



**A STUDY OF THEATRE TECHNIQUES IN MODERN
DRAMA WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO
PIRANDELLO BRECHT AND ALBEE**

**ABSTRACT
OF THE
THESIS**

SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF

Doctor of Philosophy

**IN
ENGLISH**

SUBMITTED BY

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UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF

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Abstract

The topic of research “Analysis of the Dramatic Techniques in Modern Drama with particular reference to Brecht, Pirandello and Albee” elaborates the perspective from which the concerned playwrights are to be read and analyzed. These dramatists play an important role in changing the face of drama with its huge content and novel forms. The problem to be studied is respective theatre techniques which they employ to accommodate the burgeoning content of the post world war era.

The plays selected for analysis are: Bertolt Brecht’s *The Good Woman of Setzuan* and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*; Luigi Pirandello’s *The Six Characters in Search of an Author* and *Each in His Own Way*; and Edward Albee’s *The Zoo Story*.

This study is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter provides the overview of the experiments and developments in modern drama in general. The succeeding five chapters analyze the techniques in the selected plays of the three playwrights. ^{They} give detailed description of the techniques employed by the dramatists to justify their themes and the material they exploit. And the last chapter concludes the findings of the preceding chapters. Each work is read through almost cover to cover. Thus if it is technique only then this work does attempt to make a small contribution to its understanding and may lead to its further study.

The creation of pioneering writers have quite often influenced by personal experiences, autobiographical facts, and contemporary illusions that make their creative ventures substantial. The works of Brecht, Pirandello and Albee are not without topical references.

The twentieth century witnesses a major change. The paroxysm caused by the two world wars left an indelible mark on the world and dismantled the edifices of faith and reality. Diminishing the stability of western civilization it raised doubts about the adequacy of traditional literary modes to represent the harsh and bleak reality of post war period. The contemporary Avant-garde dramatists discerned the urgency to debunk old canons and experiment with new forms and content. The existing dramaturgy seemed insufficient to convey the growing perceptions of life's complexities. Major modern playwrights rejected outmoded formulae and endeavored with fresh constructions to portray multi-layered reality and heterogeneity of human personality. Brecht, Pirandello and Albee experimented with various forms and techniques and emerged with their own unique styles.

The Good Woman of Setzuan is considered to be a chefs-d'oeuvre in the literary canon of continental drama. The play comes into the category of Brecht's parable plays where he manifests his intensive desire to educate audience so that they gain a proper consciousness. On account of the dramatic form of his parable plays, Brecht not only adopts the parable that appears mainly in a narrative form, he also combines it with his Epic theatre technique, thus, creating a unique form of parable: the epic parable. The parable puts

forth several contemporary issues and problems. To cover the wide gamut of growing content ranging from the commercial society's 'modus operandi' to the conflict between good and evil, Brecht experimented with several styles and approaches.

The Caucasian Chalk Circle is an amusing ironic commentary on greed and corruption. Grusha, a kitchen maid at Governor's house, is a kind soul to whom everything terrible happens. On the other hand Governor's wife abandons her only child as she organizes her wardrobe for the flight to safety. After two years of uprisings when the things settle, Grand Duke is restored, Natella employs soldiers so-called 'ironshirts' to locate her son, who is the heir to her former husband's fortunes. Lastly 'Azdak's reign' as a judge and his ruling to give the custody of the child to Grusha instead of biological mother are the major incidents that constitute the play and become the embodiment of Brecht's collective creativity.

As for the innovations and experimentations in modern drama *Six Characters in Search of an Author* is one of the foremost endeavors of the century. It astounded the theatre practitioners with its complex technique and pitiful grim human tragedy. The two drama forms are put adjacent to each other. The new form interrupting the old and the old form started adopting the new. Thus the result is chaos throughout and it ends in confusion. A fusion of techniques such as Meta theatrical method, play within a play, the concept of split personality, and the use of mask and many more are witnessed. Brecht also made use of mask but was different from that of Pirandello's. Brecht

intended for concealment, to disguise Shen Te as Shui Ta while Pirandello designed mask to illustrate different facets of the same personality and to distinguish between the two sets of people on stage.

