit suicide and she unscrupulously
connives with her capitalist brother Morty to show off this as death due to accident to claim the old man's insurance money. Another deadly blow is inflicted on the family esteem when her young and only daughter gets pregnant, sleeping with a stranger. Again Bessie covers up this disgraceful act and schemes with her "lonely" husband to marry her off to a desolate foreigner, Sam Feinschreiber. At last her wanton deeds are exposed by her alienated son Ralph and the disenchanted daughter. Bessie's angry retort to them shows that in her maniacal obsession with respectability she lets go of every thing good and valuable in life.

In the stage direction itself Odets speaks of her "quick exasperation at ineptitude", and fear of "utter poverty" (AS37). These are alienating influences that show she is living in constant apprehension. While Myron, her husband is "heart broken without being aware of it", their daughter Hennie "travels alone" and is "fatalistic about being trapped"(AS 37). Ralph, the young boy is baffled at the intricacies of life itself. These clearly denote that they are lonely in their own right and are utterly disillusioned and frustrated. They are individuals who find themselves alienated from each other and suffer from a loss of personality, family and self. There is failure to understand and accept each other and thus their best laid schemes miserably fail. They meet despair and
disillusionment in trying to establish human relationships and the sense of futility and meaninglessness permeating the world overtakes them. Thus, they find themselves alienated from the world and from their inner selves.

Sartre’s famous line on the nineteen thirties of America as quoted by Alfred Kazin in *Contemporaries*, “the broken connection between man and the world” (1962, 24) aptly describes the state of the alienated individuals in *Awake and Sing*. Alienation between the feuding classes, the have’s and the have-nots, as represented respectively by the aristocratic Morty and the poor Bessie highlights the class division. There is always an urge on the have-nots to transcend the class barrier and reach the upper level. But the pressures of economy wrench them down. Morty is a shrewd judge of material values and stands alienated from moral values. His sister Bessie Berger in her fanatical strife to reach his level sacrifices all scruples and morals. Living in a penthouse with a Japanese butler to serve him, Morty flaunts his taste by sleeping with dress models from different fashion showrooms. In her foolishness, the young Hennie deems it is lady like to sleep with strangers on pavements. Her proud and awkward show-off brings her dishonour and yet she is remorseless. As she has inherited her mother’s traits, this streak of wilfulness persists and finally she deserts her child and husband to
gratify her biological urge. The irony is that while Morty takes pleasure in counting and adding to his dollars, which run into millions, Bessie and her daughter live in utter penury.

Bessie’s angry retort to the unhelpful Morty, “you got money and money talks. But without the dollar who sleeps?”(AS66), shows the unbridgeable gap and alienation between the two classes and also points to how she attributes values to the dollar, disregarding real values of life. It is the thirst for money that corrupts Bessie absolutely and her alienation from all finer spirits of life makes her lonely at last in her own family, which she once ruled ruthlessly. As an ardent follower of his wife without a sense of self-respect, her husband occupies the empty stage “alone”, unable to comprehend what transpired late that night. It is like Captain Boyle collapsing on the empty stage, heavily intoxicated and alienated from his family reality as the curtain falls finally in Juno and the Paycock.

As the curtains part for the opening scene of Paradise Lost, the steadily declining fortunes of the middle-class Gordon family are visible. Here again we see a group of tormented, unhappy individuals trying to act like a family amidst the overwhelming burden of economic degeneracy. As the action progresses we see death, desolation, sterility and neurosis overtaking the family.
Finally, the burden of economic chaos brings them to the street. Thus the once affluent and respectable Gordon family, now devoid of all respectability, collapse under the alienating influences inflicted by economic loss. Pike, the furnace man sums up the tragic fate of those subjected to the alienating economic situation thus: “A person starves to death in it. Not enough alkaline. That’s what it means. Hunger and deprivation…” (PL168). We are driven to the private and inner world of the alienated individuals; the cleavage is wide and deep in their world.

