THE HUMAN CONDITION
AS PORTRAYED IN THREE TRAGICOMEDIES OF THE NINETEEN-FIFTIES

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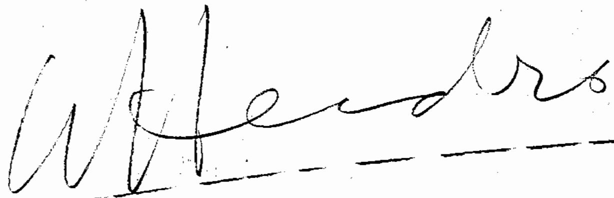

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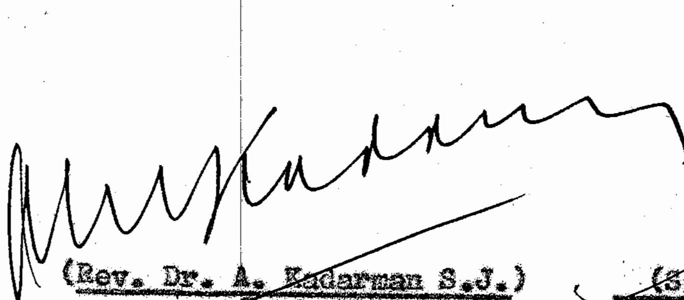

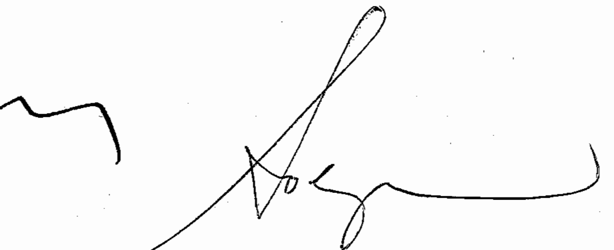

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To my father, mother and fiancée, I dedicate this thesis.

Atasana, Thomas

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis deals with three modern English tragicomedies of the nineteen-fifties. They are Waiting for Godot by Samuel Beckett (Faber and Faber, London, 1973), Look Back in Anger by John Osborne (Bantam Books, New York, 1959) and The Birthday Party by Harold Pinter (Samuel French Ltd, London, 1960). I chiefly approach these plays in terms of what the main characters experience and what problems they undergo rather than what their characteristics are. Since Beckett, Osborne and Pinter write about man's condition in their works, I try to examine how the human condition affects the living experiences and actual problems of the characters. I also pay attention to the three playwrights' prominent views and the dramatic styles they have presented to effectively support their views.

The objective of this thesis is to show parallels which are related to man's condition experienced by the characters in these three tragicomedies and to put forward the authors' outlooks expressed via their works, as well as the unique style of each play. I do not concentrate on other dramatic elements, such as setting, structure and characterization. By way of comparison, I make use of five other plays. Two of them are written by Osborne and Pinter, namely Luther (Faber and Faber, London, 1961) and Landscape (Grove Press, Inc., New York, 1970) respectively. The others are Eugene Ionesco's The New Tenant and David Campton's Then... (both are taken from Theatre Today, Longmans, Green & Co Ltd, London and Harlow, 1969, ed. by David Thompson) and Edward Albee's Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? Penguin Books, Middlesex, 1970).

In accordance with the objective, the structure of this

thesis is arranged as follows. First of all, I give the summaries of the three plays in order to draw an overall picture (Chapter I). Secondly, I deal with the human condition referring to man's tragic flaws that dominate the characters of these plays (Chapter II). Next, I discuss the three dramatists' outlooks for the present world (Chapter III), followed by their unique styles (Chapter IV). The final conclusion (Chapter V) closes this thesis.

No doubt, I have personally obtained great profit in relation to my teaching activity and indeed to life itself after studying and analysing these tragicomedies. They reveal the tragedy of man's condition in our modern but absurd, uncompromising and frightening world, yet they still show man's comic dimension worth enjoying. As an illustration, teaching will be absurd if the teacher behaves as if he knows everything. In this complex and menacing world, human fear is something to reckon with. A teacher is therefore expected to understand his students' fears and also their shortcomings. Finally, teaching will be livelier if the sense of humour is not abandoned.

Chapter I

THREE TRAGICOMEDIES OF THE NINETEEN-FIFTIES

About a decade after the Second World War, several playwrights — such as Samuel Beckett, John Osborne and Harold Pinter — seemed to express spectacularly and dramatically the tragic dimension of the human condition in the age of this modern and yet absurd, unfriendly and menacing world through the theatrical media. They put forward their typical ideas and at the same time created new dramatic styles in the English theatre. A.C. Ward (1965) even estimates that in the nineteen-fifties an important revolution was brought about in English drama, beginning with the London production of Beckett's Waiting for Godot in 1955.[1] He further states that this play "might be taken as the pattern play of the decade."[2] The following year, "the angry young man" in Osborne's new play Look Back in Anger surprised and confused the English audience. John Russell Taylor (1962) is certain that 8 May 1956, when Look Back in Anger had its first night at the Royal Court in London, "still marks the real breakthrough of 'the new drama' into the British theatre."[3] David Thompson (1965) believes that "the English theatre has aquired a new look and a new creative vitality ever since that historic night of 8 May 1956."[4] Ronald Hayman (1970) also notes that "the journalists who talk about a 'revolution' in the English theatre date it on the 8th May

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1. A.C. Ward, Twentieth-Century English Literature, E.L.B.S. and Methuen & Co Ltd, London, 1965, pp. 137-38.
2. Ibid., p. 7.
3. John Russell Taylor, Anger and After, Eyre Methuen Ltd, London, 1977, p. 39.
4. David Thompson, Ed., Theatre Today, Longmans, Green & Co Ltd, London and Harlow, 1969, p. xv.

1956."[5] In 1958 Pinter presented his first full-length play, The Birthday Party, which brought his name to prominence.

1. Waiting for Godot

Samuel Barclay Beckett, Irish poet, novelist and dramatist, was born at Foxrock, near Dublin, in 1906. He took a degree at Trinity College, Dublin, and then went to Paris. In 1937 he made Paris his home, after a short time as lecturer in French at Trinity College (1930-31) and two years in London (1933-35). He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1969. According to Jean-Jacques Mayoux, Beckett's adoption of the French language for many of his writings seems to be chosen in order to emphasize "the foreign-ness, the externality of all language."[6]

Beckett's famous two-act play, En attendant Godot, was written in 1952. He translated this original French version into English as Waiting for Godot in 1954. Martin Esslin has labelled this play as "the Theatre of the Absurd".[7] Ronald Hayman states that "the achievement of Waiting for Godot is that like no other play it crystallizes inaction into a dramatic action."[8] Inaction is the consequence of the fact that "there is no development in Beckett's plays because, according to Beckett, development is impossible."[9] The following summary

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5. Ronald Hayman, John Osborne, Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, London, 1970, p. 3.

6. Jean-Jacques Mayoux, Samuel Beckett, Longman Group Ltd, London, 1974, cover.

7. Martin Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd in Richard Kostelanetz, Ed., On Contemporary Literature, Avon Books, New York, 1964, pp. 204-21.

8. Ronald Hayman, Samuel Beckett, Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, London, 1970, p. 4.

9. Ibid., p. 18.

of Waiting for Godot is to confirm Esslin's classification and Hayman's statement at the same time.

On a country road in an evening Estragon, a tramp, sits on a low mound trying to take off his boot. The boot is apparently too narrow for his foot. He has to struggle hard to pull it. He is panting with the effort and gets exhausted. In the meantime Vladimir, another tramp, plays with his hat. These two idle tramps agree that they have nothing to do. Since doing nothing is unbearable, they begin to chat. Their first talk is full of Biblical references, such as "the Holy Land", "the Dead Sea", "the two thieves" and "our Saviour". When Estragon invites Vladimir to go, Vladimir reminds him that they must stay because they are waiting for Godot. As they are still in the dimension of time, they somehow have to pass the time while waiting. As a result, they are in urgent need to do something. Estragon tries to tell the story of "the Englishman in the brothel" and asks Vladimir to continue telling it. Vladimir refuses. Then Estragon invites Vladimir to hang themselves from a bough of the single tree nearby. They reject the idea because it may separate them if one of them fails to die. Estragon asks Vladimir for a carrot to chew on. When he drops the remain of the carrot, Pozzo, a kind of despot, and Lucky, his slave, approach them. Pozzo carries a whip and drives Lucky by means of a rope tied round the neck. Lucky carries a heavy bag, a folding stool, a picnic basket and a greatcoat. The tramps mistake Pozzo for Godot. Pozzo asks them who Godot is, and stumblingly Vladimir tells him that Godot is a kind of acquaintance. Pozzo puts on his coat, sits on the stool and enjoys drinking wine and eating a piece of chicken. To serve Pozzo, Lucky has repeatedly to drop and pick up the things he carries. This gives a comic effect. Vladimir and Estragon begin to inspect Lucky. They wonder why Lucky does not put down the bags. Pozzo finally informs them that Lucky does so in order to impress his master how well he carries so that Pozzo will be tempted to keep him. In fact, Pozzo wants to sell Lucky at the fair. He tells Vladimir that he intends to get rid of his slave. Lucky weeps when he hears that. Estragon makes to wipe Lucky's eyes, but Lucky kicks him violently in the shins. Pozzo states that

he is in a hurry, but his behaviour shows the opposite. He even loses his watch. Before he leaves he still has time to ask Lucky to dance and think aloud in front of the tramps. When he and Lucky go on with their journey, Vladimir and Estragon agree that both master and slave have helped them pass the time. A boy suddenly appears. He regards Vladimir as Mr Albert. He has a message from Godot to inform them that Godot will surely come tomorrow, but not today. Finally, Estragon suggests that they go, but they remain to stay.

The next day in the evening at the same place Vladimir sings a song about dogs digging a dog tomb. When he sees Estragon come, he immediately wants to embrace his friend. They embrace and clap each other on the back. Vladimir notices that his friend has been beaten. Ten people have beaten Estragon but he does not know the real reason why they have badly treated him. He has a tendency to forget things easily. He has forgotten that they attempted to hang themselves the previous day. When Vladimir reminds him about Pozzo and his slave, he begins to remember what happened yesterday. They are still waiting for Godot this evening. To continue passing their time, Estragon invites Vladimir to play games with words, such as to contradict each other, to ask each other questions and to abuse each other. Then Vladimir asks Estragon to play a game at being Pozzo and Lucky and to stagger about on one leg trying to imitate trees. When they look at the only tree near them, they are surprised to see it covered with some leaves whereas it was all bare the previous evening. In a single night it has grown leaves. To break the silence, Vladimir starts to sing in a loud voice. This makes Estragon angry. Vladimir softens his voice and Estragon begins to sleep. Estragon wakes with a start. In the meantime Vladimir sees Lucky's hat. It means that they find an object to play with. They childishly play with that hat. Pozzo and Lucky come. Pozzo is now blind, while Lucky is dumb. Lucky is still burdened as before. Pozzo follows Lucky using a shorter rope than it was before. It seems that Pozzo's intention to sell his slave is forgotten. Again, the two tramps mistake Pozzo for Godot. Lucky falls, and he automatically brings down Pozzo with him. Pozzo asks for help. The tramps are reluctant to help him so that he offers them one hundred francs. Vladimir is moved to help him when he offers two hundred francs.

In fact, Pozzo has forgotten that he met Vladimir and Estragon yesterday. After he and Lucky have left the tramps to continue with their journey, a boy comes to the tramps. He tells them again that Godot will not come today but surely tomorrow, although he does nothing this evening. They seem to be frustrated so that they come back to the idea of hanging themselves. However, they do not really commit suicide because the cord breaks. They never give up the idea anyway, since they cannot bear to go on waiting like that. At last, when Vladimir invites Estragon to go, Estragon agrees, but they do not move.

Waiting for Godot is a tragicomedy. Both tragic and comic elements really dominate the play. A couple of direct textual quotations below illustrate its tragicomic atmosphere.

> POZZO: ...(He jerks the rope.) Closer! (Lucky advances.) Stop! (Lucky stops.)...Coat! (Lucky puts down the bag, advances, gives the coat, goes back to his place, takes up the bag.) Hold that! (Pozzo holds out the whip. Lucky advances and, both his hands being occupied, takes the whip in his mouth, then goes back to his place. Pozzo begins to put on his coat, stops.) Coat! (Lucky puts down the bag, basket and stool, advances, helps Pozzo on with his coat, goes back to his place and takes up bag, basket and stool.)...
>
> (Waiting for Godot, p. 24)

> ESTRAGON: (timidly). Please, sir...
> POZZO : What is it, my good man?
> ESTRAGON: Er...you've finished with the...er... you don't need the...er...bones, sir?
> VLADIMIR: (scandalized). You couldn't have waited?
> POZZO : No no, he does well to ask. Do I need the bones? (He turns over with the end of his whip.) No, personally I do not need them any more. (Estragon takes a step towards the bones.) But... (Estragon stops short)...but in theory the bones go to the carrier. He is therefore the one to ask. (Estragon turns towards Lucky, hesitates.) Go on, go on, don't be afraid, ask him, he'll tell you.
> Estragon goes towards Lucky, stops before him.
> ESTRAGON: Mister...excuse me, Mister...
> POZZO : You're being spoken to, pig! Reply! (To Estragon.) Try him again.

ESTRAGON: Excuse me, Mister, the bones, you won't be wanting the bones?
Lucky looks long at Estragon.
(pp. 26-27)

POZZO: Make haste, before he stops. (Estragon approaches Lucky and makes to wipe his eyes. Lucky kicks him violently in the shins. Estragon drops the handkerchief, recoils, staggers about the stage howling with pain.)
(p. 32)

ESTRAGON: That's the idea, let's abuse each other.
They turn, move apart, turn again and face each other.
VLADIMIR: Moron!
ESTRAGON: Vermin!
VLADIMIR: Abortion!
ESTRAGON: Morpion!
VLADIMIR: Sewer-rat!
ESTRAGON: Curate!
VLADIMIR: Cretin!
ESTRAGON: (with finality). Crritic!
(p. 75)

POZZO: (clutching on to Lucky who staggers). What is it? Who is it?
Lucky falls, drops everything and brings down Pozzo with him. They lie helpless among the scattered baggage.
(p. 77)

Godot turns out to be a big question. Vladimir and Estragon who are waiting for Godot never indicate who Godot is. Beckett himself has frankly admitted that he does not know who Godot is. When Alan Schneider once asked him who or what was meant by "Godot", he just replied: "If I knew, I would have said so in the play."[10] "Our Saviour" and "Christ" are mentioned several times in the play. Is this a hint that those tramps are waiting for salvation? Is Godot "the Saviour"? The Gospel notes that Christ has come and He says that He will come again.[11] Are those tramps expecting the rearrival of Christ and thus longing for Doomsday? Nobody knows!

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10. See Richard N. Coe, Beckett, Oliver and Boyd Ltd, Edinburg and London, 1968, p. 2.

11. See Matt. 24:29-31; Mark 13:24-27; Luke 21:25-28.

2. Look Back in Anger

John Osborne was twenty-six when his well-known "angry" play, Look Back in Anger, was first performed at the Royal Court in London in 1956. He is of working-class origin. Besides writing some plays, he has been an actor with some years' experience at Ilfracombe and Hayling Island and familiar to regulars at the Royal Court. Look Back in Anger is his full-length play in three acts. Its synopsis is as follows.

In the Porters' one-room flat in a large Midland town, early evening in April, Jimmy Porter and Cliff Lewis are seated in armchairs reading newspapers. In the meantime Alison, Jimmy's wife, is ironing clothes. Jimmy throws his paper down and begins to criticize the book reviews in the Sunday papers which tend to say the same about different books. Cliff seems not to be interested in Jimmy's comment. This makes Jimmy calls him "an ignorant peasant". Cliff even emphasizes that he is uneducated as well. When Alison refuses to give a comment, Jimmy sharply says that she has not had a thought for years. Then he throws his criticism at Bishop of Bromley who has made a very moving appeal to all Christians to do all they can to assist in the manufacture of the H-Bomb. He boasts that he is the only one who knows how to treat a paper or anything else in the house. He spends ninepence on a posh Sunday paper every week, but nobody reads it except him. He is angry because his wife, Cliff and many other people are not enthusiastic about anything. He truly longs for ordinary human enthusiasm. Without enthusiasm, human beings are not really human. He cynically invites Alison and Cliff to play a game at pretending that they were human beings, that they were actually alive. In the meanwhile his anger continues to flow. Now his victims are the members of Alison's family. He rudely characterizes Alison's parents, Colonel and Mrs Redfern, as arrogant, full of malice and evil minded. He accuses Alison's brother, Nigel, and his political pals as having been plundering and fooling everybody for generations and selling out their countrymen. For him Nigel, like other invisible politicians whose knowledge is vague, is

not much use to anyone, even to his supporters. Finally, he brutally states that Nigel and Alison sound like sycophantic, phlegmatic and pusillanimous people. Hearing all these coarse words, Cliff seems no longer to be patient. He pushes Jimmy round the floor. Both collapse to the floor. Jimmy manages to push Cliff on to the ironing board, and into Alison. The board and Alison collapse. She cries out in pain. She has burnt her arm on the iron. She is very angry with her husband and makes him get out. Cliff tries to cure the burn with a piece of soap. Meanwhile, she has an opportunity to tell Cliff that Jimmy sometimes gets savage. However, the most important thing she wants to reveal to Cliff is that she is pregnant, something she dares not tell her husband. In fact, she is very fond of Cliff. Jimmy himself regards Cliff as the only friend he seems to have left. The other person who is dear to him is Mrs Tanner, a Charwoman who let him buy the sweet-stall off her. He is close to her and Cliff because they are from the working class, unlike Alison who comes from the upper-middle-class.