The Six Characters wear the mask of emotions in which the author has fixed them. The playwright introduces them as the Father, the Mother, the Step Daughter, the Son, the Young Boy and the Little Girl. They are literary characters created by an author who abandoned them to protect themselves. The desperate search of the 'visitor' for an author has led them to the stage. These vibrant creations of author's imagination insist on performing their drama, claiming to be the abandoned creatures of the author's fancy. In order to present their drama on stage the dramatist employed the technique of play within a play. Thus by juxtaposing the conventional realistic theatre with the unconventional impromptu experimentation of commedia dell'arte and teatro grottesco Pirandello skillfully exhibits his themes of appearance and reality, life and art, and the problems of artistic creation.

Each in his Own Way demonstrated parallel themes situations and innovative theatre techniques etched out in *Six Characters*. The play is an advancement, a progress of experimental stagecraft and thematic patterns first employed in the *Six Characters*. Thus the play is a 'comedy in progress' in which the playwright inverts the convention by bringing among the audience real people who recognized themselves in the actors on stage. It deals with the problem of presentation on stage by incorporating multiple nuances of dramaturgy including for the first time theatre spectators' responses, critiques

and appreciations as part of the total theatre experience. Pirandello breached the fourth wall convention and extended the theatre to the lobby. The play is in two acts and a non-existent third act, punctuated by two choral interludes added at the end of each act.

The Zoo Story, the debut play of Edward Albee, brought him worldwide recognition as a proponent of 'the Theatre of the Absurd'. The play attacked the treasured myth of his country and the playwright came to be considered as the *enfant terrible* of American theatre. A brilliantly drawn discourse between Jerry, the outcast, and Peter, the conformist was interrupted by its sensational ending. The bench was the most significant prop in the play, an arena for assertion. The brawl over the bench turned out to be lethal. It ended with Jerry impaling himself on a knife held by Peter, shuttering the self-reflecting world of this man. It is a one act play in which nothing happens except the exchange of dialogues until the violent ending. It is a drama of language which creates situations and provides momentum to the play. Jerry is a brilliantly drawn character who very efficiently enacted the human predicament. His desperation to connect with people to overcome the haunting loneliness is conveyed through verbal communication only. With minimum number of characters barely any props or stage settings, without action or drama in its accepted sense of the term, the entire contemporary state of modern drama are effectively portrayed on stage. Content and form were so completely merged that seemingly content became form and form content. This was the individuality of the Absurd technique of which *The Zoo Story* is an apparent manifestation.

Modern drama is a pastiche of techniques as is evident in the analysis of the plays by three prominent dramatists belonging to three different countries. Content and form are two important components of drama. The content or the subject matter as manifested in the study of the plays is more or less the same. It deals with man's sense of insufficiency and disillusionment, the constant war that wages inside the individual as well as the conflict between man and the environment or society. In all such situations it is the inner psyche of the individual that shows the impact. Hence the content was nearly the same and virtually all the dramatists worked on similar grounds. The difference therefore had to be in the manner in which this familiar subject was presented before the audience. Brecht used the medium of parable and applied epic theatre technique to present the startling content. Pirandello mingled the old and new forms of drama to an extent that apparently there was no difference between fiction and reality. He tried to bring the audience close to theatre experience thus bringing reality close to drama. And lastly, Albee wrote static drama. Similar content exploited by yet another method. With lesser action and movements, his was the drama of language. Language created situations provided momentum and drama was thus created.



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This is to certify that Ms. Asfia Khan has completed her thesis entitled *A Study of Theatre Techniques in Modern Drama with Particular Reference to Pirandello, Brecht and Albee* under my supervision. To the best of my knowledge this is her original work.

Kaniz Khawaja Ahmed

Dr. Kaniz Khawaja Ahmed
Supervisor

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Dedications

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Asfia khan

Introduction

The topic of research “Analysis of the Dramatic Techniques in Modern Drama with particular reference to Brecht, Pirandello and Albee” elaborates the perspective from which the concerned playwrights are to be read and analyzed. These dramatists play an important role in changing the face of drama with its huge content and novel forms. The problem to be studied is the respective theatre techniques which they employ to accommodate the existing extent of the post world war era. The facility of music cannot be available to the textual analysis therefore it is difficult to achieve the effect of total drama. Yet the text can yield the primary dramaturgic features, gives the desired effect and answers the basic questions.