As in *Awake*, in *Paradise* too, they confront the greatest crisis in life. We see the wish for “running away from bondage, and a search for independence and power; and embracing even death as a means of release” (Cantor 1978, 36) as they are thwarted in every attempt for release and deliverance in the play. The most tragic is the plight of Ben, who is unable to earn a livelihood inspite of his Olympic gold medals and physical prowess. It is awful to see this gay spirited, powerful youth betrayed by his marriage partner, cuckolded and left to stand alienated from every familial and societal tie. His spirits decline, life degenerates, and he becomes the very symbol of self-alienation. As every avenue of life and release from a sense of alienation is closed, he finally gives himself to death willingly.
Another classic case of an alienated individual is Ben’s younger brother Julie, a promising stock market clerk. His obsession with money and success prompts him to speculate market trends in paper work. The game of speculation alienates him from every thing around him and transforms him into a mental wreck. Endowed with sleeping sickness, he haunts the stage as a walking corpse in the prime of youth. His alienation is total at the end of the play as he is perpetually seated in a wheel chair. His burden is that he could neither live nor die. According to Clurman, this play is about the disintegrating middle class, “which distrusts its own values” by not being “altogether attuned to” the “consciousness” of its own class. Commenting further, he adds that “they are all a little mad... enveloped by a mist of nostalgia” (1939, 424) which alienates them from every thing around. The fateful irony of the alienated ones in the play is that none of the younger generation could sleep and every one complains of sleeplessness at one stage or the other in his life.

The plight of the young beautiful pianist Pearl is more pathetic than that of the others. The sense of loneliness tortures her and she is even ashamed to come out of her room. Unable to marry Felix to whom she has been engaged for two years, she has to accept the fact that he is forced to desert her in search of a means for his livelihood. While a sense of homelessness permeates Felix’s thoughts and
actions, Pearl is fatalistically trapped inside the family as every attempt to escape the hateful surroundings is blocked by the condition. While talking to Menedelsohn, Odets declared that all his plays "deal with "homelessness in a certain way ... I've always felt homeless. I have never felt that I had a home. And if that is centrally true of me, and I know it is, that will necessarily come out in the work" (1969, 119). Harold Cantor observes of Pearl thus: "Embittered Pearl's sense of loss is expressed through her intermittent off stage playing as she joins her family in its slow process of fossilization and disintegration" (1978, 78). It is worth noting that "fossil", "sterilization" and "anaesthesia" are terms referring to characters in the "Interne Episode" in the play Waiting.

Sam Katz is another lonely, divided person in the play. He hides his true self and shows only the fictitious side of his life. He is reluctant to reveal that his self is corroded by his deformities. His sexual pretensions and the fantasy tales that he cooks up with his wife's blessing shows him as one alienated from his own self. In turn, his actions to cover up his fantasy life expose him as a villain. It is pathetic to learn at the end of the play that he swindled his friend's money, mostly to meet his medical bill. His final exposure by his wife is agonizing. Her confession that "for seven years Sam Katz did not sleep with a girl" (PL 215) is really moving. The agony
of childlessness, Sam’s impotency, sense of insecurity, and his pronouncement that “Home is a prison” (PL 215) tend to prove that inspite of alienating experiences of every kind, he chooses to live. The delineation of the inner turmoil in characters in Paradise shows that Odets, “was exploring the tormented psyche” (Jenckes 1991, 117). It is beyond doubt that in Paradise, the characters suffer from psychological alienation.

The general impression one gets while studying the problem of alienation in these plays is that most of Odets’s characters though physically in the chaotic world, have mentally not acclimatized themselves to the changing world and continue to think that they live in the happy days of the American boom. While the values of the world are fast changing, most of them grope in the dark with neither the knowledge of the world nor any grasp over the essential problems they face. Thus by mixing up their priorities these characters automatically alienate themselves from the centre of life. Being far removed from realities and normal human activities, they strive to live their lives and have their needs fulfilled under the impression that they still count as citizens. In reality they are completely isolated. Their’s is a family founded on alienation with diverse, conflicting priorities that never shall see them sharing a common ground.
Only a few characters with rare insight towards the end of the plays comprehend the reality and tend to live with acceptance. As this is an ever deepening crisis, a solution too eludes their grasp. Edmund Fuller says that “in our age man suffers not only from war, persecution, famine and ruin, but also from inner problem, a conviction and meaninglessness in his way of existence” (1958, 3). The sufferings due to the latter cause are widely prevalent but elude solutions. Like most modern American writers who are seized of the gravity of the issue, Odets deems this question of alienation as the greatest problem confronting his men and women.