Two weeks later Helena Charles, Alison's friend, pays a visit to the Porters. It is in the evening and Jimmy is playing on his jazz trumpet. Helena comes to them like a visiting royalty. According to Jimmy, she is one of his natural enemies. For Alison, Helena's visit means that she has someone to whom she can express her feelings openly. She no doubt tells stories about her husband and herself to Helena. They married when Jimmy had left the university for about a year. For the first time in her life, she was cut off from the kind of people she had always known. After they married, they had no money and no home. Jimmy was even jobless, until Mrs Tanner started him off in the sweet business. They began to live in Hugh's flat in Poplar before moving to their present flat. Hugh, Jimmy's friend almost from childhood, is Mrs Tanner's son. Alison could not believe that those two educated companions could be so savage and so uncompromising. They were frightening for her. They apparently regarded her as a sort of hostage from the sections of society they had declared war on. They even went to some of Nigel's political meetings with their Poplar cronies and dispersed those meetings. They broke up when Hugh made up his mind to go abroad and Jimmy refused to go with him. Pointing out a toy teddy bear and a soft woolly squirrel on a chest of drawers, Alison tells Helena that she and Jimmy have been

playing "bears and squirrels, squirrels and bears" game, which is quite mad according to her. They play at being animals to each other as they could not bear the pain of being human beings any longer. Helena suggests that Alison has got to fight Jimmy or to get out, otherwise he will kill her. Helena also invites Alison to go to church. Jimmy is really surprised to know it. He wonders if his wife has gone out of her mind by taking Helena's advice. He furiously accuses Helena of being determined to win Alison from him. Helena furthermore proposes that Alison should return to her parents if she wants peace. When Alison tries to change the course of Jimmy's anger toward Helena by saying something about her family, he seems to take the opportunity by humiliating her mother and expecting his own mother-in-law to die. When Helena interrupts his rude speech and Cliff tries to stop it, he even aims his contempt at Helena, whom he mockingly calls "a saint in Dior's clothing" and "an expert in the New Economics - the Economics of the Supernatural". He describes her and her kind as a romantic lot who spend their time mostly looking forward to the past. The following evening Alison's father, Colonel Redfern, visits the Porters as Helena has phoned him and asked him to come and fetch his daughter. When he arrives, Jimmy has gone to London to see Mrs Tanner who has just had a stroke. Cliff is also out, looking after the sweet-stall in Jimmy's absence. The Colonel wonders why such an educated man like Jimmy makes a living by keeping a sweet-stall in the market. When Jimmy comes back, Alison and her father have just departed and the Colonel has nearly run Jimmy down in his car. Jimmy is almost giddy with anger. Helena undoubtedly becomes the object of his fury. He confesses that in fact he still always has a deep loving for Alison. Helena informs him that his wife is going to have a baby, but he is indifferent for such news.

On a Sunday evening several months later, the usual Sunday routine is repeated. Jimmy and Cliff are sitting in their respective armchairs with their leg sprawled out and reading Sunday newspapers as usual. The only difference is that Helena has taken Alison's place. She is ironing clothes. When Jimmy finishes with his paper, he begins to criticize people who sacrifice things they never really want in the first place. Cliff, who is not interested in Jimmy's speeches, seems to be bored with such a constant bad atmosphere. He needs something

different and wants to try somewhere different. On the other hand, Helena is likely to get used to Jimmy's way of life, and she finally admits that she loves him. When Jimmy is playing with his jazz trumpet in Cliff's room a few minutes later, Alison suddenly comes without any baby with her. She finds out that Helena has been perfectly playing her former role. She seems to regret and tells Helena that her coming back is cruel and unfair, but with a heavy heart Helena decides to leave Jimmy. She emphasizes that Alison has more right to live with her own husband than she has. Anyway, she has discovered what is wrong with Jimmy. She is sure that he was born out of his time. Alison understands this too. When Jimmy approaches, Helena persuades him to accept his wife by ensuring him that he cannot be happy, when what he is doing is wrong or hurts someone else. At last he is willing to accept Alison when she humiliates herself and confesses that she has been wrong. She has lost her baby and now she does not want to lose her husband. He tenderly invites her to be together in their bear's cave and squirrel's drey.

Tragic and comic elements clearly colour Look Back in Anger. Jimmy's speeches are generally violent, despairing and bitter, but they are sometimes very funny. The following illustrations are meant to show that Look Back in Anger is in a way a tragicomedy.

> JIMMY: ...How I remember looking down at them, full of beer for breakfast, and feeling a bit buzzed. Mummy was slumped over her pew in a heap — the noble, female rhino, pole-axed at last! And Daddy sat beside her, upright and unafraid, dreaming of his days among the Indian Princes, and unable to believe he'd left his horsewhip at home. Just the two of them in that empty church — them and me...
> (Look Back in Anger, pp. 65-66)

> JIMMY : (to Alison). Are you going to let yourself be taken in by this saint in Dior's clothing? I will tell you the simple truth about her. (Articulating with care.) She is a cow. I wouldn't mind that so much, but she seems to have become a sacred cow as well!

CLIFF : You've gone too far, Jimmy. Now dry up!
HELENA: Oh, let him go on.
JIMMY : (to Cliff). I suppose you're going over to that side as well. Well, why don't you? Helena will help to make it pay off for you. She's an expert in the New Economics – the Economics of the Supernatural...
(p. 66)

JIMMY : ...What are you doing here anyway? You'd better keep out of my way, if you don't want your head kicked in.
HELENA: (calmly). If you'll stop thinking about yourself for one moment, I'll tell you something I think you ought to know. Your wife is going to have a baby.
He just looks at her.
Well? Doesn't that mean anything? Even to you?
He is taken aback, but not so much by the news, as by her.
JIMMY : All right – yes. I am surprised. I give you that. But tell me. Did you honestly expect me to go soggy at the knees, and collapse with remorse! (Leaning nearer.) Listen, if you'll stop breathing your female wisdom all over me, I'll tell you something: I don't care. (Beginning quietly.) I don't care if she's going to have a baby. I don't care if it has two heads!
(p. 90)

JIMMY: Do I detect a growing, satanic glint in her eyes lately? Do you think it's living in sin with me that does it? (To Helena.) Do you feel very sinful my dear? Well? Do you?
She can hardly believe that this is an attack and she can only look at him, uncertain of herself.
Do you feel sin crawling out of your ears, like stored up wax or something? Are you wondering whether I'm joking or not? Perhaps I ought to wear a red nose and funny hat. I'm just curious, that's all.
She is shaken by the sudden coldness in his eyes, but before she has time to fully realise how hurt she is, he is smiling at her, and shouting cheerfully at Cliff.
Let's have that paper, stupid!
(p. 97)

ALISON: ...It's gone! It's gone! That – that helpless human being inside my body. I thought it was so safe, and secure in there. Nothing could take it from me. It was mine, my responsibility. But it's lost.
She slides down against the leg of the table to the floor.
All I wanted was to die...
(p. 118)

Taylor notes that Look Back in Anger arrived at just the

right moment when protest was in the air. Around 1956, the mood of the country, especially that of young England, changed its direction sharply from the over-refinement and dilettantism which had been in fashion at the universities and elsewhere.[12] Osborne himself admitted that he hated England then.[13] It is apparent that Jimmy Porter is no more than Osborne's spokesman of protest for his disappointed contemporary generation. As an addition, Christopher Russell Reaske categorizes Look Back in Anger as a kind of "rebellious drama".[14]

3. The Birthday Party

Born in Hackney, East London, in 1930, Harold Pinter is the only child of Jewish parents. After a brief study at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, he became a professional actor for some time. However, since he started writing plays for stage, radio and television in 1957, he has spent much of his time in writing. His dramatic career began in 1958 with The Birthday Party, a full-length play in three acts. This play is known as "comedy of menace". According to John Russell Taylor, the principal happening of Pinter's comedy of menace is when "the outsider menaces the apparently secure, peaceful existence of those inside."[15] This is obviously true in The Birthday Party, the synopsis of which is as follows.

In a summer evening in the living room of a house in a seaside town, Petey Boles, a deck-chair attendant, enjoys his

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12. Taylor, Anger and After, pp. 35-36.
13. See Hayman, John Osborne, pp. 7-8.
14. Christopher Russell Reaske, How To Analyze Drama, Monarch Press, New York, 1966, p. 12.
15. John Russell Taylor, Harold Pinter, Longman Group Ltd, Harlow, Essex, 1973, p. 6.

breakfast served by his wife, Meg. Then he reads a paper. When Meg is serving him fried bread before he goes back to work, he informs her that two men will spend a couple of nights in their house. The news make her proud. At present they only have a lodger who has stayed for a year, named Stanley Webber. He seems to have been a pianist once. Now he does nothing. He is only capable of boasting that he once gave a "successful" concert at Lower Edmonton. However, it turns out that Lower Edmonton is just an unknown village. Meg, his dull and stupid landlady, tends to pamper him, which often makes him annoyed. When she invites him to have breakfast and expects him to praise her fried bread, his negative comment only causes disappointment. However, it does not lessen her affection for him. She proudly informs him that she is expecting two visitors. He does not believe it, but he looks very curious about the two gentlemen. She unfortunately knows nothing about them. He purposely tries to frighten her by convincing her that they are coming in a van with a big wheelbarrow inside it. When the van stops, they will wheel the wheelbarrow out and knock at the front door. He says that they are looking for someone, a certain person. She breathlessly listens to him. Suddenly, there is actually a knock at the front door. Both of them are silent for a few moments. They look scared. They are relieved when they find out that the guest is only Lulu, an ordinary hussy. Meg collects a shopping bag and goes out. Stanley is moved to ask Lulu to go away with him, but he does not know where to go. As a result, she cynically calls him a "washout" and leaves. In a few minutes, there is another knock at the front door. Stanley hides himself and peeps through the kitchen hatch. Goldberg and McCann, the expected visitors, enter and come into the living room. Stanley moves away unobtrusively. Those visitors look like travelling businessmen looking for rooms. Goldberg is a talkative Jew, while McCann is a withdrawn Irishman. They meet Meg who has just entered the room carrying a full basket of groceries. She tells them that she only has one lodger, Stanley, at the moment. They begin to inquire about Stanley. She even tells them that today is his birthday, although she knows that he has obviously forgotten it. In fact, there is no definite indication whether today is his birthday or not. Anyway, Goldberg proposes to give Stanley a party at nine p.m. He will get some bottles and Meg will invite Lulu to

to come. She is also to remind Stanley of his birthday and to give him a boy's drum as a birthday present.

In the evening, McCann sits above the table, tearing a sheet of newspaper into five equal strips. Stanley approaches. McCann is annoyed when Stanley picks up one of the strips of paper from the table. On the other hand, Stanley does not want the presence of other people in the house. Goldberg and Petey enter and join them. When Petey leaves them to play chess, Stanley tells the two newcomers to find rooms somewhere else. Goldberg just considers this as a bad piece of humour from a man on his birthday. He asks Stanley to sit down. When Stanley rejects it, Godlberg asks McCann to force him to do so. Then they begin to interrogate Stanley as if he is a criminal. They accuse him of wasting everybody's time, treating a young lady like a leper, betraying the organization, killing his wife, etc. They call him a pig. Stanley is overpowered and almost speechless. Suddenly loud drumbeats are heard. Meg enters the room, carrying the drum and sticks. Hence, the birthday party starts. Goldberg asks McCann to shine a torch on the birthday boy, Stanley. Lulu comes. Goldberg's hospitality seems to attract her. She also admires Goldberg's fluent speech of reception. Those people begin to enjoy drinking whiskey. Meg wants to play a game. Lulu suggests a game called "blind man's buff" and they accept it. When it is Stanley's turn to be the blind man, McCann takes Stanley's glasses. Now Stanley stands blindfolded. McCann breaks the glasses and snaps the frame. Stanley starts moving very slowly. McCann takes the drum and intentionally places it in front of Stanley. Stanley walks into the drum and falls over as his foot is caught in it. He is cruelly disgraced.

The Boles' morning routine is repeated the next morning. Petey reads a newspaper as usual and Meg serves him tea. She tells Petey that there is a big car outside. She wonders if there is a wheelbarrow in it. He explains to her that it is Mr Goldberg's car, and there is no wheelbarrow in it. When Goldberg enters the room, Meg first thinks that it is Stanley. In fact, Goldberg has used Lulu the whole night. While Meg is going shopping, McCann ushers in Stanley. Stanley is dressed in a dark suit and white collar, holding his broken glasses in his hands. He attempts to speak, but fails. Goldberg tells Petey that Stanley needs special treatment. He and McCann take him to

the waiting car. It is obvious now that they have come for Stanley, but their exact purpose is unclear. Stanley is defenceless, and Petey is unable to prevent it. When Meg returns and asks Petey where Stanley is, he tells her that Stanley is still asleep.

The term "comedy of menace" attached to The Birthday Party itself suggests that the play is more or less a tragicomedy. In fact, comic and tragic elements both exist in the play. The following lines are some examples.

MEG : (She appears at the hatch with a plate of fried bread) Here you are. You'll like this. (PETEY rises, goes to the hatch, takes the plate from Meg, puts it on the table in front of Stanley, then resumes his seat)
STANLEY: What's this?
PETEY : Fried bread.
(MEG comes from the kitchen, closes the hall door and stands L of Stanley)
MEG : Well, I bet you don't know what it is.
STANLEY: Oh yes I do.
MEG : What?
STANLEY: Fried bread.
MEG : He knew.
STANLEY: What a wonderful surprise.
(The Birthday Party, p. 7)

LULU : I mean, what do you do, just sit around the house like this all day long? (She pauses) Hasn't Mrs Boles got enough to do without having you under her feet all day long?
STANLEY: I always stand on the table when she sweeps the floor.
(p. 16)

GOLDBERG: Speak up, Webber. Why did the chicken cross the road?
STANLEY : He wanted to — he wanted to — he wanted to...
MCCANN : He doesn't know.
GOLDBERG: Why did the chicken cross the road?
STANLEY : He wanted to...
MCCANN : He doesn't know. He doesn't know which came first.
GOLDBERG: Which came first?
MCCANN : Chicken? Egg? Which came first?
GOLDBERG: Which came first? Which came first? Which came first?
(STANLEY screams)
(p. 38)

MEG : Why has the light gone out?
GOLDBERG: Everyone quiet! Help him find the torch.
(There is silence...)
Over here. McCann!
MCCANN : Here.
GOLDBERG: Come to me, come to me. Easy. Over there. (STANLEY moves down L of the table. LULU suddenly perceives him moving towards her, screams and faints. GOLDBERG and MCCANN turn and stumble against each other)

(p. 51)

GOLDBERG: Prospect. Sure. Sure it's prospect.
(STANLEY's hands, clutching his glasses, begin to tremble)
What's your opinion of such a prospect? Eh, Stanley?
(STANLEY concentrates, his mouth opens, he attempts to speak, fails and emits sounds from his throat)
STANLEY : Uh-gug — ug-gug — eeehhh-gag...(On the breath) Caah — caahh...
(GOLDBERG and MCCANN watch STANLEY as he draws a long breath which shudders down his body. He concentrates)

(p. 67)

Why is Stanley, an ordinary lodger in a boarding house, destroyed by two unidentified intruders, Goldberg and McCann? This question is certainly the most significant yet vaguest problem of the play. However, it seems that Pinter deliberately leaves it unexplained.

Chapter II

MAN'S TRAGIC FLAW

1. The Human Condition

Man has to undergo his own complex and frequently undesired condition, since he is basically imperfect. In this writing man's condition always refers to man's tragic flaws because of his imperfection, or it relates to what Jean-Paul Sartre (1946) calls limitations.

> ...although it is impossible to find in each and every man a universal essence that can be called human nature, there is nevertheless a human universality of condition. It is not by chance that the thinkers of today are so much more ready to speak of the condition than of the nature of man. By this condition they understand, with more or less clarity, all the limitations which à priori define man's fundamental situation in the universe.[16]

No doubt, these limitations greatly colour man's life. They are inevitably the primary cause of man's endless sufferings. They bitterly transform man into a "tragic" being. Richard N. Coe describes the condition of man as a kind of Purgatory. He believes that man's condition is not like Paradise, eventhough it is not like Hell either, for a sort of hope remains to exist.[17]

The human condition is real and actual in man's experience. Personally, man encounters continual and complex problems within himself and within the other, others (society) and the

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16. Jean-Paul Sartre, "Existentialism in a Humanism" (Philip Mairet's translation of Sartre's famous lecture, L'existentialisme est un humanisme, in 1946) in Walter Kaufmann, Ed., Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre, Meridian Books, Cleveland, Ohio, 1969, p. 303.