The plays selected for analysis are: Bertolt Brecht’s *The Good Woman of Setzuan* and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*; Luigi Pirandello’s *The Six Characters in Search Of An Authors* and *Each in His Own Way*; and Edward Albee’s *The Zoo Story*.

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does attempt to make a small contribution to its understanding and may lead to its further study.

Drama is a form of composition designed for performance on stage where actors play the role of characters. They substitute on stage the spoken words from the script consisting of written dialogues. It is observed that drama emulates life yet, unlike other genres of literature, its mode is action and speech. Drama displays “something in the doing” and “something being done”. It is not simply the presentation of interesting characters (Macbeth and Lady Macbeth), or issues of moralizing and interesting ideas, it is a presentation of human beings engaged in action. Although a play usually tells a story, “the medium of drama” as Ezra Pound observed, “is not words, but persons moving about on a stage using words” (Barnet, et al 3).

‘Drama is the art of make-believe’, consists in acting out the events that are imagined happening or had happened, for the pleasure of the onlookers. The basic ingredients of drama are characters – presented by players; action – described by gestures and movements; thought – implied by dialogues and actions; spectacle – represented by scenery and costume; and finally audiences who respond to this complicated mixture (Lee 2).

Though aware that the drama on stage is make-belief, the viewers are involuntarily prompted into a belief of its reality. The dramatist does not address his audience directly but speaks through his characters. A conventional drama has plot, characters, dialogue and settings. This form is rectilinear and

stable- moving from right to left; from its inception through a chain of chronological successions. In the traditional mode forward movement organizes its sequence. Every important speech or action is like an arrow pointing to the next speech or action all merging into the sequential Aristotelian beginning-middle-end pattern. In a way we can say that a well-made play epitomizes romantic melodrama having a neatly devised plot, intrigue, contrivances, clichéd situations, sublimity in language and the improbable *deus ex machina* to terminate incredibly the dramatic in a happy ending. Esslin defines a well-made play thus:

A well-made play is expected to present characters that are well observed and convincingly motivated. A well-made play is expected to entertain by the ding-dong of witty and logically build-up dialogue/..a well-made play is expected to have a beginning, a middle and a neatly tied up ending (Esslin 7).

In handling of these fundamental features, it has to exercise great economy. All superfluous details are omitted. The dramatist works with a number of collaborators: the audience, the actors, the producer, the scene painter, dressmaker, musicians, the electricians and many others. Plays are meant to be seen and heard. But when play is read effort is made to experience it in the theatre of the mind.

Drama, generally, emerges out of a problem or a conflict. W. H. Auden noticed a dominant pattern:

Drama is based on the mistake.....All good drama has two movements first the making of the mistake then the discovery that it was a mistake.

In tragedy the theme is dark and serious; in comedy it is light and gay, promising a happy ending. The structure is same in both cases. A play requires exposition to explain the circumstances, a complication during which it progresses or grows more involved followed by a crises or climax where it takes the turn (accordingly, as the play could be comedy or tragedy); a denouement which unravels the complications; and a solution or catastrophe that decides the fate of its character. The five act Elizabethan drama, comprising a number of scenes, followed the Senecan tradition. In due course the five act poetic drama became obsolete and modern dramatist employed the three act strategy.

Shakespeare combined Realism with romanticism. A creative artist of excellence he did not aim at realistic portrayal of life and manners as actually lived by people. Like any professional dramatist he tempered, enlarged or reduced according to his creativity, imagination and concept. The language used was adapted to this end. Similarly Ben Jonson attempted a reflection of an image of contemporary times. Realism tended to fade with the conditions it represents, because of its validity to the contemporary times. Hence perspectives change from age to age. Different eras have several approaches to represent reality on stage.

Drama aims at creating an illusion of reality. Aristotle described dramatic illusion as an “imitation of an action”. However the action of most drama is not drawn from life’s actual experiences, but from a potential or imagined experience. Thus distinct ages make use of diverse theatrical and literary conventions. Dryden stated:

a play ought to be the just and lively image of human nature,
reproducing the passions and humors and the changes of fortunes
to which it is subject for the delight and instruction of mankind.