The alienation experienced by O’Casey’s slum characters is due to failure on all fronts. While struggling in desperate poverty and ignorance, they are trapped amidst the violence and death perpetrated by fanatical nationalists and colonial forces. This is one potent source of alienation, central in all the characters. Unlike Odets’s characters who enjoy a more dignified social status, O’Casey’s people are from the slums, doing menial labour to make both ends meet. Hence a sense of alienation is in-built in them due to exhaustive physical labour, general depravity and lack of any meaningful contact with the politics of the world. It is worth noting that most of them do not have a personal history or a cherishable heritage to cling onto and derive inspiration from. It is pertinent to
quote here George Lukacs' observation on the theme of alienation of the characters without personal history. According to him such a person is fatefuly "thrown into the world meaninglessly, unfathomably. He does not develop contact with (his world); he neither forms nor is formed by it" (1972, 477). Most of the characters in the Dublin plays lack personal history, tradition or lineage.

In the Shadow, neither Donal Davoren nor Seumas Shields has a home, family or relations. The play provides no hint about their origin even. All around them are just neighbours. A sense of loneliness that emanates from the longing for relations influence their habits and actions. In turn it develops into a sense of hatred towards fellow human beings. Ample evidence is provided in the text to show that they are distanced and alienated from everyone else and even from their own actions. Davoren's initial proclamation, "The people! Damn the people! They live in the abyss" (SG 25), shows how deep is he alienated from the common mass. Such comments could emanate only from a hopelessly alienated individual who prefers to live in an environment of strangers.

Shields distinguishes the good from the bad. He prefers the innocent ones, but denounces the fanatical mob that mars the peace and life of others. The presence of the gunmen and the occupying
forces create a fear psychosis in him. He is a man possessed and thinking of death and mysterious "tappings". It is a mental hallucination that nobody else can hear. But for Davoren, he would have turned a neurotic wreck and died of fearful sensations. Hence his is an alienation from society. While Davoren partially overcomes self-alienation by his creative involvement, Shields stands completely alienated, as he has no associations or involvements, save the partial pedling business. Sleeplessness is his affliction and he suffers from this like a psychopath. Shields is a quite complex character most of the time and Davoren accusing him of "inconsistency"(SG 40) in the play. Shields' fear psychosis, individualistic way of living, mechanicalness and defeatism prove that he suffers loss of identity and turns into an alienatee by separating himself from the world. Such characters who marginalise themselves are, "living under the shadow of death"(Hassan 1961, 6).

The life affirming quality in Davoren is his passion for colour and beauty. This is born out of the poetic instinct in him and this clearly distinguishes his sufferings due to alienation from those of Shields. Though he stands aloof from the politics and religion of the day, this fascination for beauty and colour draw people towards him. Again, it is this instinct that draws him towards the beautiful Minnie Powell. It also shows how desperate he is in his search for
meaningful relations. For a brief while his search for home, peace and love ends in Minnie, but alas! this fleeting moment of comfort ends soon when Minnie is killed in the violence. We see that Davoren too shares Shields' contradictions and inconsistencies till the middle of the play. In Minnie's death, Davoren realizes how deadly alienating his environment is and he declares thus: "It's dangerous to be in and it's equally dangerous to be out"(SG 29). Hence it is apt to note that as individuals without personal history in an alienating society, Davoren and Shields suffer the tortures of the damned and carry with them the characteristics of the alienated: a crisis of identify, the loss of it and a search for it. This is the crisis of alienation confronting all the characters in the Dublin trilogy.