17. Coe, op. cit., p. 5.

Other. He faces both the miniature world of his own (microcosm) and the world outside (macrocosm). Beckett, Osborne and Pinter are concerned with man's encounter in this modern world, and the are writing about the human condition. The results are artistic presentation of "modern tragedy".

Pozzo's blindness makes him sink into the dreadful darkness of his condition. Vladimir and Estragon avoid thinking about their own condition for having been trapped by their own absurd waiting.

> VLADIMIR: When you seek you hear.
> ESTRAGON: You do.
> VLADIMIR: That prevents you from thinking.
> (_Waiting for Godot_, p. 64)

Their condition seems to be no longer endurable so that they begin to regard suicide as an effective means of escaping, as a kind of agreeable solution. In Act One the idea of hanging themselves is finally rejected because they do not want to be alone and separated from each other.

> VLADIMIR: You're my only hope.
> ESTRAGON: (_with effort_). Gogo light — bough not break — Gogo dead. Didi heavy — bough break — Didi alone. Whereas —
> VLADIMIR: I hadn't thought of that.
> (pp. 17-18)

At the end of Act Two they fail to commit suicide simply because the cord breaks. Nevertheless, if Godot does not come tomorrow, they will certainly hang themselves using "a good bit of rope". The tragedy of Jimmy Porter is another story of man's condition. As a university graduate he is only capable of running a sweet-stall. He is apparently impotent to alter his bad luck. He talks a lot but acts a little. He is no more than a loudmouth. On the other hand, Stanley Webber is totally

defeated by his condition, although he tries to hide himself among the walls of his tiny world.

The phenomena of the modern tragedy dealing with man's condition are reflected in human communication, isolation, impotence and dependence. It is up to the individual man whether he will really fight to conquer his tragic limitations or not.

2. The Agony of Human Communication

Beckett is interested in the difficulties of human communication as expressed through a symbolism of blindness and of immobility.[18] What sort of communication can be dug out of the relationship between Pozzo, a kind of despot, and Lucky, his slave?

> ...Pozzo drives Lucky by means of a rope passed round his neck...Lucky carries a heavy bag, a folding stool, a picnic basket and a greatcoat. Pozzo a whip.
>
> (Waiting for Godot, p. 21)

This very strong picture of master-slave relationship takes place in Act One when Pozzo intends to sell Lucky at the fair. Doubtless, real communication in such a relationship is not only a great difficulty, but it proves to be impossible. It is inhuman. Pozzo never communicates with Lucky. He orders his slave and will even sell him, like a cattle owner sells his animal. This animal has to carry out whatever its owner wants. The fact that human beings are basically created with the same rights is entirely absent in the relationship between the possessor and the possessed, between the conqueror and the con-

18. See Mayoux, op. cit., cover.

quered. The precise personal pronouns for Lucky are "it" and "its" — perhaps — instead of "he", "him" and "his". It sounds extremely ironic that this master-slave relationship in various forms still exists in the modern world of today. The actual examples are relationships between a feudalistic master and his servants in a typical underdeveloped country, between a boss and his private bodyguards in the world of crime and between a Communist government and its people. Besides, people sometimes become the slaves of drugs (marihuana, narcotics, etc.), ideologies and money. It seems that the current media of communication which are amazingly modernized cannot be relied on to heal this ill condition by bringing human beings closer and more equal to each other. For instance, television often seizes the attention of members of a family who are watching it and prevents them from communicating. It even happens that television, radio and newspapers are improperly exploited as media of political indoctrination, power displays and consumptive tantalization for extravagance.

The Pozzo-Lucky relationship in Act Two only emphasizes the absence of natural communication. Pozzo's intention to sell Lucky seems to vanish. He is now blind and Lucky goes dumb. In giving orders, Pozzo does not need to see the human side of his slave. His mouth is far more important than his eyes. Since Lucky is only to obey, the ability to speak or utter words has become useless. The physical vehicles for any possible communication are therefore eliminated.

At the very end of both Act One and Act Two, there are similar lines that go as follows (the only difference is that in Act Two the suggestion comes from Vladimir).

> ESTRAGON: Well, shall we go?
> VLADIMIR: Yes, let's go.
> *They do not move.*
>
> (pp. 54 & 94)

This original exposure of immobility performed by the two tramps is seemingly intended to show that communication by means of language is insufficient and tends to be in vain. One's suggestion and the other's approval turn out to be empty and meaningless. Their "communication" - if it can be called so - finds no way to realization. What is spoken even contradicts what is done. Perhaps they need to produce a stream of words, otherwise they have nothing to say. In The New Tenant[19] Eugene Ionesco also presents a similar situation where oral expression is not in accordance with its realization.

> GENTLEMAN (still calm, taking money from pocket): Please take this for your trouble!
> CARETAKER: Well, I never! Who do you take me for? ...I'm no pauper, wasn't my fault if I couldn't 'ave any kids, that's on account of my old man, they'd be grown up now, they would - I don't want your money! (takes it and puts it in her apron pocket)...
> (The New Tenant, Theatre Today, p. 90)

Beckett further points out another phenomenon of the inconsistency of language usage. The validity of language is thus questioned.

> ESTRAGON: Saved from what?
> VLADIMIR: Hell.
>
> VLADIMIR: Because he wouldn't save them.
> ESTRAGON: From hell?
> VLADIMIR: Imbecile! From death.
> ESTRAGON: I thought you said hell.
> VLADIMIR: From death, from death.
> (Waiting for Godot, pp. 12-13)

Another similar happening that shows the inconsistency of language usage is the Christian name Goldberg has in The Birthday Party. It changes continually (Nat, Simey, etc.).

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19. A brief synopsis of the play is provided in Chapter III, 1, pp. 40-41.

MCCANN : Hey, Nat...
GOLDBERG (*reflectively*): Yes.
MCCANN : Nat. How do we know this is the right house?
GOLDBERG: What?

(*The Birthday Party*, p. 17)

GOLDBERG: ...'Simey,' my wife used to shout, 'quick, before it gets cold! And there on the table what would I see? The nicest piece of rollmop and pickled cucumber you could wish to find on a plate.
LULU : I thought your name was 'Nat'.
GOLDBERG: She called me 'Simey'.

(p. 46)

GOLDBERG: ...My father said to me, 'Benny, Benny,' he said, 'come here.' He was dying. I knelt down. By him day and night...'Forgive, Benny,' he said, 'and let live.'

(p. 62)

In this play Pinter also shows the ambiguity of expression. For example, when Goldberg tells Petey that Stanley "needs special treatment" (p. 68), we are not sure whether it is physical or mental treatment, whether it has a positive or negative purpose. Only from the whole story we may guess that it is a mental treatment and has a negative purpose: to destroy Stanley.

Beckett, Ionesco and Pinter indicate how language does not serve as the best means of communication any more. Man himself has betrayed language. Or, is it beyond man's power to make language as positive and as logical as possible? In the second decade of this century, George Bernard Shaw via his play, *Pygmalion* (1912), proclaimed language to be the most effective device to reach to the top. That romantic comedy displays how a flower girl can be promoted to the level of a Duchess by improving her speech. Later, in less than half a century, Beckett, Ionesco and Pinter surprisingly disprove Shaw's theory.

Jimmy Porter, "the angry young man" in *Look Back in Anger*, dominates the play mostly with his long furious speeches. Certainly, there are hardly mutual dialogues in the play. Besides

his role as Osborne's speaker in order to criticize the sickness and depression of today, Jimmy is himself an ironic prototype of contemporary individuals who talk more and listen less. The following lines give an illustration that Jimmy does not listen to Cliff at all.

> JIMMY: ...Nigel and Alison. They're what they sound like: sycophantic, phlegmatic and pusillanimous.
> CLIFF: I'll bet that concert's started by now. Shall I put it on?
> JIMMY: I looked up that word the other day. It's one of those words I've never been quite sure of, but always thought I knew.
> (Look Back in Anger, p. 16)

In his brief play entitled Landscape (1968), Pinter also points out that people's togetherness does not always mean that they communicate with one another. In the kitchen of a country house, Duff (a man in his early fifties) and Beth (a woman in her late forties) talk, but they seem not to hear each other, let alone listen to each other. They are likely to interchange recollections, yet one's recollections are not relevant to the other's at all. A part of their evening talk is as follows.

> DUFF
> The dog wouldn't have minded me feeding the birds. Anyway, as soon as we got in the shelter he fell asleep. But even if he'd been awake...
> Pause
> BETH
> They all held my arms lightly, as I stepped out of the car, or out of the door, or down the steps. Without exception. If they touched the back of my neck, or my hand, it was done so lightly. Without exception. With one exception.
> DUFF
> Mind you, there was a lot of shit all over the place, all along the paths, by the pond. Dogshit, duckshit...all kinds of shit...all over the paths. The rain didn't clean it up. It made it even more treacherous.
> Pause
> The ducks were well away, right over on their island. But I wouldn't have fed them, anyway. I would have fed the sparrows.

BETH

I could stand now, I could be the same. I dress differently, but I am beautiful.
Silence
(Landscape, Landscape and Silence, pp. 11-12)

The fact that listening is an important part of communication is therefore ignored. It is an indication that human communication has become unbalanced.

Pinter is really concerned with the problem of communication. So he says:

"I think that we communicate only too well, in our silence, in what is unsaid, and that what takes place is continual evasion, desperate rearguard attempts to keep ourselves to ourselves. Communication is too alarming. To enter into someone else's life is too frightening. To disclose to others the poverty within us is too fearsome a possibility."[20]

"I feel that instead of any inability to communicate there is a deliberate evasion of communication. Communication itself between people is so frightening that rather than do that there is continual cross-talk, a continual talking about other things rather than what is at the root of their relationship."[21]

These strong statements are likely to point out the lost dimension of human natural and mutual communication. It is indeed very tragic and ironic that silence is finally the only alternative for prudent communication in this modern world. Who will deny the fact that human beings can live together without communicating with each other now? People can live under the same roof, yet at the same time they stand apart from each other, mostly because of their unwillingness to open their minds or hearts to others. One is afraid to reveal his own condition to

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20. Taylor, Harold Pinter, p. 26.
21. Taylor, Anger and After, p. 334.

others, apparently based on the assumption that they will become potential threats for him once they know one's personal shortcomings. Personal contact therefore becomes more and more rare, since it is increasingly hard to obtain. Contact tends to be inhuman, threatening, or perhaps only businesslike.

In The Birthday Party, the conversation between Petey Boles and his wife, Meg, is dull and lacks vivacity. It is a bare routine and full of monotony. The following are some lines of their "dialogue" illustrating such a routine taken from the beginnings of Act One and Act Three, respectively.

MEG : ...You got your paper?
PETEY: Yes.
MEG : Is it good?
PETEY: Not bad.
MEG : What does it say?
PETEY: Nothing much.

MEG : ...You got your paper?
PETEY: Yes.
MEG : Is it good?
PETEY: Not bad.

(The Birthday Party, pp. 2 & 53)

The similarity of these lines shows the monotony of everyday conversation which is capable of destroying man's spirit. As a result, it is only natural that communication is dreadful, and becoming less and less needed.

Stanley's "dialogue" with Goldberg and McCann does not reflect any communication at all. Instead, it serves as an effective means to intimidation and destruction. As a result, Stanley is quite unwilling to communicate with those dangerous intruders. This also proves that equality often plays an important role in achieving more prudent and mutual communication. Certainly, Goldberg and McCann are more than equal to Stanley. Even if they had conducted natural communication, Stanley would have been left behind. Similarly, it is hard for

Cliff to mutually communicate with Jimmy, because of his stupidity and inferiority. The ordinary human communication is also absent in the Pozzo-Lucky relationship because they are extremely unequal in rank. On the contrary, the relationship of the two tramps, Vladimir and Estragon, is capable of producing more agreeable communication.

It seems that modern man is actually facing the failure and the lost dimension of personal communication, at least in the eyes of the dramatists mentioned above.

3. Isolation: A Path to Escapism

When personal relationships are considered unnecessary, the way to isolation is easily cleared. People are reluctant to relate personally. They become hard to one another, but at the same time they are afraid of one another. What follows is that other people are considered as strangers or even as sources of menace. To some extent, one may become a stranger to himself. One is in need to escape from others, to avoid them. The only "excellent" access to seemingly secure escapism is no doubt isolation. Such isolation naturally makes man undergo his loneliness more bitterly. Ionesco states that man's solitude of today is catastrophic and traumatic.

> "Now, as then, there's no friendship among the young, only camaraderie. And camaraderie is finally solitude in common. The world suffers from the fact that people cannot assume the right to be solitary. In the past there were solitaries. Now solitude is a catastrophe, a trauma. But people don't escape into themselves and even if one is with other people who march in rhythm, the fashion is to hide one's own solitude — but without escaping it..."[22]

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22. See Ronald Hayman, Eugene Ionesco, Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, London, 1972, p. 7.

Ionesco's The New Tenant is a fine illustration of the very idea of siolation. The Gentleman in the play deliberately isolates himself from the outside world. He hides himself among his furniture, which he apparently thinks is the best means of safe escapism.

Beckett seems to bring forth tramps on puspose. Tramps stand outside the common social system. They are separated from society. Most of them intentionally isolate themselves from society. But, since solitude is unbearable, they tend to make friends among themselves. The friendship of Vladimir and Estragon indicates that they are absolutely unable to live alone. They are afraid to be alone.

> Estragon falls asleep.
> VLADIMIR: ...Gogo!...Gogo!...GOGO!
> ESTRAGON: (restored to the horror of his situation) I was asleep! (Despairingly.) Why will you never let me sleep?
> VLADIMIR: I felt lonely.
> (Waiting for Godot, p. 15)
>
> VLADIMIR: ...In an instant all will vanish and we'll be alone once more, in the mist of nothingness!
> (p. 81)

The setting of Look Back in Anger, i.e. "one-room flat in a large Midland town" (p. 1), itself suggests isolation. The idea of a flat community in this modern age seems to create hatred and uneasiness among its occupants instead of leading them into truly human communication.

Ronald Hayman reveals that the theme of isolation, mainly growing isolation, is very important in Look Back in Anger. "In spite of the contact he makes with Cliff and Alison and Helena, Jimmy Porter is presented as being very much alone in his suffering awareness of what's wrong with everything."[23]

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23. Hayman, John Osborne, p. 7.

Jimmy himself expresses the image of loneliness as follows.

> The heaviest, strongest creatures in this world seem to be the loneliest. Like the old bear, following his own breath in the dark forest. There's no warm pack, no herd to comfort him.
> (Look Back in Anger, p. 116)

Pinter pushes such traumatic isolation even stronger in The Birthday Party. Stanley almost fears everything, so he hides as a lodger in the Boles's house. As an outcast he conceals himself from society, which apparently refuses his existence. He is indeed a "washout".

> LULU : So you're not coming out for a walk?
> STANLEY: I can't at the moment.
> LULU : You're a bit of a washout, aren't you?
> (The Birthday Party, p. 16)
>
> GOLDBERG: I'm telling you, Webber. You're a washout. Why are you getting on everybody's wick?
> (p. 35)
>
> GOLDBERG: No society would touch you. Not even a building society.
> (p. 38)

He is willy-nilly thrown into the cave of isolation because of his fear of the world outside. It is pathetic that this cave is not a safe shelter either. Anyway, he cannot escape from the menacing power of the outsiders.

4. Man's Impotence

Man's powerlessness is said to be the evil root of human tragedy. Because of his impotence, man frequently has to face failure along his life. Vladimir and Estragon seem to be so powerless that they go on waiting for Godot - who may be interpreted as their Saviour, their eternal hope. Since Godot will never come in their life time, their failure is apparently com-

plete. While waiting they actually suffer from boredom, but it is beyond their power to avoid it. They can only think of committing suicide as a possible solution.

Jimmy Porter is similarly the victim of his impotence besides of the deficiencies of his milieu which has paralyzed him. Such can be the cause of his great anger. Booming like a machine-gun, he furiously fires all kinds of harmful broadsides around him that are likely to hit him and his generation. Yet, he has no power to overcome those "enemies". He is quite unable to give any alternative as well. It is tragic that he, who looks so forceful, can be so powerless. Helena and Alison finally recognize what has actually gone wrong in Jimmy. He is just vain and worthless.

> HELENA: Do you know — I have discovered what is wrong with Jimmy? It's very simple really. He was born out of his time.
> ALISON: Yes. I know.
> HELENA: There's no place for people like that any longer — in sex, or politics, or anything. That's why he's so futile. Sometimes, when I listen to him, I feel he thinks he's still in the middle of the French Revolution. And that's where he ought to be, of course. He doesn't know where he is, or where he is going. He'll never do anything and he'll never amount to anything.
> ALISON: I suppose he's what you'd call an Eminent Victorian. Slightly comic — in a way...
> (Look Back in Anger, p. 111)

Jimmy is indeed like a wild "bear" constantly threatened by "steel traps" around him, dreaming of natural freedom.

> JIMMY : ...We'll be together in our bear's cave, and our squirrel's drey, and we'll live on honey, and nuts — lots and lots of nuts. And we'll sing songs about ourselves... but...we've got to be careful. There are cruel steel traps lying about everywhere, just waiting for rather mad, slightly satanic, and very timid little animals. Right?...Poor squirrels!
> ALISON: ...Poor bears...Oh, poor, poor bears!
> (p. 119)

Cliff frankly admits his personal powerlessness in front of Alison, who seems to understand him. He realizes his ordinariness and that he does not dare to live on his own any more.

> I don't think I'd have the courage to live on my own again — in spite of everything. I'm pretty rough, and pretty ordinary really, and I'd seem worse on my own...
>
> (p. 25)

Alison is not capable of escaping from her impotence either. When she loses her baby, she fails as a woman. Her condition is almost similar to the sterility of the married couple, Martha and George, in Edward Albee's famous play, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?[24] Her sorrow and despair are painful indeed.

> It's gone! It's gone! That — that helpless human being inside my body. I thought it was so safe, and secure in there. Nothing could take it from me. It was mine, my responsibility. But it's lost.
> She slides down against the leg of the table to the floor.
> All I wanted was to die. I never knew what it was like. I didn't know it could be like that! I was in pain...
>
> (p. 118)

Stanley is another story of how crippled man is. He must have tried to be accepted by others, but he fails. He is a complete failure. Being an obscure and jobless pianist, he envelops himself in the web of grand dreams which are obviously the only means toward urgent compensation. When Goldberg and McCann come to abuse and destroy him, he is totally overpowered. What can be expected from such an underdog except being entirely defeated? Petey — who is equally feeble — cannot help Stanley, and so the powers represented by Goldberg and McCann smoothly operate unopposed.

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24. See Chapter III, 2, pp. 53-55, for the synopsis of the play.

Personal failure as experienced by the two tramps, Jimmy, Cliff, Alison and Stanley is but a miniature of the failure of the whole society.

5. Chronic Dependence

Besides failure, dependence is obviously another outcome of man's impotence. Man is, therefore, never absolutely free. It is painful that dependence is so unavoidable. Yet, it paradoxically proves to be an astonishing intermediary in bringing human beings closer to each other.

One who is weak depends upon the other who is stronger, while the latter needs the former to acknowledge and support his power and position — which is also a kind of dependence. Vladimir and Estragon are dependent on Godot. Estragon even wonders if they are tied to Godot.

> ESTRAGON: ...We're not tied!
> VLADIMIR: I don't hear a word you're saying.
> ESTRAGON: ...I'm asking you if we're tied.
> VLADIMIR: Tied?
> ESTRAGON: Ti-ed.
> VLADIMIR: How do you mean tied?
> ESTRAGON: Down.
> VLADIMIR: But to whom. By whom?
> ESTRAGON: To your man.
> VLADIMIR: To Godot? Tied to Godot? What an idea! No question of it. (Pause.) For the moment.
> (Waiting for Godot, pp. 20-21)

Not long after they say so, Pozzo comes holding a piece of rope to which Lucky is tied. Jacques Guicharnaud suggests that "Lucky's rope is similar to the bond that might possibly unite the tramps to Godot."[25] Vladimir and Estragon insist on waiting

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25. Jacques Guicharnaud, "Existence On Stage" in Kostelanetz, Ed., On Contemporary Literature, p. 273.

for Godot continually, as if Godot really obsesses them. Perhaps they want Godot to seal their existence. Godot, on the other hand, is seemingly in want of their reassurance. In sending his messenger, a little boy, to tell the two tramps that he will not come, he is likely to keep reminding them of his own existence.[26] In this way Beckett indirectly shows the mutual dependence existing between the impotent and the Omnipotent. Man's mutual dependence is clearly portrayed in the Pozzo-Lucky relationship. In Act One of Waiting for Godot, Pozzo expresses how badly Lucky needs him.

> He imagines that when I see how well he carries
> I'll be tempted to keep him on in that capacity.
> (p. 31)

The other way round, Pozzo's order would not be carried out without the presence of Lucky. In Act Two, Pozzo absolutely needs Lucky. Being blind, he trusts his physical sight to Lucky. He no longer drives Lucky. Instead, he follows Lucky by means of a much shorter piece of rope than that in Act One. The shorter rope symbolically indicates that he has become closer to his slave.

> Enter Pozzo and Lucky. Pozzo is blind. Lucky burdened as before. Rope as before, but much shorter, so that Pozzo may follow more easily.
> (p. 77)

In Look Back in Anger, via his spokesman — Jimmy — Osborne says:

> They all want to escape from the pain of being
> alive. And, most of all, from love.
> (Look Back in Anger, p. 115)

It is obvious that love — if not properly and mutually shared —

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26. Cf. Hayman, Samuel Beckett, p. 13.

will make lovers totally dependent. Alison and Helena love Jimmy, and so he becomes an excessive centre of their passion and attention. The following lines are Alison's confession of her dependence on Jimmy.

> ...and all I could think of was you, and what I'd lost...I thought: if only – he could see me now, so stupid, and ugly and ridiculous. That is what he's been longing for me to feel. This is what he wants to splash about in! I'm in the fire, and I'm burning, and all I want is to die! It's cost him his child, and any others I might have had! But what does it matter – this is what he wanted from me!...Don't you see! I'm in the mud at last! I'm grovelling! I'm crawling! Oh, God ——
>
> (p. 118)

Stanley in The Birthday Party is not free from human dependence either. He depends on his mask: his big words and grand dreams.

> STANLEY: ...I've – er – I've been offered a job, as a matter of fact.
> MEG : What?
> STANLEY: Yes, I'm considering a job at the moment.
> MEG : You're not.
> STANLEY: A good one, too. A night club in Berlin.
> MEG : Berlin?
> STANLEY: Berlin. A night club. Playing the piano. A fabulous salary. And all found.
> MEG : How long for?
> STANLEY: We don't stay in Berlin. Then we go to Athens.
> MEG : How long for?
> STANELY: Yes. Then we pay a flying visit to – er – whatsisname...
> MEG : Where?
> STANLEY: Constantinople. Zagreb. Vladivostock. It's a round-the-world tour.
> MEG : Have you played the piano in those places before?
> STANLEY: Played the piano? I've played the piano all over the world. All over the country. (He pauses) I once gave a concert.
> MEG : A concert?
> STANLEY (reflectively): Yes. It was a good one, too. They were all there that night. Every single one of them. It was a great success. Yes. A concert. At Lower Edmonton.
>
> (The Birthday Party, pp. 12-13)

It is easily guessed that this big dreamer has only been able to give a single concert on a small scale in an unknown village all along his life. It is no wonder that he is unable to defend his mask and that it is roughly taken from him by the two powerful intruders, Goldberg and McCann. Here again human dependence devours its victim.

George and Martha in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? are dependent upon their fantasy as well. But at the end of the play they "exorcize" that dependence. They try to face their condition naturally, without any deceitful illusion. David Campton also presents an exciting image of man's dependence on "paper bags" in Then...[27] Those paper bags serve as vital protection from atomization. When the curtain falls, however, one of the only two characters in the play takes his paper bag off his head. At last he does not want to be dependent on anything any more.

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27. See Chapter III, 3, pp. 62-63, for a brief summary of the play.

Chapter III

CURRENT OUTLOOKS FOR THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

Beckett, Osborne and Pinter reveal their own interpretations of the latter-day world through their plays. Their outlooks are not optimistic at all. Beckett regards man's life and his world as absurd. Osborne looks back at the unpromising world in anger. Pinter comes to a conclusion that willy-nilly man has to undergo fear of the menacing world. Man's condition inevitably becomes the source of such undesired phenomena.

1. The Reality of Absurdity

> The gods had condemned Sisyphus to ceaselessly rolling a rock to the top of a mountain, whence the stone would fall back of its own weight. They had thought with some reason that there is no more dreadful punishment than futile and hopeless labor...
>
> You have already grasped that Sisyphus is the absurd hero...[28]

Albert Camus' famous reflection on the myth of Sisyphus (1942) apparently popularizes the term "absurd". What is "absurd"? Ionesco defines it as "that which has no purpose, or goal, or objective."[29] It is the synonym of "grotesque-abstract". In this usage absurd does not mean ridiculous - another meaning given by dictionaries - but rather illogical, irrational or unreasonable. It is generally known that "absurd" in its current sense of definition applies to the plays of Beckett, Ionesco

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28. Albert Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus (Justin O'Brien's translation of Le Mythe de Sisyphe) in Kaufmann, Ed., Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre, pp. 312-13.

29. Esslin, op. cit., p. 206.

and other Absurdists. They seem to proclaim the reality of absurdity via their plays. For those Absurdists, the absurdity of man's life is as real as other aspects of reality. Or, absurdity is the hidden aspect of reality they probably want to uncover. They even tend to conclude that absurdity is the only reality of man's existence in this world. This tendency is made stronger by Ionesco's statement: "We are astounded to discover that we exist in this world that appears illusory, fictitious — where human behavior reveals its absurdity..."[30]

Vladimir and Estragon are waiting for Godot, who will not come and of whom they have no clear idea. In other words, what they are doing is absurd. Their endless waiting seems to be useless and meaningless. It is just futile and hopeless, like Sisyphus' labour.

In waiting they are confronted with time. "Let us not waste our time in idle discourse! ...Let us do something...," says Vladimir (p. 79). The problem is that they have nothing to do with their time. The opening line of the play and other similar expressions in the play clearly indicate this.

> ESTRAGON: (giving up again). Nothing to be done.
> (Waiting for Godot, p. 9; also p. 11, said by Vladimir)
>
> ESTRAGON: There's nothing to show.
> (p. 11)
>
> VLADIMIR: Nothing you can do about it.
> (p. 21)
>
> VLADIMIR: We've nothing more to do here.
> (p. 52)

They naturally have to kill their time, otherwise time will devour them beyond their control. It seems that silence — which is possibly symbolized by Lucky's dumbness in Act Two — is

30. Richard Schechner, "The Inner and the Outer Reality" in Kostelanetz, Ed., On Contemporary Literature, p. 398.

unbearable for them. Long silence is especially irritating, so that there is an urgent need to say something.

> *Long silence.*
> VLADIMIR: Say something!
> ESTRAGON: I'm trying.
> *Long silence.*
> VLADIMIR: (*in anguish*). Say anything at all!
> (p. 63)

To pass the time while waiting, they amuse themselves by talking nonsense, playing with words.

> VLADIMIR: Ah yes, the two thieves. Do you remember the story?
> ESTRAGON: No.
> VLADIMIR: Shall I tell it to you?
> ESTRAGON: No.
> VLADIMIR: It'll pass the time...
> (p. 12)
>
> ESTRAGON: That's the idea, let's make a little conversation.
> (p. 48)
>
> ESTRAGON: That's the idea, let's contradict each other.
> (p. 64)
>
> ESTRAGON: That's the idea, let's ask each other questions.
> (p. 64)
>
> ESTRAGON: That's the idea, let's abuse each other. *They turn, move apart, turn again and face each other.*
> VLADIMIR: Moron!
> ESTRAGON: Vermin!
> (p. 75)

Another alternative to pass their time is by playing games. Like children who have a lot of time to play, they play games at random. Their games are comic and sound very childish (note also the use of their childish nicknames, Didi and Gogo).

> VLADIMIR: Will you not play?
> ESTRAGON: Play at what?
> VLADIMIR: We could play at Pozzo and Lucky.
> ESTRAGON: Never heard of it.
> VLADIMIR: I'll do Lucky, you do Pozzo. (*He imitates Lucky sagging under the weight of his baggage. Estragon looks at him with stupefaction.*) Go on.

ESTRAGON: What am I to do?
VLADIMIR: Curse me!

(pp. 72-73)

VLADIMIR: Off we go.
<u>Vladimir hops from one foot to the other. Estragon imitates him.</u>

(p. 76)

VLADIMIR: ...(<u>Pause.</u>) Let's just do the tree, for the balance.
ESTRAGON: The tree?
<u>Vladimir does the tree, staggering about on one leg.</u>
VLADIMIR: (<u>stopping</u>). Your turn.
Estragon does the tree, staggers.

(p. 76)

It is no doubt that eating a carrot (p. 20), which is normally a trivial and familiar act, becomes a kind of adventure in their waiting. Eating a carrot is after all not a game they have to invent. Besides, Estragon spends his time in doing so. Similarly, their meeting with Pozzo and Lucky also help them pass their time. Like silence, doing nothing is apparently unendurable, although Estragon states that it is safer than doing anything (p. 18). It is obvious that they act only to fill up a vacuum, to kill time, which can be a kind of tyranny for them. They even try to hang themselves. Those tramps are imprisoned by their waiting, and as a result they are not free to go.

ESTRAGON: Let's go.
VLADIMIR: We can't.
ESTRAGON: Why not?
VLADIMIR: We're waiting for Godot.
ESTRAGON: ...Ah!

(pp. 14, 48, 68, 71, 78 & 84)

The very logical outcome of their talking nonsense and playing futile games in their efforts to pass the time while waiting for "vague" Godot is boredom. Vladimir — of whom the idea of waiting for Godot comes out — and Estragon — who is not very much interested in Vladimir's idea — express such boredom

quite strongly. They seem to be tired on life itself, life which is full of monotony and routine.

> VLADIMIR: We wait. We are bored. (He throws up his hand.) No, don't protest, we are bored to death, there's no denying it...
> (p. 81)
>
> ESTRAGON: I can't go on like this.
> (p. 94)

Twice Godot sends his messenger, a boy, in order to tell the tramps that he will not come "this evening" but "surely tomorrow". In this context twice is an adequate signal indicating that he will "never" come. The irony culminates when finally the boy informs them that his master "does nothing" at all.

> VLADIMIR: What does he do, Mr. Godot? (Silence.) Do you hear me?
> BOY : Yes, sir.
> VLADIMIR: Well?
> BOY : He does nothing, sir.
> (p. 91)

This is absurd! They are waiting for someone who will not come, who does nothing and whom they do not know exactly. They are waiting for the "uncertainty". It sounds irrational, yet it can be very real in reality. For example, we tend to live in hopes of better future, yet we never know what will really happen in the future. The future is always uncertain. Uncertainty has inevitably become one of human experiences, which is also an element of the human condition. Whether Godot exists or not is uncertain. Estragon even concludes that "nothing is certain" (p. 53). He and Vladimir are quite uncertain about what they did yesterday.

> ESTRAGON: We came here yesterday.
> VLADIMIR: Ah no, there you're mistaken.
> ESTRAGON: What did we do yesterday?
> VLADIMIR: What did we do yesterday?
> ESTRAGON: Yes.

VLADIMIR: Why...(Angrily). Nothing is certain when you're about
(p. 14)

This tragic uncertainty is likely the consequence of man's ignorance. According to Estragon, "people are bloody ignorant apes" (p. 13). It is also Estragon who interprets man's ignorance as "I don't know why I don't know" (p. 67).

If they want to wait and keep on waiting, they must be in need of something. That "something" is multi-interpretable, and so is Godot. Perhaps they are in want of someone who has the right to legalize their existence. They probably intend to be saved. But, who knows that they (unconsciously) hope to be annihilated, instead? It is also possible that in fact the act of waiting itself is what they want to do since there is nothing left to do. Right at the beginning of the play Vladimir confirms that he has not yet tried everything (p. 9).[31] For the play, waiting is surely the point of the play. Vladimir and Estragon continually experience it and undergo its effects. It is clearly reflected in their comments. Mayoux suggests that for Beckett, waiting is a "completely negative experience", and not a "period of expectancy and looking forward".[32] Waiting for Godot is therefore a sour and bitter representation of the emptiness and despair of the human hope. Each time Vladimir reminds Estragon of their waiting for Godot, Estragon responds with his despairing sigh, "Ah!" Hence, it conforms with Martin Esslin's estimation that Beckett's absurdity is melancholic.[33]

In The New Tenant (1953), like in his other plays, Ionesco brings forward a similar idea: the reality of absurdity. In a bare room a noisy Caretaker waits for a Gentleman who moves

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31. Cf. Hayman, Samuel Beckett, p. 5.

32. Mayoux, op. cit., p. 7.

33. Esslin, op. cit., p. 206.

house. She intends to look after him. The Gentleman — who does not need the service of such a Caretaker — has hired two Furniture Movers. When they come, he directs them where to put the furniture. The bare room (i.e. the empty stage) gradually fills with furniture. The furniture proliferates in such a way that the yard, the street and even the underground lines are blocked. In the room the traffic has come to a standstill, full of furniture. The Thames has stopped flowing too. Furniture is cluttering the whole country. The Gentleman is more and more encircled until he is completely walled in and can no longer be seen. He has deliberately burried or hidden himself among the furniture. It seems that he wants to escape and hide from others, from the world outside. How can he isolate himself from the world he lives in? Is that not absurd?

The absurd proliferating furniture might be an exaggeration, but it is certainly a sharp satire upon the reality of man's foolish ideas and his unreasonable behaviour. It is pathetic to observe the Gentleman's greediness. He does not allow for any single piece of furniture to be left behind.

> GENTLEMAN: (<u>to 1st MOVER</u>) Please don't stop bringing the things in.
> (<u>The New Tenant</u>, <u>Theatre Today</u>, p. 106)
> 2nd MOVER: There'll be no room left!
> GENTLEMAN: Oh yes, there will. Like this there will.
> (p. 108)

In reality, furniture often obsesses people, like Godot obsesses the two tramps. That sort of people also heap along things all their lives. Ironically, things tie them in return. It only proves that fellow human beings are often regarded as being less valuable than things.