Alienation is also the historic condition of O'Casey's Ireland. Centuries of colonial domination deprived the Irish of the real facets of native civilization and its unique values. The alien culture trampled down the long cherished values and peace. The socio-cultural confrontation through the centuries sapped the energy and vitality of the people. In course of time their real culture was pushed under resulting in a distorted, mixed vision of life for them. Within the limits of this experience, the Irish stood alienated from their real nature and ability. The fast changing socio-political and economic scene of the world in the twentieth century urged in them a yearning
for freedom and independence. While experiencing unstable conditions, the peasants and workers involved themselves in the liberation struggle. This was a means of escape from the loneliness, frustration and estrangement but led to alienation from reality. Prone to violence by nature due to these alienating causes, the Dublin slum characters were easily carried away by fanatical aberrations. Thus they joined the violent movement and sank in misery.

Maik Hamburger in her article entitled ‘Anti-Illusion...’ compares the technique of alienation used by Brecht and O’Casey, states thus: “whereas Brecht’s emphasis lay on the story and he used the technique of alienation to expose social mechanisms, O’Casey in the Dublin plays was placing his emphasis on the characters and he used his technique of contrasting styles to expose socially displaced emotions or to channel the emotions of the spectator”(1981, 8). The critic is of the view that alienation is not only experienced by characters but is a conscious technique of stage craft used by O’Casey to heighten the sense of loss and displacement. The contrasting style used by O’Casey in the Dublin plays is to enhance either a farcical or a tragic situation.

When a comedian heightens a tragic situation in comic scenes, that itself is a technique of alienation. This technique employed by
O’Casey in low comedy situations put great stress on such characters’ sufferings due to alienation. Seumas Shields’ complains that his business associate Maguire is late, looks farcical and dubious when he himself is under the sweet arms of Morpheus till noon and decides not to wash himself in the morning due to laziness. This comical self-contradiction assumes a serious realistic tone when Maguire leaves his bag and in a gesture of despair Shields exclaims thus: “Oh, this is a hopeless country! There’s a fellow that thinks that the four cardinal virtues are not to be found outside the Irish Republic” (SG 7). The technique used by O’Casey heightens the tension and shows Shields preparing himself for serious and tragic insights. It is tragic irony to see Shields’ alienation from the Republican causes with which once he was deeply involved, carrying the gun, paying rifle levy and teaching the Irish language at nights when he was in the Irish Republican Brotherhood. This sense of estrangement is experienced and expressed by all the patriotic volunteers who associated themselves with the gun culture in the Dublin plays.

The tragic plight of Johnny Boyle, his seclusion and neurotic fits due to fear for life from his estrstwhile republican comrades shows how the alienating effect torments his soul in Juno. Similarly, Jack Clitheore in Plough, though enamoured of the glory of a
commandant in the Irish Citizen Army during the Easter Rising, is baffled to see Captain Brennan firing over the head of the Irish men and women. Captain Brennan’s angry retort “Irish be damned” (PS 154) is a proof to show how far the movement stands alienated from the masses. The masses’ alienation from the movement is borne out by the mob looting, plundering and attacking the volunteers who defend their life risking their own in the streets.

Jack Clitheore’s misplaced love has an alienating effect. By neglecting his loving wife Nora and being enamoured of mythical ‘Cathleen’, Jack stands alienated from natural life force. The Volunteers in the play stand alienated from the real cause of the Rising due to self-love. Lieutenant Langon, ripped through the belly in the fierce fighting complains that, “Everyone else (is) escapin” (PS155), fearing their lives. Captain Brennan with whom he shares his despair deserts the comrades at the siege of the post office. Later he runs for his life from the enemy soldiers and poses as a civilian before the raiding forces in Jack’s tenement.

The distancing technique used by O’Casey in this play heightens the sense of mutual alienation and also enhances its tragic effect. The opposing pulls in the life of these characters estrange them further. The gunmen Volunteers are neither committed ones
nor dropouts. Cohen says, "To be involved is to be committed to the society" and "to drop out is not only to question the society but to question the question, to make a readied break" (1982, 425). But these alienated Volunteers in the play neither reject their original situation nor involve themselves earnestly with it. This dilemma separates them from every thing and turns them into alienatees.