The unexplained or incomprehensible element in <u>The Birthday Party</u> is apparently another aspect of absurdity. Where Goldberg

and McCann come from, why they destroy and take Stanley away or what Stanley is accused of is quite obscure. None of the other characters in the play really asks those two strangers about the real purpose of their coming. Of course, it might be considered impolite to do so. Pinter seems to deliberately give no explanation at all. It remains a puzzle until the end of the play. Pinter is likely to ask questions like: "Do we exactly know where we have come from?" and "Why are we too weak and easily destroyed?" He possibly wants to emphasize that there is no absolute truth we fully understand. It is another feature of the human condition: man never comprehends truth absolutely, even the truth about himself. None of us fully knows the truth about our fellow beings. That is why people tend to misunderstand each other. They cannot completely penetrate their world which turns out to be vague and full of mystery.

Beckett, Ionesco, Pinter and some of their contemporaries actually invite the uncertain, unreasonable, incomprehensible and hidden aspects of reality to give a more complete view of this modern world. They uncover the absurdity of the human condition. Camus even calls man's condition "the absurd"[34] Oscar G. Brockett states that for the Absurdists, truth lacks logic, order and certainty. It is a mistake to merely look at this world from the scientific point of view.[35]

Beckett and Ionesco, as the prophets of the so-called "Theatre of the Absurd", are extreme enough in pushing absurdity forward. The danger of such extremists is the unwillingness to consider other alternatives naturally. They have a tendency to merely regard absurdity as a total and final foundation of

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34. See Oscar G. Brockett, The Theatre, and Introduction, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., New York, 1964, p. 344.

35. Ibid., p. 341.

man's life. Absurdity is certainly not everything. It is indeed one of the truths about man and his world, but the reality of absurdity is surely not the entire reality of mankind. It is only a part of the human reality.

2. Looking at the World in Anger

Osborne introduces his "angry young man" as follows.

> He is a disconcerting mixture of sincerity and cheerful malice, of tenderness and freebooting cruelty; restless, importunate, full of pride, a combination which alienates the sensitive and insensitive alike. Blistering honesty, or apparent honesty, like his, makes few friends. To many he may seem sensitive to the point of vulgarity. To others, he is simply a loudmouth. To be as vehement as he is is to be almost non-committal.
> (Look Back in Anger, p. 2)

Jimmy Porter is a complex figure. He calls himself a "ruffian" (p. 59), but almost at the same time he considers himself as a "gentleman" (p. 68). He is certainly Osborne's speaker to "look back in anger". He speaks for his contemporary generation, the post-war generation, representing their fury. To Osborne, he tends to be basically a hero, although in the literal and classical sense he may be labelled as an anti-hero. Both his gloomy personal background and bad luck seem to be the stepping stone of his anger. This can be traced back to his childhood, when he - ten years old - had to watch his father dying for a whole year. He recalls his childhood memory in front of Helena.

> For twelve months, I watched my father dying - when I was ten years old...His family were embarrassed by the whole business. Embarrassed and irritated. As for my mother, all she could think about was the fact that she had allied herself to a man who seemed to be on the wrong side in all things...We all of us waited for him to die...But I was the only one who cared! Every time I sat on

> the edge of his bed, to listen to him talking or reading to me, I had to fight back my tears. At the end of twelve months, I was a veteran. All that that feverish failure of a man who had to listen to him was a small, frightened boy...He would talk to me for hours, pouring out all that was left of his life to one, lonely, bewildered little boy, who could barely understand half of what he said. All he could feel was the despair and the bitterness, the sweet, sickly smell of a dying man. You see, I learnt at an early age what it was to be angry — angry and helpless. And I can never forget it. I knew more about — love...betrayal...and death, when I was ten years old that you will probably ever know all your life.
> (pp. 68-70)

His bitter childhood was only a beginning. He married Alison when he left the university about a year, but they had no money, and he was jobless (p. 47). Eventually, this university graduate only managed to rent a one-room attic flat and could find nothing better to do than run a sweet-stall. Such an astonishing occupation makes his father-in-law, Colonel Redfern, greatly surprised while his "stupid" friend, Cliff, is not remiss in mocking him.

> COLONEL: Sweet-stall. It does seem an extraordinary thing for an educated young man to be occupying himself with...
> (p. 79)

> CLIFF: ...The sweet-stall's all right, but I think I'd like to try something else. You're highly educated, and it suits you...
> (p. 103)

Jimmy obviously realizes that he is smart as well as educated. John Russell Taylor formulates him as "an enormous cultural snob" because he just listens to classical music and the most traditional jazz and only reads good books and "posh" Sunday papers.[36] In the beginning of the play he defines himself as: "I'm the only one who knows how to treat a paper, or any-

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36. Taylor, Anger and After, p. 41.

thing else, in this house..." (p. 5). But, he ironically unable to treat his wife properly! Such proves that he is a big loud-mouth as well.

This university graduate is above all an idealist. He wants to be "very patriotic" although he knows for sure that nobody will suppose him to be so (p. 11). He is eager to struggle for something worth dying, yet it turns out to be merely utopian. He tragically faces a dead end. His milieu offers no opportunity at all.

> I suppose people of our generation aren't able to die for good causes any longer. We had all that done for us, in the thirties and the forties, when we were still kids...There aren't any good, brave causes left...
>
> (p. 104)

Alison even keeps a comic remembrance of how Jimmy looked like a seemingly heroic but feeble knight fighting against her family when he desired her to be his "queen". She tells Helena:

> Jimmy went into battle with his axe swinging round his head — frail, and so full of fire. I have never seen anything like it. The old story of the knight in shining armour — except that his armour didn't really shine very much.
>
> (p. 51)

This young idealist is also full of enthusiasm. He believes that "there's a — a kind of — burning verility of mind and spirit that looks for something as powerful as itself..." (p. 116). When he looks around, however, he finds out that people are no longer enthusiastic in facing their lives as if they have lost their spirit and vivacity. It is hard to understand why people can be so lifeless, unlike he who is still able to say: "I like to eat, I like to live too." (p. 5). People actually disappoint him. People's attitude toward sacrifice is a strong example how they like to twist ideas on purpose for

their own sake.

> After all the whole point of a sacrifice is that you give up something you never really wanted in the first place...People are doing it around you all the time. They give up their careers, say — or their beliefs — or sex. And everyone thinks to themselves: how wonderful to be able to do that. If only I were capable of doing that! But the truth of it is that they've been kidding themselves, and they've been kidding you. It's not awfully difficult — giving up something you were incapable of ever really wanting. We shouldn't be admiring them. We should feel sorry for them...
> (p. 95)

Hence, he comes to a conclusion that it is not proper to call people human beings any more. They have descended from their human throne. They are probably approaching the animal level or becoming like robots. He is cynical indeed when he expresses his contempt for people and the gloomy image of life as well as his own despair.

> Oh heavens, how I long for a little ordinary human enthusiasm. Just enthusiasm — that's all. I want to hear a warm, thrilling voice cry out Hallelujah! (He bangs his breast theatrically.) Hallelujah! I'm alive! I've an idea. Why don't we have a little game? Let's pretend that we're human beings, and that we're actually alive. Just for a while. What do you say? Let's pretend we're human. (He looks from one to the other.) Oh, brother, it's such a long time since I was with anyone who got enthusiastic about anything.
> (p. 9)

> ...you'd better give up the whole idea of life, and become a saint...Because you'll never make it as a human being. It's either this world or the next.
> (p. 115)

His disappointment is so deeply rooted in him that it finds its way out in superfluous anger. He explodes like a volcano that cannot keep its suppressed lava any longer. He has already made a black-list containing the targets of his tirades. He is primarily cross with people, either individually or collectively.

Alison is logically the nearest victim of his anger. In his eyes, she seems to be a mere list of various negative characteristics that are against his own taste. It is embarrassing that he talks so cruelly about her and her values, in her very presence.

> She hasn't had a thought for years.
> (p. 4)
>
> As for Nigel and Alison — Nigel and Alison. They're what they sound like: sycophantic, phlegmatic and pusillanimous...pusillanimous...and suddenly I discover that there is actually a word that sums her up...it's her name! Pusillanimous!
> (p. 16)
>
> She is so clumsy. I watch for her to do the same things every night...
> (p. 20)
>
> I wonder if you might even become a recognisable human being yourself. But I doubt it.
> (p. 39)
>
> You Judas! You phlegm! She's[37] taking you with her, and you're so bloody feeble, you'll let her do it!
> (p. 70)

She disappoints him because she has lost her "wonderful relaxation of spirit" that attracted him the first time he met her (p. 116). When she leaves him partly because of Helena's suggestion and partly due to her need of peace, he accuses her of being "phoney" (p. 90). A phoney attitude really nauseates him. Ironically, in front of Helena he admits that he will "always have a deep loving need of Alison" (p. 90). Alison herself realizes that there must be certain reasons dealing with her background that makes Jimmy badly treat her. She comes from an upper-middle-class background (her father is a colonel). Her family clearly represents the welfare society Jimmy is principally against. The welfare society, the paradise of wealthy and successful people, seems to mock his bad luck. Alison feels as

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37. Helena.

if she has become Jimmy's "hostage" instead of his dear wife.

> They[38] both came to regard me as a sort of hostage from those sections of society they had declared war on.
>
> (p. 48)

Besides, she had lost her virginity before her wedding day. She had to undergo suffering simply because they had never performed any sexual intercourse before their hasty marriage. She was not quite honest (or, she might not have enough time to reveal her condition to him) and at the other hand he was not prepared to accept such a painful reality.

> ALISON: Jimmy's got his own private morality, as you know. What my mother calls "loose". It is pretty free, of course, but it's very harsh too. You know, it's funny, but we never slept together before we were married.
> CLIFF : It certainly is - knowing him!
> ALISON: We knew each other such a short time, everything moved at such a pace, we didn't have much opportunity. And, afterwards, he actually taunted me with my virginity. He was quite angry about it, as if I had deceived him in some strange way. He seemed to think an untouched woman would defile him.
>
> (p. 28)

Their marriage has been a hell for her. She feels that Jimmy continuously and untiringly passes judgment on her as if he married her for "revenge" (p. 82). She is helpless. What she can do is to call him a "spiritual barbarian" (p. 82).

Jimmy's prime enmity toward Helena rises because of her middle-class background. She is therefore one of his "natural enemies" (p. 35). Her arrival as "the gracious representative of visiting royalty" (p. 41) only produces an unbearable atmosphere. In Jimmy's eyes, her appearance that features her as the daughter of the welfare society actually provokes his rage, let

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38. Jimmy and his friend, Hugh Tanner.

alone her influence upon Alison. She therefore becomes the object of his ridicule.

> JIMMY: (to Alison) Are you going to let yourself be taken in by this saint in Dior's clothing? I will tell you the simple turth about her. (Articulating with care.) She is a cow.
>
> (p. 66)

> JIMMY: (to Cliff)...Helena will help to make it pay off for you. She's an expert in the New Economics — the Economics of the Supernatural...I know Helena and her kind so very well...They're a romantic lot. They spend their time mostly looking forward to the past. The only place they can see the light is the Dark Ages...She'd rather go down to the ecstatic little shed at the bottom of the garden to relieve her sense of guilt. Our Helena is full of ecstatic wind — (he leans across the table at her) aren't you?
>
> (pp. 66-67)

> JIMMY: Now leave me alone, and get out, you evil-minded little virgin.
>
> (p. 91)

Helena in return regards him as a "savage" (p. 51) and a "very tiresome young man" (p. 58). However, she finally finds out that there is something wrong with Jimmy. "He was born out of his time" (p. 111). He has no place in anything.

Alison's parents with their "conservative" values place themselves as Jimmy's potential opponents. They are undoubtedly the symbol of the welfare society itself. That sort of society is the nest of the Establishment. It is well noted how Alison shows the basic difference between her father and Jimmy.

> ALISON : You're hurt because everything is changed. Jimmy is hurt because everything is the same. And neither of you can face it. Something's gone wrong somewhere, hasn't it?
>
> COLONEL: It looks like it, my dear.
>
> (p. 84)

Jimmy's hatred for something static and monotonous is also reflected when he says: "God, how I hate Sundays! It's always the

same. We never seem to get any further, do we? Always the same ritual..." (p. 8). Monotony, routine or ritual bores him. On the contrary, Colonel Redfern is more or less a kind of static aristocrat with a dreamy nostalgia for the glorious past. He left England in 1914. His post was in India. When he returned back to his country in 1947, he discovered that things had changed.

> Perhaps Jimmy is right. Perhaps I am a – what was it? an old plant left over from the Edwardian Wilderness. And I can't understand why the sun isn't shining any more...The England I remember was the one I left in 1914, and I was happy to go on remembering it that way...
>
> (p. 83)

Without any strong argument, Jimmy accuses the Colonel as the <u>nom de plume</u> of the Bishop of Bromley (p. 7) who "makes a very moving appeal to all Christians to do all they can to assist in the manufacture of the H-Bomb" (p. 6). During his wedding ceremony in the church he jokingly caricatured the Colonel as follows.

> And Daddy sat beside her[39], upright and unafraid, dreaming of his days among the Indian Princes, and unable to believe he'd left his horsewhip at home.
>
> (p. 65)

Alison's mother seems to be the worst victim of Jimmy's resentment. He brutally humiliates her in front of her daughter, creating the most embarrassing air in the play. He even wishes that "arrogant" and "malicious" (p. 14) middle-aged woman was dead.

> JIMMY: I knew that, to protect her innocent young, she wouldn't hesitate to cheat, lie, bully and blackmail.
>
> (p. 59)

> JIMMY : (<u>to Alison</u>). You've let this genuflecting

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39. Mrs Redfern.

sin jobber win you over, haven't you? She's got you back, hasn't she?

HELENA: Oh for heaven's sake, don't be such a bully! You've no right to talk about her mother like that!

JIMMY : (<u>capable of anything now</u>). I've got every right. That old bitch should be dead! (<u>To Alison.</u>) Well? Aren't I right?...I said she's an old bitch, and should be dead!

(p. 62)

JIMMY: Mummy was slumped over her pew in a heap — the noble, female rhino, pole-axed at last!

(p. 65)

ALISON : Do you know what he said about Mummy? He said she was an overfed, overprivileged old bitch. "A good blow-out for the worms" was his expression, I think.

COLONEL: I see.

(p. 81)

His contempt for Alison's mother maybe the accumulative climax for his traumatic disrespect for his own mother who — according to him — "was all for being associated with minorities, provided they were the smart, fashionable ones" (p. 69). Hence, he has a great tendency to hate women in general. He especially despises Alison's friends who are only capable of enjoying their dull welfare.

> Have you ever noticed how noisy women are?...When you see a woman in front of her bedroom mirror, you realise what a refined sort of butcher she is. Did you ever see some dirty old Arab, sticking his fingers into some mess of lamb fat and gristle? Well, she's just like that.
>
> (p. 20)

> I had a flat underneath a couple of girls once. You heard every damned thing those bastards did, all day and night.
>
> (p. 21)

> You must have been talking to some of my wife's friends. They're very intellectual set, aren't they? I've seen 'em. They all sit around feeling very spiritual, with their mental hands on each other's knees, discussing sex as if it were the Art of Fugue.
>
> (p. 56)

> No, there's nothing left for it, me boy, but to let yourself be butchered by the women.
>
> (p. 105)

On the contrary, he has a deep respect and warm affection for Hugh's mother, a Charwoman, who worked hard to support her family (p. 79). According to Alison, Mrs Tanner is "very sweet". "Jimmy seems to adore her principally because she's been poor almost all her life..." (p. 52). Jimmy is especially very fond of her because she is from the working-class (p. 79). Osborne himself is of a working-class background.[40] In the same respect, Jimmy likes Cliff, who has been "loyal, generous and a good friend...worth a half a dozen Helenas" (p. 104) to him. However, he looks down on Cliff because of his being "too ignorant" and "uneducated" (p. 4) and of his having "no intellect" and "no curiosity" (p. 56). It is easily concluded that Osborne stands for the working-class. As the underdogs, they are powerless victims of the welfare society and its social and political systems.

Jimmy's dream to be "a sort of right-wing deviationist" (p. 36) gives a clear idea that politicians also form a special item in Jimmy's black-list. As Members of Parliament, the legislature, they are the architects of the social system as well as the crazy and fanatic supporters of the Establishment. Nigel, Alison's brother, is a typical example of such politicians. He is not more than an agent armed with confusing insight in order to cheat and sell people.

> Well, you've never heard so many well-bred commonplaces come from beneath the same bowler hat. The Platitude from Outer Space — that's brother Nigel. He'll end up in the Cabinet one day, make no mistake. But somewhere at the back of that mind is the vague knowledge that he and his pals have been plundering and fooling everybody for generations. Now Nigel is just about as vague as you can get without being actually invisible. And invisible politicians aren't much use to anyone — not even to <u>his</u> supporters! And nothing is more vague about

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40. Taylor, <u>Anger and After</u>, p. 12.

> Nigel than his knowledge. His knowledge of life and ordinary human beings is so hazy...Besides, he's a patriot and an Englishman, and he doesn't like the idea that he may have been selling out his countryman all these years...
>
> (pp. 14-15)

The Church is also the aim of Jimmy's angry protest. He is not a church-goer at all, although he once needed this institution to legitimize his marriage. Church bells seem to annoy him (p. 115). He mockingly calls Helena a "saint in Dior's clothing" because she invites Alison to go to church. For him, one who goes to church has gone out of his mind (p. 59). Bishop of Bromley's appeal to all Christians to support to the utmost of their strength in the manufacture of the H-Bomb shows how such a high-ranking clergyman can be that odd and mad as to incite the destruction of mankind. This Bishop also accuses the working-class of permanently and viciously stirring up the idea that "he supports the rich against the poor" (p. 7).

Jimmy intentionally refuses to adapt himself to his milieu and its system. He is a non-conformist. It may prove that he has a strong personality. As a man, he is tragically unable to make his dreams come true. He is exactly what Ronald Hayman describes as "a man of action who is frustrated because there's nothing he can go into action for."[41] What he can do is only to talk. He is honest when he admits that he is an expert in noisy quarrelling.

> Why _don't_ we brawl? It's the only thing left I'm any good at.
>
> (p. 60)

Edward Albee's _Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?_, written in 1961 and 1962, serves as another example of an "angry" (and comic) play. The setting of the play is the living room of a

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41. Hayman, _John Osborne_, p. 4.

house on the campus of a small New England college. Of course, the residents of the house, George (a middle-aged professor majoring in history) and Martha (his slightly older wife), have a far higher social position than the Porters in Look Back in Anger. They invite Nick, a young biologist, and Honey, his wife, for drinks just after midnight, at about two o'clock in the morning. Those older and younger couples drink and make conversation for a couple of hours. They indulge in fun and games by hurting one another through angry attacks. Stripped slowly by alcohol, each character personally nares oneself and uncovers the privacy of one's partner. For example, because of the drink, Nick tells George that he married Honey for money. When George retells the truth in front of Honey, she is really offended and shocked. Another example is the scene when Martha, whose father is the president of the college, informs her guests that George's personal motive in marrying her has been his hope to gain the presidency for himself, but he has always failed. In order to revenge, George jokingly takes aim at her with a short-barrelled shotgun popping a large Chinese parasol. Like Jimmy who rudely names his wife's mother "a female rhino", George calls Martha's father "a white mouse". Martha continues abusing him until he can no longer bear it. He grabs her by the throat. Nick intervenes by throwing George to the floor. George, humiliated, is ready to take revenge. Their psychological battles for testing their nerves are thus completed. Their embarrassement is actually as exciting as the embarrassment in Look Back in Anger.

> GEORGE (claps his hands together, once, loud):
> I've got it! I'll tell you what game we'll play. We're done with Humiliate the Host...this round, anyway...we're done with that...and we don't want to play Hump the Hostess, yet...not yet...so I know

> what we'll play...We'll play a round of
> Get the Guests. How about that? How about
> a little game of Get the Guests?
> (Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?, p. 85)

In the further course of the play, the good-looking Nick is too drunk to rise to the seduction of Martha, twice his age. Yet, the very idea of the "son" that Martha continually mentions is obviously the chief key to the meaning of the play. She and George pretend and convince their guests that they are waiting for their son who is supposedly about to return from college. That son turns out to be a mere fantasy that Martha and George have created to compensate for their inability to have children. They are waiting for the impossibility, very much resembling the idea of Godot. Their sterility -- which perhaps symbolizes the barreness of the modern world itself -- has created anger and despair and made them hide their tragic weakness and failure behind a false mask. Such hypocrisy frequently becomes a kind of basic necessity in the human condition. At the end of the play, however, George decides to abolish their imaginative son by informing Martha that a telegram has arrived stating the boy is dead. Martha's reaction is truly pathetic.

> GEORGE: I can kill him, Martha, if I want to.
> MARTHA: HE IS OUR CHILD!
> GEORGE: AND I HAVE KILLED HIM!
> MARTHA: NO!
> GEORGE: YES!
> (Long silence.)
>
> (p. 137)

It is understandable that Martha, as a wife of a materially prosperous professor and as a daughter of a prestigious college president, badly loongs for a son, at least to inherit their welfare. On the contrary, Jimmy's reluctance to have a baby or

his indifference to it can be very reasonable. He may be unwilling to bequeath his bad luck. The very idea of a baby only makes him angry.

> I don't care. I don't care if she's going to have a baby. I don't care if it has two heads!
> (Look Back in Anger, p. 90)

Martha gives up at last, although she confesses that she fears to encounter the future without her fantasy child, or symbolically she is afraid of "Virginia Woolf".[42] After all, she learns to face reality as it is. More or less, an ending with such a reconciliation is similar to that of Look Back in Anger, when Jimmy and Alison finally come to a mutual understanding.

3. Man's Fear of the Menacing World

In Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? Albee strongly exposes the chronic fear of a childless middle-aged woman in facing the bitter reality of her life which is both futile and frightening. When she and her husband by way of compensation create an imaginative son, the fear is even doubled: the fear of living a life without such a deceitful and illusive fantasy. The Gentleman in Ionesco's The New Tenant, who intends to escape and hide himself from the world outside his own, seems to fear society. He may not feel secure to live among other people. Ironically, he feels at home among his furniture.

Pinter explores fear far more deeply in The Birthday Party. This play is categorized as a "comedy of menace", which is exactly a suitable term. Stanley Webber, who actually suffers

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42. Cf. Ronald Hayman, Edward Albee, Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, London, 1971, p. 35.

from fear, apparently the symbol of fear itself. The dramatization of such a feeble man who is afraid of almost everything is powerful enough to create pathetic, tragic and yet funny effects. He looks courageous only in front of kind-hearted but stupid Meg. Conceitedly, he teases Meg and threatens her.

> STANLEY: They're coming today.
> MEG : Who?
> STANLEY: They're coming in a van.
> MEG : Who?
> STANLEY: And do you know what they've got in that van?
> MEG (breathlessly): They haven't.
> STANLEY: Oh yes they have.
> MEG : You're a liar.
> STANLEY: A big wheelbarrow. (He sits on the downstage edge of the table) And when the van stops they wheel it out, and they wheel it up the garden path, and then they knock at the front door.
> MEG : They don't.
> STANLEY: They're looking for someone.
> MEG : They're not.
> STANLEY: They're looking for someone. A certain person.
> MEG (hoarsely): No, they're not!
> (The Birthday Party, p. 14)

It is ironic that the "certain person" is in fact Stanley himself.

When Goldberg and McCann arrive, Stanley immediately smells that an unidentified threat is approaching. He instinctively tries to resist, but Godlberg is smart enough to change the direction of Stanley's scheme by congratulating him on his birthday.

> STANLEY : I'm afraid there's been a mistake. We're booked out. Your room is taken. Mrs Boles forgot to tell you. You'll have to find somewhere else.
> GOLDBERG: Are you the manager here?
> STANLEY : That's right.
> GOLDBERG: Is it a good game?
> STANLEY (moving down C): I run the house. I'm afraid you and your friend will have to find other accommodation.
> GOLDBERG (rising and moving to R of Stanley): Oh,

I forgot, I must congratulate you on
your birthday. (He offers his hand)
Congratulations.

(p. 32)

Stanley fails in his defence. In front of Goldberg and McCann, who are like Angels of Death preparing a "wheelbarrow" for his dead body, he is powerless. Those two powerful intruders tend to be the symbol of the menacing world outside. Their arrival disturbs Stanley's seemingly secure little world and step by step they destroy Stanley's personality. It is interesting how their plot is systematically carried out.

First of all, Goldberg and McCann, acting like public prosecutors, cross-examine Stanley, the defendant. Their exhausting interrogations are then immediately followed by accusations, which is the second step. Stanley is hardly to answer.

GOLDBERG: Webber, what were you doing yesterday?
STANLEY : Yesterday?
GOLDBERG: And the day before. What did you do the day before that?
STANLEY : What do you mean?
GOLDBERG: Why are you wasting everybody's time, Webber? Why are you getting in everybody's way?
STANLEY : Me? What are you...?

(p. 35)

GOLDBERG: Why do you treat that young lady like a leper? She's not a leper, Webber!
STANLEY : What the...?
GOLDBERG: What did you wear last week, Webber? Where do you keep your suits?
MCCANN : Why did you leave the organization?
GOLDBERG: What would your old mum say, Webber?
MCCANN : Why did you betray us?
GOLDBERG: You hurt me, Webber. You're playing a dirty game.

(p. 35)

GOLDBERG: ...When did you last have a bath?
STANLEY : I have one every...
GOLDBERG: Don't lie.
MCCANN : You betrayed the organization. I know him!
STANLEY : You don't.

(p. 36)

GOLDBERG: Where was your wife?
STANLEY : In...(He stops)
GOLDBERG: Answer.

STANLEY (turning, crouched): What wife?
GOLDBERG: What have you done with your wife?
MCCANN : He's killed his wife!
STANLEY (sitting on the chair, his back to the audience): What wife?
MCCANN : How did he kill her?
GOLDBERG: How did you kill her?
MCCANN : You throttled her.
GOLDBERG: With arsenic.

(p. 36)

GOLDBERG: What do you use for pyjamas?
STANLEY : Nothing.
GOLDBERG: You verminate the sheet of your birth.
MCCANN : What about the Albigensenist heresy?
GOLDBERG: Who watered the wicket in Melbourne?
MCCANN : What about the blessed Oliver Plunkett?

(p. 38)

MCCANN : Wake him up. Stick a needle in his eye.
GOLDBERG: Your bite is dead. Only your pong is left.
MCCANN : You betrayed our land.
GOLDBERG: You betray our breed.
MCCANN : You're dead.
GOLDBERG: You're dead. You can't live, you can't think, you can't love. You're dead.

(p. 39)

Pinter features Goldberg and McCann, who are supposed to be vague agents of mysterious and dreadful powers, as still having unique personal differences. He brings them forward with their human ordinariness. They are not merely similar and mechanical robots. Sex and property tend to be Goldberg's major interests. He suggests that Stanley has badly treated the opposite sex. He openly makes love with Lulu, a sort of ordinary hussy. He also abuses Stanley's clothing. On the other hand, McCann is more interested in politics and religion, a natural tendency for his being a typical Irishman. He accuses Stanley of betraying the "organization".[43] He more or less applies a common communist method of interrogating the "enemies of the Party". It is apparent that the menacing power can be in the form of sexual, economical, political, religious or any power. The positions and jobs of Goldberg and McCann are accordingly unclear because

43. Cf. Taylor, Anger and After, p. 328 and Harold Pinter, p. 9.

power does not only exist in a certain position or occupation. It exists in every aspect of life.

The next step is to humiliate Stanley. Pinter makes a symbolic use of Stanley's glasses to represent Stanley's sight as a man. When his glasses are taken off (twice), he loses his sight as a man.

> GOLDBERG: What can you see without your glasses?
> STANLEY : Anything.
> GOLDBERG (to McCann): Take off his glasses.
> (MCCANN snatches Stanley's glasses)
> (p. 36)

> MCCANN (to Stanley): I'll take your glasses. (He removes Stanley's glasses)
> (p. 49)

Without his human sight, Stanley is like an animal.

> STANLEY (circling): Uuuuuhhhhh!
> MCCANN : Right, Judas.
> GOLDBERG (rising): Steady, McCann.
> MCCANN : Come on!
> STANLEY : Uuuuuuuhhhhh!
> MCCANN : He's sweating.
> GOLDBERG: Easy, McCann.
> MCCANN : The bastard sweatpig is sweating.
> (p. 39)

He becomes a total animal when his glasses are destroyed.

> (STANLEY stands blindfolded. MCCANN backs slowly to C. He breaks Stanley's glasses, snapping the frame...)
> (p. 50)

The humiliation is complete when they keep him as the target of their cruel games during his own birthday party. The party has nothing to do with the usual delight and pleasure for the birthday boy. He is slaughtered, instead.

> GOLDBERG: ...McCann, have you got your torch?
> MCCANN (taking a small torch from his pocket):
> Here.
> GOLDBERG: Switch out the light and put your torch.
> (MCCANN switches off the light, then shines the torch on Meg) Not on the

lady, on the gentleman. You must shine
it on the birthday boy.
(MCCANN shines the torch in Stanley's
face)

(p. 41)

(STANLEY moves very slowly C. MCCANN picks up the
drum from the table and places it sideways in
Stanley's path. STANLEY walks into the drum and
falls over with his foot caught in it)

(p. 50)

When their victim is entirely powerless and defeated, they still make fun of him and make him an object of ridicule.

GOLDBERG (rising and moving behind Stanley):
We'll make a man of you.
MCCANN : And a woman.
GOLDBERG: You'll be re-orientated.
MCCANN : You'll be magnate.
GOLDBERG: Animals.
MCCANN : Animals.

(pp. 66-67)

The final step is to carry Stanley off. Goldberg and McCann successfully accomplish their plot, without any protest and significant resistance from Stanley. Nobody is capable of preventing them. Petey Boles tries to prevent them from leading Stanley away, but he fails.

GOLDBERG: We're taking him to Monty.
PETEY : He can stay here.
GOLDBERG: Don't be silly.
PETEY : We can look after him here.
GOLDBERG (moving to L of Petey): Why do you want
to look after him?
PETEY : He's my guest.
GOLDBERG: He needs special treatment.
PETEY : We'll find someone.
GOLDBERG: No. Monty's the best there is. Bring
him, McCann.
(MCCANN leads STANLEY to GOLDBERG and
all three move towards the hall door)

(p. 68)

There should be some strong reasons why Pinter does not exactly indicate the kind of fear Stanley undergoes and the nature of the menace Goldberg and McCann perform. Both of them are nameless and unknown. Perhaps, Pinter wants to generalize

them in order to make them universal, so that the audience will experience Stanley's fear as their own fear and regard such menace as any menace that can possibly threaten them.

Then..., written by David Campton — who is six years older than Pinter, is another example of "comedy of menace". This little one-act play is therefore terrifying but funny. The pathetic elements in this play are rather touching. Mr Phythick, a schoolmaster whose subjects are physics and higher mathematics, and Miss Europe, a smartly dressed girl with a good figure, find themselves the only survivors of the ultimate catastrophe of atomic explosion. It is suggested that it was Phythick's ex-student who originated the atomization of mankind. They have survived because they obeyed the official instruction to wear brown paper bags over their heads in case of emergency. Other people were atomized since they apparently evaded that vital instruction. Although those two people are alive, they obviously remain to fear whether they can go on living or not. Their surroundings have been damaged. The damage of food as a vital support to man's life Campton puts as an illustration in this play is just an example of many other damages caused by the atomic bomb.

> GIRL : ...I brought some cold milk in a thermos flask.
> PHYTHICK (*feebly*): Thank you. Thank you so much. I believe it was the first shock. The first shock of the promised land is always overwhelming.
> GIRL : Your milk.
> PHYTHICK: Thank you. Is it safe?
> GIRL : It's Jersey milk.
> PHYTHICK: There was food in the shops, but I hesitated.
>
> (*Then...*, *Theatre Today*, p. 188)

Mr Phythick and Miss Europe begin to be acquainted with each other and gradually they have affection for each other. The difficult problem arises when they want to express their

feelings physically. Will it be safe to take the brown paper bags off? When will be the right time to do so? As they have never seen each other's faces, it is comic but affecting to observe how Phythick misinterprets Europe's countenance and her other physical features.

> PHYTHICK: You remind me of old, forgotten, far-off things. 'Behold thou art fair, my love. Behold thou art fair.'
> GIRL : I'm a brunette.
> PHYTHICK: I want to run my fingers through your curls — your hair does curl? And see my soul reflected in the deep, blue pools of your eyes...
> GIRL : Brown.
> PHYTHICK: In the deep brown pools of your eyes.
> (pp. 192-93)

If they want to be really safe, they have to live without ever seeing each other. They finally agree to keep on wearing the paper bags, but when the curtain falls Phythick raises his hands to his paper bag. Unlike Stanley, he resists his dependence on such a paper bag. In a deeper sense, he rebels against his own condition.

Unlike the undefined menace in The Birthday Party, the menace in Then... is quite clear: the atomic bomb. That man-made deadly weapon has become the constant and monstrous threat for the human race. In other words, man has ironically created an effective means of destroying himself and of reducing any living organism to dust. A far more destructive weapon than the H-bomb has even been created: the nuclear bomb. It is apparent that man will tragically find a great difficulty to stop that menacing monster. Who is to blame if people nowadays fear a nuclear war? This world is fragile now, because man has created his own tragedy. Perhaps, it is the most bitter tragedy of the human condition.

Chapter IV

UNIQUE STYLES

Besides putting forward their special outlooks on the contemporary world, Beckett, Osborne and Pinter have also developed unique styles which are significant in the English theatre. Beckett's Waiting for Godot is certainly an excellent example of the sensational Theatre of the Absurd. Osborne spectacularly makes use of biting monologues in Look Back in Anger. In his plays, Pinter displays common actions or everyday happenings realistically. These styles turn out to be their effective means of expressing the human condition on stage.