Ronald Ayling, examining the distancing technique used by O’Casey in his plays, is highly complimentary of the playwright’s effective use of this device as a significant stagecraft in his article, “Character Control and Distancing... (1970). Ayling calls for concerted attempt to study this aspect of O’Casey plays. He also says that in Plough and The Silver Tassie, O’Casey profitably uses this device to distance some of the dramatis personae and their actions so that the spectators are not swayed by their histrionics but concentrate on the theme of the plays. Like Brecht, O’Casey was distrustful of the hero’s ability to get the audience to focus on the issues. Earlier, they had been carried away by the histrionics of characters like Shields and Jack Boyle than be critical of them.

O’Casey’s concern in these plays was that the audience must derive critical insights while viewing the actions and their social implications than simply be amused by the pranks and fantasies of
the stereotyped characters. O'Casey wanted the spectators to see how these worthless characters by active involvement in political movements have lost their identity. But the response to his earlier plays belied this hope. Even well balanced critics of O'Casey turned sentimental in their assessment of such an irresponsible, grotesque-anti-hero, Jack Boyle. Ayling concludes that “O'Casey's wish to communicate the universal significance of poverty and modern warfare and his awareness of man being both an individual and mass at one and the same time” (1985b, 187) prompted him to focus on the theme than on character by the most significant use of distancing effect.

In a society of injustice, dissipation, illness and poverty, characters like Johnny Boyle in Juno, Jack Clitheore, Lt. Langon and Captain Brennan in Plough and Maguire and Minnie Powell in Shadow break-down under pressure. They fail to know that “killing is achieving minimal formalities of revenge” (Martin 1987, 66). This engulfs them in the mire of death and destruction. In turn, the distance between action and achievement gets wider. Their death distances their families from the essence of life. These alienating actions provoke the ire of the opposing forces and in turn they raid and kill the tenement population invariably. What is left for the ordinary mortals is a sense of loss, waste and discord. The anguish
due to such loss is deeply felt by the saner ones. Davoren’s sad query: “are we going to know what peace and security are?”(SG 29). shows this.

Dropping out itself is a potent source of alienation. A loss of connection or contact and loss due to seclusion impair the growth. Davoren’s statement that he has no connections, knows nothing and does not want to know, shows that he reacts thus “against the nationalist patriotic politics of this day” (Mitchel 1980, 36). The terrorist tendency of the movement and the inadequacies of politics prompt such characters distance themselves from them. Their alienation is due to the inadequacy of the movement, which they feel is potent enough to kill. It is also due to the loss of faith in their ability, and all encompassing melancholy. These exert pressure on them and in turn they wish themselves elsewhere.

Experimentation with drugs, immaturity, evasion and selfishness are also signs of alienation in O’Casey’s characters. Their ironic confusion of values, drunkenness, violence and trivialities show them as confused individuals. In Margeson’s opinion such a character is, “pursuing his own course in isolation from others or in collision with them (1967, ix). The drunken ones are fretful, abusive, boastful, and selfish in these plays. Heavy
drinking men like Grigson in *Shadow*, Captain Boyle in *Juno* and Fluther Good in *Plough* are drifting. By haunting the pub to escape work and family responsibilities, Captain Boyle is unsure of his identity and becomes childish. He has spent a lifetime trying to evade social ties, which he needs during the weakness of his old age. He is like a primitive, living in savage conditions and his alienation is total when Juno, his bread-winner and sustainer, walks out on him.

Grigson, the Protestant Orangeman, stands alienated from the religious creed and customs of the neighbours. While remaining loyal to their enemy, the Colonizer, he stands frightened and lonely and cut off from his neighbours. Thus by dropping out, he experiments with drugs and soon becomes addicted. His drunken brawls and physical assault of his wife in an inebriated condition show him up in a poor light. His wife is an exploited partner in an estranged marriage. Cohen’s observation of the dropout ones, as leading a “life of doddering self indulgence” (1982, 432) is significant in this context. Tommy Owens, a drunken boaster in the play, standing out of reality and all connections, is another individual unsure of his identity and priorities. He “weeps with self pity” (Simmons 1983, 46). It is a clear sign of an alienatee. Sociologists categorize the alcoholics, dropouts and the ones who
lack spontaneity as the other-direction oriented persons and hence alienatees.

Raymond Williams states that the tragedy of modern man lies in "a terrifying loss of connection between men and even between father and son, a loss of connection which was however a particular social and historical fact, a memorable distance between his desire and his endurance and between both and the purpose and meanings which the general life offered him" (1966, 13). Modern psychologists see this loss of connection between men and the environment, his distancing from his milieu and his own self as a distressing experience of alienation. A man who is distanced is estranged from the centre of life. Such a man, instead of charting and deciding the course of his life, just goes through the motion of life. The operating forces on his life lie elsewhere and he has no control over them.

Such a person is out of touch with himself and men around him, and thus stands removed from his own world. By being estranged from the centre of life and from their own selves many characters of O'Casey and Odets remain as outsiders in their own family and society. Even while living inside, they do not belong to it. Mitchell is of the view that in O'Casey's slum characters, there is first and foremost an "attempt to physically get out of slums" (1980,
45). As they fail in their attempt, they abandon it. Yet again, being forced by circumstances to be inside, they face tremendous conflicts, dilemmas and tensions. Thus, their only choice is melting like raindrops within the slum culture and life. Even for such a melting they have to have multiple reconciliations. We see none of O’Casey’s characters escaping the tenement life however desperately they struggle to come out of it.

A classic case in point is his women characters like Minnie, Mary and Nora, in the Dublin plays. They strive to escape through love. Ironically their’s is a loveless society and thus they feel betrayed and stand estranged. In their society, love, instead of being the panacea for all ailments, becomes a potent force of alienation. Davoren possessed with love for life could not arrest Minnie’s death when she offers herself as a sacrificial victim for all enduring love. Mary Boyle uses love as a ploy to escape the drudgery of the slum. Hence she hops from Jerry of the slums to Bentham of higher status and society. In turn, she experiences only betrayal as she has given her body in advance in her frantic quest for escape. Nora’s love is unreciprocated. Her husband is estranged from human love. Instead, he is overcome by a killer instinct and stands alienated from Nora’s genuine love. It is also a case of misplaced love, as, in Jack Clitheroe’s view, revenge killing for his country is of first priority.
In her frantic search for love within marriage, Nora is rewarded with schizophrenia. Nora is the only woman character experiencing greater alienation due to mental illness in the Dublin trilogy.

The men characters in the Dublin plays feel estranged from the slum environment. As insurrection was part of the daily life of Ireland, most of these alienated men embrace it as a medium and means of escape. As Tommy Colgan in Liam O'Flaherty's novel *Insurrection* opines, they view insurrection as a means to escape "from the prolonged horror of life in the slums; from hunger and loneliness and humiliation" (1950, 173). O'Casey's men placed in an identical situation share the same fate and hence join the movement mainly to escape the slum environment. For them, it is not an act of faith and discipline. Unlike the women escapists, the men involved in the violent movement could not survive. Death is the inevitable outcome once the wrong choice is made. For them death is a relief as already they have been reduced to life less things. Simmons views their condition thus: "The unprotected nature of tenement life where there are no cushions of money and privacy and garden walls, where police are threatening figures rather than guardians of property, where hunger and violence and drunkenness are familiares" (1983, 62). The unending dilemma arising out of unprotected nature of their life remains unresolved till the end of the plays.
The pain of life owing to such alienation is terrible and Davoren gives vent to it at the end of *Shadow* thus: “Ah me, alas! Pain, pain, pain, for ever!... it’s still more terrible to think that Davoren and Shields are alive!”(SG44). This pain of living itself is universalised by Jack Boyle as the curtains are drawn at the close of the play as follows: “th” whole worl’s... in a terr...ible state o’...chassis!” (JP101). Similarly, Mrs.Gogan’s last words in the company of the whimpering Nora are pitiful: “come on with me, dear, an’ you can doss in poor Mollser’s bed, till we gather some neigbours to come an’ give th’ last friendly touches to Bessie in th’ lonely lyin’ of her out”(PS174). One of her companions being dead and the other is mad, powerless even to live or die. The human crisis perpetrated by human eccentricity wherein they lost their identity and companions has resulted in their frantic craving for personal connections. This endless search of Man from cradle to the grave, as Emerson rightly puts it is due to the society which is “in conspiracy against the manhood of everyone of its members”(1987, 17) and reduces the individual to a cipher.