1. The Theatre of the Absurd

> "All theatre is absurd. Shakespeare makes Macbeth say life is a tale told by an idiot, signifying nothing."

So Ionesco said in an interview with Ronald Hayman.[44] He believes in the absurdity of theatre, and his plays which are rich in absurd elements have made him a prominent figure among the Absurdists. Beckett and other Absurdists such as Arthur Adamov and Jean Genet have similar interest to Ionesco's. They have realized their ideas of absurdity in their plays, which together have been labelled as the Theatre of the Absurd. The movement began to emerge in the nineteen-fifties. According to Richard N. Coe, the achievement of this new theatre "was to liberate drama from any *necessary* dependence on naturalism,

44. Hayman, Eugene Ionesco, p. 6.

logic or traditional psychology."[45]

Martin Esslin in his book entitled The Theatre of the Absurd is the first to baptize and popularize the movement. The following are some of his views on the movement.[46]

(The world as an incomprehensible place.)[47]

> The Theatre of the Absurd shows the world as an incomprehensible place. The spectators see the happenings on the stage entirely from the outside, without ever understanding the full meaning of these strange patterns of events, as newly arrived visitors might watch life in a country of which they have not yet mastered the language.

(The absurdity of real life and the irrationality of the human condition.)

> For while the happenings on the stage are absurd, they yet remain recognizable as somehow related to real life with its absurdity, so that eventually the spectators are brought face to face with the irrational side of their existence. Thus, the absurd and fantastic goings-on of the Theatre of the Absurd will, in the end, be found to reveal the irrationality of the human condition and the illusion of what we thought was its apparent logical structure.

(Meaningless clichés and stereotyped phrases in our day-to-day conversation, man's inconsistency, and a lack of initiative.)

> If the dialogue in these plays consists of meaningless clichés and the mechanical, circular repetition of stereotyped phrases — how many meaningless clichés and stereotyped phrases do we use in our day-to-day conversation? If the characters change their personality halfway through the action, how consistent and truly integrated are the people we meet in our real life? And if people in these plays appear as mere marionettes, helpless puppets without any will of their own, passively at the mercy of blind fate and meaningless circumstance, do we, in fact, in our over-organized world, still posses any genuine initiative or power to decide our own destiny?

(Dialogue contradicting the action.)

> That is why so often in the Theatre of the Absurd

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45. Coe, op. cit., p. 109.

46. Esslin, op. cit., pp. 207-20.

47. Words between brackets are mine.

the dialogue becomes divorced from the real happenings in the play and is even put into direct contradiction with the action.

(The real content lying in the action.)

In the Theatre of the Absurd, therefore, the real content of the play lies in the action. Language may be discarded altogether...

(No logical syllogisms.)

In the Theatre of the Absurd, the action does not proceed in the manner of a logical syllogism. It does not go from A to B but travels from an unknown premise X towards an unknowable conclusion Y.

(Suspense for the meaning of the play.)

Thus, instead of being in suspense as to what will happen next, the spectators are, in the Theatre of the Absurd, put into suspense as to _what_ the play _may mean_. This suspense continues even after the curtain has come down.

(Some qualities of the Theatre of the Absurd.)

In this sense, the Theatre of the Absurd is the most demanding, the most intellectual theatre. It may be riotously funny, wildly exaggerated and oversimplified, vulgar and garish, but it will always confront the spectator with a genuine intellectual problem, a philosophical paradox, which he will have to try to solve even if he knows that it is most probably insoluble.

As an absurd play, _Waiting for Godot_ is full of absurd elements confirming Martin Esslin's views. For example, it is quite logical if the audience will expect Pozzo to appear without Lucky in Act Two, since Pozzo intends to sell Lucky in Act One. Yet what happens is beyond expectation: Lucky is still present in Act Two. Logic is absolutely insufficient for judging this kind of play. It also sounds illogical that Pozzo has become blind and Lucky dumb overnight. Similarly, the tree has grown leaves just in one night, so that the tramps are surprised.

VLADIMIR: Look at it.
They look at the tree.
ESTRAGON: I see nothing.
VLADIMIR: But yesterday evening it was all black

and bare. And now it's covered with leaves.
ESTRAGON: Leaves?
VLADIMIR: In a single night.
ESTRAGON: It must be the Spring.
VLADIMIR: But in a single night!
(_Waiting for Godot_, pp. 65-66)

Beckett wants to say that in a single night things, manner and ideas can change drastically. Change is quite inevitable in this world and the universe.

VLADIMIR: How they've changed!
ESTRAGON: Who?
VLADIMIR: Those two.
ESTRAGON: That's the idea, let's make a little conversation.
VLADIMIR: Haven't they?
ESTRAGON: What?
VLADIMIR: Changed.
ESTRAGON: Very likely. They all change.
(p. 48)

The play begins with Estragon who is attempting to pull off his boot which is too narrow.

Estragon, sitting on a low mound, is trying to take off his boot. He pulls at it with both hands, panting. He gives up, exhausted, rests, tries again. As before.
(p. 9)

The boots have a significant meaning in this play. They are not merely a part of the costume, as they would have been in the conventional theatre. The narrow boots give a hint that Estragon is continually pressed and "punished" by his own clothing. As a result, he is not even free enough to breathe. He ironically wears something that makes his condition worse.

Time and place in the play can be regarded as another example of irrelevance as well. Beckett seems to do away with the exactness of time and place. To argue against them is therefore unnecessary. Perhaps the audience is just expected to imagine that this absurd play is happening at any time and at any

place. In Act One, Pozzo consults his watch four times (pp. 24, 33, 36 & 37), but at the end of the scene he loses it (p. 46). The lost watch is likely to indicate that the passing of time is ignored. Vladimir even states that time has stopped (p. 36). In Act Two, Pozzo shows his unconcern about time while Estragon is indifferent to place.

> VLADIMIR: And when was that?
> POZZO : I don't know.
> VLADIMIR: But no later than yesterday —
> POZZO : (*violently*). Don't question me! The blind have no notion of time.
>
> (p. 86)

> VLADIMIR: Dumb! Since when?
> POZZO : (*suddenly furious*). Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time! It's abominable! When! When!
>
> (p. 89)

> ESTRAGON: And here where we are now?
> VLADIMIR: Where else do you think? Do you not recognize the place?
> ESTRAGON: (*suddenly furious*). Recognize! What is there to recognize? All my lousy life I've crawled about in the mud! And you talk to me about scenery!
>
> (p. 61)

This is another indication that Estragon easily forgets everything. He and Pozzo actually have great difficulties in remembering anything.

> VLADIMIR: And they didn't beat you?
> ESTRAGON: Beat me? Certainly they beat me.
> VLADIMIR: The same lot as usual?
> ESTRAGON: The same? I don't know.
>
> (p. 9)

> VLADIMIR: The tree. Look at the tree.
> *Estragon looks at the tree.*
> ESTRAGON: Was it not there yesterday?
> VLADIMIR: Yes, of course it was there. Do you not remember?
> We nearly hanged ourselves from it. But you wouldn't. Do you not remember?
> ESTRAGON: You dreamt it.
> VLADIMIR: Is it possible that you've forgotten already?
> ESTRAGON: That's the way I am. Either I forget immediately or I never forget.
>
> (pp. 60-61)

VLADIMIR: We met yesterday. (Silence.) Do you not remember?
POZZO : I don't remember having met anyone yesterday. But tomorrow I won't remember having met anyone today.
(p. 88)

"Meaningless clichés" and "stereotyped phrases" often used in everyday conversation are also found here and there in Waiting for Godot. This can be interpreted as showing that people are content with using cliches and rarely try to use language creatively.

VLADIMIR: I'm glad to see you back.
(p. 9)

ESTRAGON: I think it is.
VLADIMIR: I think so too.
(p. 19)

ESTRAGON: Could I be of any help?
(p. 36)

POZZO: Bless you, gentlemen, bless you!
(p. 38)

POZZO : Gentlemen, you have been...civil to me.
ESTRAGON: Not at all.
VLADIMIR: What an idea!
(p. 39)

VLADIMIR: Is that all?
BOY : Yes, sir.
(p. 51)

ESTRAGON: What a day!
(p. 59)

Playing games turns out to be an interesting feature in Waiting for Godot. Besides its function to pass the time, it also indicates that Beckett has a well-noted tendency to convert the word "play" in its secondary meaning — i.e. "drama for the stage" — into its primary meaning — i.e. "(what is done for) amusement; recreation". Ronald Hayman states that "Beckett is playing around with the fact of having actors on a stage playing parts, and playing around with the idea of a play."[48] Jacques Guicharnaud even emphasizes that "the idea of life as a

48. Hayman, Samuel Beckett, p. 6.

game and man's attempt to play it" is "a central theme" in Beckett's dramatic works.[49] Vladimir and Estragon jokingly play with Lucky's hat (pp. 71-72). They play a game of being Pozzo and Lucky. They stagger about on one leg imitating trees. They play at contradicting each other, at asking each other questions and at abusing each other.[50] A similar tendency on a smaller scale is found in the plays of the other dramatists as well. In Look Back in Anger, Jimmy invites his wife to play at being a bear and a squirrel. They play at being animals as if they are unable to bear the pain of being human beings. Stanley's birthday party in The Birthday Party is embellished with a children's play called "blind man's buff" which is cruelly meant to blind Stanley himself. And a couple of psychological plays like "Humiliate the Host" and "Hump the Hostess" are presented in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?

The fact that the audience is not seriously invited to involve itself in the Theatre of the Absurd personally, or what Martin Esslin calls "the spectators see the happenings on the stage entirely from the outside," is also implied in Waiting for Godot. Vladimir does not reckon with the audience at all when he says, "Not a soul in sight!" towards auditorium. He even insults the spectators by calling them "bog".

> VLADIMIR: We're surrounded! (Estragon makes a rush towards back.) Imbecile! There's no way out there. (He takes Estragon by the arms and drags him towards front. Gesture towards front.) There! Not a soul in sight! Off you go. Quick! (He pushes Estragon towards auditorium...)
>
> (p. 74)
>
> VLADIMIR: ...(turning towards the auditorium)... that bog.
>
> (p. 15)

49. Guicharnaud, op. cit., p. 282.
50. For textual illustrations see Chapter III, 1, pp. 37-38.

Although the audience is insulted, it does not necessarily mean that the play has no power to attract playgoers. On the contrary, Hayman comes to the conclusion that "the success of Waiting for Godot proved resoundingly that it was possible to sustain an evening's entertainment and to hold an audience's interest without using the familiar tricks or the familiar structure of the well-made play." "But," Hayman further says, "Beckett's most important influence on the theatre has been as an apostle of freedom."[51]

The absurd elements in Ionesco's absurd play The New Tenant are spectacular for the audience because of their irrationality. The carrying of furniture and the proliferation of it are so dramatic that the language in the play becomes less important. It is unrealistic but funny that the two Furniture Movers need to make a tremendous effort to move an empty vase or a tiny stool, but need to make no effort at all to carry much larger and heavier furniture.

> [Both FURNITURE MOVERS are now visible, struggling to carry between them another empty vase identical with the first and obviously extremely light in weight But their united effort should appear tremendous, so much so that they are in fact stumbling under their burden.]
> (The New Tenant, Theatre Today, p. 96)
>
> [...the 1st MOVER comes in through the same door carrying two more tiny stools, exactly like the first ones and still with great effort.]
> (p. 98)
>
> [The larger and heavier the articles that the FURNITURE MOVERS bring on, the easier they seem to carry them until finally it looks like child's play.]
> (p. 97)

These unrealistic pictures are completed when "the two folding doors open of themselves and a sideboard slides on to stage,

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51. Hayman, Samuel Beckett, p. 79.

propelled by an invisible force. The doors close again..." (p. 103). Almost similar to Estragon's boots which are not just a part of the costume, furniture in The New Tenant is no longer the decor or backgrounds as it generally functions in the conventional theatre. Ionesco brings such furniture to life, makes it part of the play.

2. Biting Monologue

In Waiting for Godot Lucky is ordered to think aloud. The result is a long monologue that covers more than two full pages (pp. 42-45). It is the only monologue in the play. Lucky's oration among other things treats "old" God and man who tends to waste and pine although his life is short.

> LUCKY: Giving the existence...of a personal God quaquaquaqua with white beard quaquaquaqua outside time without extension who from the heights of divine apathia divine athambia divine aphasia loves us dearly with some exceptions for reason unknown but time will tell...
>
> ...that man in short that man in brief in spite of the strides of alimentation and defecation is seen to waste and pine waste and pine...
>
> (Waiting for Godot, pp. 42-43)

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? also contains a single monologue. It is Martha's soliloquy, revealing her misery. The following are some lines from her monologue:

> MARTHA: ...Deserted! Abandon-ed! Left out in the cold like an old pussy-cat. HA!...
> ...I cry alllll the time; but deep inside, so no one can see me. I cry all the time.
> ...Up the drain, down the spout, dead, gone and forgotten...
>
> (Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?, pp. 109-10)

If the single monologue in Waiting for Godot or that in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? can be regarded as a kind of variation of style, the same is not true of the monologues in Look Back in Anger. Jimmy's monologues, which are biting and full of angry criticism, turn out to be the dominant style of the play. There is always a danger of boring the audience in presenting abundant monologues, but Osborne proves that the long sharp monologues in his angry play are its most appropriate style. T.C. Worsley in the New Statesman characterizes Jimmy's soliloquies as "the authentic new tone of the Nineteen-Fifties, desperate, savage, resentful and, at times, very funny."[52] One of Jimmy's biting monologues goes as follows.

> JIMMY: He's a big chap. Well...so many well-bred commonplaces come from beneath the same bowler hat. The Platitude from Outer Space — that's brother Nigel. He'll end up in the Cabinet one day, make no mistake. But somewhere at the back of that mind is a vague knowledge that he and his pals have been plundering and fooling everybody for generations. (Going upstage, and turning.) Now Nigel is just about as vague as you can get without being actually invisible. And invisible politicians aren't much use to anyone — not even to his supporters! And nothing is more vague about Nigel than his knowledge. His knowledge of life and ordinary human beings is so hazy, he really deserves some sort of decoration for it — a medal inscribed "For Vaguery in the Field". But it wouldn't do for him to be troubled by any stabs of conscience, however vague. (Moving down again.) Besides, he's a patriot and an Englishman, and he doesn't like the idea that he may have been selling out his countryman all these years, so what does he do? The only thing he can do — seek sanctuary in his own stupidity. The only way to keep things as much like they always have been as possible, is to make any alternative too much for your poor, tiny brain to grasp. It takes some doing nowadays. It really does. But they knew all about character building at Nigel's school,

52. See Taylor, Anger and After, p. 31.

> and he'll make it. And, what's more, he'll
> do it better than anybody else!
> _...he moves across to the window, to recover himself, and look out._
> It's started to rain. That's all it needs.
> This room and the rain.
> (_Look Back in Anger_, pp. 14-15)

Ronald Hayman also emphasizes the domination of the monologue in this play. He says, "There's no give-and-take dialogue, hardly any cut-and-thrust dialogue. What we're given is monologue with echo."[53] The function of Alison, Helena and Cliff is merely to interrupt Jimmy's rhetoric, or in Jimmy's absence they echo him. The following quotations illustrate how their interruptions only serve to push him on:

> JIMMY: Thank God they don't have many women surgeons! Those primitive hands would have your guts out in no time. Flip! Out it comes, like the powder out of its box. Flop! Back it goes, like the powder puff on the table.
> CLIFF: (_grimacing cheerfully_). Ugh! Stop it!
> JIMMY: (_moving upstage_). She'd drop your guts like hair clips and fluff all over the floor...
> (pp. 20-21)

> JIMMY : Oh, hell! Now the bloody bells have started!
> _He rushes to the window._
> Wrap it up, will you? Stop ringing those bells! There's somebody going crazy in here! I don't want to hear them!
> ALISON: Stop shouting! (_Recovering immediately._)
> JIMMY : I don't give a damn about Miss Drury — that mild old gentlewoman doesn't fool me, even if she takes in you two. She's an old robber.
> (p. 21)

> JIMMY : ...I was a liberal skinny weakling. I too was afraid to strip down my soul, but now everyone looks at my superb physique in envy. I can perform any kind of press there is without betraying the least sign of passion or kindliness.
> HELENA: All right Jimmy.
> JIMMY : Two years ago I couldn't even lift up my head — now I have more uplift than a film starlet.

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53. Hayman, _John Osborne_, p. 17.

HELENA: Jimmy, can we have one day, just one day, without tumbling over religion or politics?
CLIFF : Yes, change the record old boy, or pipe down.

(p. 98)

Jimmy is apparently capricious. At one moment he needs a response to his rhetoric, but at the other moment he does not want to be interrupted.

JIMMY: ...Ah yes. He's[54] upset because one has suggested that he supports the rich against the poor. He says he denies the difference of class distinctions. "This idea has been persistently and wickedly fostered by — the working classes!" Well!
He looks at both of them for reaction, but Cliff is reading, and Alison is intent on her ironing.