The tremor in human relations thus felt and echoed in Odets’s characters, binds them with O’Casey’s. What Odets portrays is the effect of socio-economic factors in alienating individual relationships. Sam’s cry, in *Awake and Sing!*, “I’m a lonely person.
Nobody likes me" (AS94), is pivotal to his alienation. Through this we are transported to the private, inner world of the other alienated characters too. Ralph in the play too resigns to his fate and prepares to live like a dog, uncared for and unwanted. Jacob, the old Marxist idealist is perplexed to see his daughter Bessie’s aggressiveness. He could not digest Bessie forsaking moral values for materialistic considerations. At last, a sense of defeat overpowers him. Being cowed down by the materialists like Bessie and Morty, he stands lonely and Tootsie the favourite dog is his sole companion till his death.

Financial insecurity leading to personal and social insecurity always haunts Odets’s characters. According to Harold Clurman the pressures of the business world “with its fundamental uncertainty, hysteria, indifference to and impatience with human problems as such, its inevitable ruthlessness, its ultimate killer tendencies” (1939, 431) are responsible for the estrangement of these characters. The sense of alienation leads even to hysterical heights when their genuine aspirations are not met for lack of money. Julie Gordon in Paradise is hopelessly ruined by hysteria. Many of the young men and women like Odets, feel “life is dead in the body”. They are also aware that they “have nothing, have never had anything” and their fate is “to lie sick in... heart” and “despair”, (Gibson 1982, 271).
The other alienating influences like, sleeplessness, betrayal by marriage partners, turmoil and crisis in love, and restlessness could be traced to the financial insecurity they commonly share. The sickening melancholy arising out of the feeling that nobody loves and understands them and their surcharged temperament expose them as fearful, withdrawing, confused and hating people. As these are all destructively alienating traits, and hence in their life "dissolution is a natural law" (Bigsby 1982, 39).

As writers directly confronting the human condition, O'Casey and Odets show how stranded among proliferating contradictions their people encounter the game of life. In their society the contradiction in preaching and practice has become a fashion as seen in its "preaching liberty and practicing slavery" (Commager 1978, xiii). There is also this contradiction in preaching material-well being and perpetuating penury. These overlapping and contradictory influences are alienating in their own right and enhance the meaning of alienation as seen in the characters. In their society there are no enduring bonds, "where jobs are hard work rather than careers" and "ideals are hypocrisy or veiled forms of oppression" (McCarthy 1988, 2). When money is worshipped at the cost of moral well being, man becomes the victim of the intrinsic hypocrisy of his own society.
The discussion on the causes and forms of alienation shows Man primarily as a product of the society. Its influences and pressures are visible in every manifestation of human conduct. Hence his very identity itself could not be separated from the influences that operate on him. This itself is an indicator that the individual’s nature is primarily fixed. Alienation is complete in those who are not aware of this. As evident from the life of these characters, the individual life is inseparable from the influences that are partly acquired and partly inherited. This strengthens the view that the individual actions are determined; taking the term in its broadest conventional sense minus philosophical fixations around it. In the context of the shaping forces operating in their environment, these characters are caught in a web of conflicting as well as contradictory and mutually alienating influences. It is worth discussing the conflicts that these characters encounter in life as a result of such alienating factors.