(p. 7)

CLIFF: Have you seen nobody?
JIMMY: Of course, I haven't seen nobody! Kindly don't waste my time! Ladies and gentlemen, a little recitation entitled "She said she was called a little Gidding, but she was more like a gelding iron!" Thank you "She said she was called little Gidding —— "
CLIFF: Are you quite sure you haven't seen nobody?
JIMMY: Are you still here?
CLIFF: I'm looking for nobody!
JIMMY: Will you kindly go away! "She said she was called little Gidding —— "
CLIFF: Well, I can't find nobody anywhere, and I'm supposed to give him this case!
JIMMY: Will you kindly stop interrupting perlease! Can't you see I'm trying to entertain these ladies and gentlemen?

(pp. 99-100)

When Jimmy is not on the stage, Alison, Cliff, Helena and the Colonel hardly speak about themselves. They mostly talk about Jimmy. By doing so, they more or less echo Jimmy's various characteristics, such as his shortcomings, manners and resentment of his past experiences.

ALISON: We knew each other such a sort time, everything moved at such a pace, we didn't

54. The Bishop of Bromley.

have much opportunity. And afterwards, he actually taunted me with my virginity. He was quite angry about it, as if I had deceived him in some strange way. He seemed to think an untouched woman would defile him.

CLIFF : I've never heard you talking like this about him. He'd be quite pleased.

ALISON: Yes, he would. Do you think he's right?

CLIFF : What's about?

ALISON: Oh — everything.

CLIFF : Well, I suppose he and I think the same about a lot of things, because we're alike in some ways. We both come from working people, if you like. Oh I know some of his mother's relatives are pretty posh, but he hates them as much as he hates yours. Don't quite know why. Anyway, he gets on with me because I'm common. Common as dirt, that's me.

(pp. 28-30)

COLONEL: I didn't approve of Jimmy at all, and I don't suppose I ever should, but, looking back on it, I think it would have been better, for all concerned, if we had never attempted to interfere. At last, it would have been a little more dignified.

ALISON : It wasn't your fault.

COLONEL: I don't know. We were all to blame, in our different ways. No doubt Jimmy acted in good faith. He's honest enough, whatever else he may be.

(pp. 80-81)

HELENA: Do you know — I have discovered what is wrong with Jimmy? It's very simple really. He was born out of his time.

ALISON: Yes. I know.

(p. 111)

This means that the other characters in the play are only complementary to Jimmy. Jimmy is the centre of the play. Hence, Hayman is right in categorizing Look Back in Anger as "the one-man play par excellence".[55] The play actually features Jimmy's solo performances and he plays his role excellently.

The character of Jimmy's monologues is interesting to note. His focus of attention tends to move from a special level to a general one. Or, he usually begins his resentment from a personal level and then it immediately moves onto a public level.

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55. Hayman, John Osborne, p. 17.

> Now Nigel is just about as vague as you can get without being actually invisible. And invisible politicians aren't much use to anyone —
>
> (p. 14)
>
> She's so clumsy. I watch for her to do the same things every night. The way she jumps on the bed, as if she were stamping on someone's face, and draws the curtains back with a great clatter, in that casually destructive way of hers. It's like someone launching a battleship. Have you ever noticed how noisy women are?
>
> (p. 20)
>
> Did you ever see some dirty old Arab, sticking his fingers into some mess of lamb fat and gristle? Well, she's just like that. Thank God they don't have many women surgeons!
>
> (p. 20)

Long monologues are also found in Osborne's other play entitled _Luther_. This play is a dramatization of the personal and religious experiences of Martin Luther, the German religious reformer who began the Protestant Reformation. Through sharp monologues Luther expresses his relation with his parents and God, his obsession with his personal guilt and the sinfulness of being alive. The result is a growing rebellion against the Roman Catholic Church. Hayman features _Luther_ "as much a one-man play as _Look Back in Anger_",[56] while Taylor points out that most of the "dialogue" in _Luther_ "turns out, in fact, to be two monologues skilfully intercut."[57] As a matter of fact, _Luther_ even presents much longer monologues than those in _Look Back in Anger_. It so happens that a couple of scenes in the play only consist of single monologues, namely Act Two, Scene One; Act Two, Scene Three; and Act Two, Scene Six. In the following soliloquies, Martin Luther puts forward his sufferings and fears.

> MARTIN: I lost the body of a child, a child's body, the eyes of a child; and at the

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56. _Ibid._, p. 42.

57. Taylor, _Anger and After_, p. 56.

> first sound of my own childish voice. I lost the body of a child; and I was afraid, and I went back to find it. But I'm still afraid. I'm afraid, and there's an end of it! But I mean...(shouts)...Continually! For instance of the noise the Prior's dog makes on a still evening when he rolls over on his side and licks his teeth. I'm afraid of the darkness, and the hole in it; and I see it sometime of every day! And some days more than once even, and there's no bottom to it, no bottom to my breath, and I can't reach it. Why? Why do you think? There's a bare fist clenched to my bowels and they can't move, and I have to sit sweating in my little monk's house to open them. The lost body of a child, hanging on a mother's tit, and close to the warm, big body of a man, and I can't find it.
>
> (*Luther*, p. 24)

> MARTIN: Somewhere in the body of a child, Satan foresaw in me what I'm suffering now. That's why he prepares open pits for me, and all kinds of tricks to bring me down, so that I keep wondering if I'm the only man living who's baited, and surrounded by dreams, and afraid to move.
>
> (p. 30)

Biting monologues as a unique style no doubt contributed towards Osborne's becoming a significant dramatist of the mid fifties.

3. Realistic Common Actions

In *The Birthday Party* Pinter shows the importance of common actions or everyday happenings. In the "well-made" play, common actions are generally left out because they are considered irrelevant elements. However, if ordinary actions such as preparing meals, drinking tea, sitting on a chair, combing one's hair and chatting are regarded as irrelevant and therefore should be omitted on stage, why do people do so all the time? Pinter is obviously realistic, and he consistently exposes

reality as it is without artificial selection. Since he shows everyday realities in their minute details — which are commonly ignored in the conventional theatre — the result is dramatically surprising.

The ways people eat, read, smoke and do with glasses are realistically shown in The Birthday Party. It needs our special concentration to eventually enjoy watching such detailed ordinary actions. We are invited to notice details more than plot.

> MEG: I've got your cornflakes ready. (She disappears and reappears with a plate of cornflakes) Here's your cornflakes.
> (PETEY rises, goes to the hatch, takes the plate from Meg, resumes his seat at the table, props up the paper and begins to eat)
> (The Birthday Party, p. 2)
>
> (MEG goes into the kitchen. STANLEY rubs his eyes under his glasses and reads the paper. MEG returns from the kitchen, carrying a pot of tea)
> (p. 9)
>
> (STANLEY moves to the window L, takes a cigarette and matches from his pyjama jacket pocket, lights the cigarette and gazes out of the window)
> (p. 10)
>
> STANLEY (stubbing out his cigarette in the ashtray on the sewing-table up C): When was this? When did he see them?
> MEG : Last night.
> (p. 11)
>
> STANLEY: I had a unique touch...(He pauses)...My father nearly came down to hear me...(He removes his glasses and wipes them on his pyjama jacket)...Well I can take a tip — any day of the week. (He replaces his glasses and looks at Meg)
> (p. 13)

In daily life, people tend to do insignificant things, especially when they have nothing to do. They may play with their nails, fingers, noses, hair, pencils, etc. In The Birthday Party a man (McCann) sits for a considerable time doing nothing meaningful but carefully shredding a sheet of newspaper into several equal strips.

> _When the CURTAIN rises...MCCANN is seated above the table, tearing a sheet of newspaper into five equal strips. STANLEY enters..._
>
> STANLEY (_crossing to the french windows_): Very warm tonight. (_He glances out then turns to McCann_) Someone out there?
> (MCCANN tears another length of paper...)
> (p. 26)

In the conventional theatre, dressing up is generally completed before the actor or actress appears in front of the audience. On the stage everything has to be perfect. But in _The Birthday Party_, there is a girl (Lulu) who makes up her face on the stage. In ordinary life this seemingly trivial action is quite common among women.

> STANLEY: I think it's going to rain today. What do you think?
> LULU : I hope so. You could do with it. (_She moves, sits R of the table, takes a compact from her bag and powders her nose_)
> (p. 15)

After discussing the visual elements of Pinter's realistic presentation of common actions, we see that the same obtains for the auditory ones. Like Beckett, Pinter includes meaningless clichés or stereotyped phrases in _The Birthday Party_. Such clichés and phrases have been an inevitable part of everyday speech. The daily expressions in the play vary widely, such as formal greetings:

> PETEY : Morning, Stanley.
> STANLEY: Morning.
> (p. 5)
>
> STANLEY: Evening.
> MCCANN : Evening.
> (p. 26)
>
> MEG: Did you sleep well?
> (p. 6)

talking about the weather:

MEG : Is it nice out?
PETEY: Very nice.

(p. 2)

STANLEY: What's it like out today?
PETEY : Very nice.
STANLEY: Warm?
PETEY : Well, there's a good breeze blowing.

(p. 6)

or showing hospitality:

MEG : Very pleased to meet you.
(They shake hands)
GOLDBERG: We're pleased to meet you, too.
MEG : That's very nice.

(p. 20)

MCCANN : What's your name?
STANLEY: 'Webber'.
MCCANN : I'm glad to meet you, sir. (He offers his hand)

(p. 26)

The stumble in speech is magnificently put forward in the play. If a speaker stumbles, he usually happens to be nervous, uneducated or among other people whom he regards as superior to him. This is also true with Meg and Stanley, when she repeatedly uses the term "...and then...and then..." and he frequently applies the phrase "...I mean..." In addition, it shows how common their background is. People like them are quite believable because they occur in real life.

MEG : Oh, lovely. He once gave a concert.
GOLDBERG: Oh? Where?
MEG (falteringly): In — a big hall. His father gave him champagne. But then they locked the place up and he couldn't get out. The caretaker had gone home. So he had to wait until the morning before he could get out. They were very grateful. (She pauses) And then they all wanted to give him a tip. And so he took the tip. And then he got a fast train and he came down here.

(p. 21)

STANLEY: Who's out there?
MCCANN : My friend and the man of the house.
STANLEY: You know what? To look at me, I bet you wouldn't think I'd led such a quiet life.

> The lines on my face, eh? It's the drink. Been drinking a bit down here. But what I mean is — away from your own — all wrong of course — I'll be all right when I get back — but what I mean is, the way some people look at me you'd think I was a different person. I suppose I have changed, but I'm still the same man that I always was. I mean, you wouldn't think, to look at me, really — I mean, not really, that I was the sort of bloke to — to cause any trouble.
>
> (p. 29)

Pinter also shows a great tendency to make use of silence and pauses besides hesitant speeches. In fact, speeches which are too smooth and fluent will only sound artificial. What usually happens in ordinary conversation is that the speakers sometimes need time to think, to rest, as they have nothing more particular to say. In this respect, Pinter cannot be regarded as a pioneer, for in Waiting for Godot Beckett has applied the same method. The following lines are taken from Pinter's The Birthday Party and Landscape and from Beckett's Waiting for Godot by way of comparison.

> GOLDBERG: ...Who came before your father's father but your father's father's mother! Your great-gran-granny.
>
> (There is a silence)
>
> (He slowly rises) And that's why I've reached my position, McCann. Because I've always been as fit as a fiddle. My motto. 'Work hard and play hard.' Not a day's illness. (He sits R of the table)
>
> (There is a pause)
>
> All the same, give me a blow. (He pauses) Blow in my mouth. (He opens his mouth)
>
> (The Birthday Party, p. 62)

BETH

He moved in the sand and put his arm around me.
Silence

DUFF

Do you like me to talk to you?
Pause
Do you like me to tell you about all the things

I've been doing?
Pause
About all the things I've been thinking?
Pause
Mmmmn?
Pause
I think you do.

BETH

And cuddled me.
Silence

(Landscape, Landscape and Silence, pp. 20-21)

VLADIMIR: ...let him sleep on. (Pause.) What have I said?
Enter Boy right. He halts.
Silence.
BOY : Mister...(Vladimir turns.) Mr. Albert...
VLADIMIR: Off we go again. (Pause.) Do you not recognize me?
BOY : No, sir.
VLADIMIR: It wasn't you came yesterday.
BOY : No, sir.
VLADIMIR: This is your first time.
BOY : Yes, sir.
Silence.

(Waiting for Godot, p. 91)

David Thompson in Theatre Today indicates that Pinter sometimes exposes the non-sequiturs (i.e. "it does not follow") of conversation in his play.[58] It means that Pinter does not miss to notice that people often tend to talk about themselves without paying enough attention to what their interlocutors say. They rather consider their "stories" as the most important subjects in every conversation. The following lines from The Birthday Party can be taken as an example of the non-sequiturs of conversation.

MCCANN : Who would do that?
STANLEY: That woman is mad!
MCCANN : That's slander.
STANLEY: And you don't know what you're doing.
MCCANN : Your cigarette is near that paper.

(The Birthday Party, pp. 29-30)

Except the third line, the other lines above do not logically follow the preceding ones. Perhaps keep spectators will think

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58. Thompson, Ed., Theatre Today, p. xiii.

that those lines should have run as follows:

MCCANN : Who would do that?
STANLEY: Meg, that mad woman.
MCCANN : That's slander.
STANLEY: Ah, you don't know what you're doing.
MCCANN : I certainly know what I'm doing.

However, what commonly happens in ordinary conversation is not quite logical. The original piece therefore sounds much more real and natural. Here are also other examples of the _non-sequiturs_ of conversation in _Landscape_.[59]

BETH
...Snoozing how lovely I said to him. But I wasn't a fool, on that occasion. I lay quiet, by his side.
Silence
DUFF
Anyway...
BETH
My skin...
DUFF
I'm sleeping all right these days.
BETH
Was stinging.
DUFF
Right through the night, every night.
BETH
I'd been in the sea.
(_Landscape_, _Landscape and Silence_, p. 14)
BETH
I wore a blue dress.
DUFF
Let it stand for three days. Keep wet sacks over the barrels. Hose the cellar floor daily. Hose the barrels daily.
BETH
It was a beautiful autumn morning.
DUFF
Run water through the pipes to the bar pumps daily.
(p. 26)

Pinter is certainly a master of applying the realism of everyday speech-patterns in his plays. He observes and photo-

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59. Taylor calls this play a "gnomic duologue". See Taylor, _Anger and After_, p. 356.

graphs common actions in everyday life in their realistic details. When the pictures are shown on stage, they give alluring affects both visually and auditorily. He has created a new and unique style in the English theatre this way. Realistic common actions presented in The Birthday Party precisely illustrate the ordinariness of people like Stanley, Petey, Meg and Lulu. Stanley is therefore frightened when two powerful intruders approach him through uncommon attitudes: ruining a party and speaking threatening language.

Pinter, Beckett and Osborne have something in common. The styles of their tragicomedies are outside the lines of the "well-made" play or the conventional theatre. It is apparent that they are not content with the conventional patterns, and they have accordingly created new patterns of their own. They prove that the presentation of realistic common actions, absurd elements and biting monologues in expressing the human condition is worth enjoying.

Chapter V

CONCLUSION

Now that this study has been accomplished by means of showing parallelism among the three tragicomedies, comparing them with other works and presenting the writers' views and styles, I am in a position to draw the following conclusions:

1. The human condition is the primary cause of man's tragic sufferings, and it cannot be endured. Imprisoned by their own absurd waiting, Vladimir and Estragon try to avoid thinking about their own condition, and consider suicide as the best means of escaping. Jimmy's flaws make him impotent to carry out his ideals. Stanley is pathetically destroyed by the faces of a hostile society.

2. Modern man is tragically confronting the failure and the lost dimension of personal communication. Contemporary individuals tend to talk more and listen less, and language is no longer a device for ideal communication.

3. Human relationships seem to be problems for modern man. People incline to regard other people as strangers or sources of menace. Hence they are often unwilling to relate personally as they basically fear one another. Isolation is thus considered as a secure way out. Beckett's tramps and Stanley's fear of the outside world serve as fine examples of this phenomenon, and so does Jimmy Porter in his tirades against successful people in society.

4. Man often has to undergo failure because of his powerless-

ness. The tramps completely fail to meet Godot for Godot will never come. Jimmy's failure makes him only capable of being angry, while Stanley fails to escape from the menacing world outside. Their failures suggest the failure of the whole society.

5. Man is never totally free because of his chronic dependence on others. Man's dependence is complex and inevitable, but at the same time it generally proves to be a surprising cause of bringing people closer to one another. Stanley is victimized by other people, but Vladimir and Estragon get closer to each other because of their mutual needs. Jimmy accepts his wife back when he realizes that she badly needs him and he has no other alternatives himself.

6. The absurdity of man's condition is closely related to the uncertain, irrational and incomprehensible aspects of life in the modern world. It is therefore insufficient to look at this world only from a scientific point of view. But it is also wrong to idolize absurdity as the only reality of man and his world. There are still other realities such as anger and fear.

7. The absurd, biting monologue, and realistic common actions as dramatic styles developed by Beckett, Osborne and Pinter respectively are suitable devices to support their outlooks on the modern world. These styles also enrich the English theatre.

8. Although the human condition is basically tragic to Beckett, Osborne and Pinter, they are still able to provoke laughter out of the comic dimension of man.

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