But in modern drama, the dramatic illusion of reality is enlarged to include not just the shape of human action, the events and characters but also the details of everyday life of common man. Therefore drama ranges far and wide and explores multiple realities, some of which seem close to everyday existence and others may look improbably removed from ordinary commonplace experiences.

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Chapter I

Techniques in Modern Drama

Modern drama has roots in the war torn sensibility of disillusioned, battered, and spiritually sterile humanity. The cataclysm consequent to the two major wars dismantled reliable edifices of religion, morality and family. The basic queries regarding existence and truth remained unanswered and the disenchanting individual rejected traditional moral absolutes. Modern drama offered expression to these realities of the post war period. However, the existing dramatic structures failed to furnish requisite form to the burgeoning content now available as subject. Contemporary avant garde dramatist discerned the urgency to debunk old canons and experiment with new forms, styles and contents. Major modern playwrights rejected outmoded formulae and endeavored with fresh constructions to portray multilayered reality and heterogeneity of human personality.

Forms and attitudes, techniques and styles in drama do not occur automatically. They are products of an accretion of resources contributed by playwrights of different ages. Modern drama is far removed from being a mere facsimile of the ancient Greek and Roman drama, or the stagecraft of middle ages and the renaissance, or other periods in the history of the theatre. Modern drama is an outgrowth of a number of significant upheavals and development. It represents an effort to make some sense out of the chaotic doctrines, and undeveloped ventures in a century notably unstable and distressingly confusing

in artistic as well as social aims. Therefore the story of the theatre is one of the rebellion and reaction, with new forms challenging the old, and the old forms in turn providing the basis for the new. To adapt the concept of art historian, E.H. Cropper, "drama originates in our reaction to the world, not in the world itself" (Styan ix).

Around the globe there were reactions in stage production and concepts or ideas in theatre. The leaders in these efforts – romanticists like Victor Hugo realists like Henrik Ibsen, and naturalists like Emile Zola- have created theatrical history with strongly urged ideals and truculent formulations.

Modern drama has its genesis in the closing decade of nineteenth century, a period characterized by discontent, restless criticism and an intense probing into disturbances and cleavages in the modern world. The pioneers of the modern theatre, Ibsen, Hauptman and Gorki, Chekhov and Shaw, were preoccupied with the ideological and social turmoil of their day. The heritage of an era of protest and revolt is the hallmark of contemporary drama. In the words of Allardyce Nicolle:

the conception of drama, expressing the theories and attitudes of the playwrights in opposition to those of the great majority of men of his time, marks the early modern dramatist as an embattled revolutionary, seeking to change men's minds and hearts as well as their institutions and laws.

The modern theatre, therefore, seems an enterprise strongly marked by variety, eclecticism and a *mélange* of genres. Realism and Naturalism, Symbolism and Poetic drama, Expressionism and Existentialism, and many other styles are found juxtaposed in modern theatre. The threads of many different styles are interwoven within a single play. In practice it is difficult to find a play of pure Realism, or naked Symbolism. Ibsen is a realist and a symbolist, Strindberg embraces both Naturalism and Expressionism, O'Neill's works fluctuates from Realism and Expressionism to the use of masks in his later plays. Tennessee Williams employs several techniques including Brecht's alienation effect, in writing symbolist drama Pirandello becomes the progenitor of the Absurd, Weiss arranges Artaudian cruelty within Brechtian Epic frame and so on. Attempts to blend disparate techniques and forms have become more common than efforts to achieve formal or stylistic purity. Thus

The enlargement of the subject, the freedom of form, the radical shift of paradigm and the interplay of representational have culminated in a blending and reconciliation of dramatic techniques (Ahmed 30).

And all these major modern playwrights have boldly experimented with the traditional forms;

neither the doctrinaire, nor completely attached to a single absolute style of playwriting, they have frequently sought to

enlarge as well as to explore the boundaries of their art (Block and Shedd 3).

Behind these modifications of the new drama resided the thought of Friedrich, Hebbel, Nietzsche, Darwin and Marx: “beneath the surface of action, dialogue, characterization, beneath the crust of “style”, lay intellectual and visionary conviction.” Gassner observed that in the early nineteenth century theatre liberated itself from conventionality only to accept or accommodate a new form of bondage in submitting to the ultra-realistic requirements of verisimilitude and illusionism. Stage production consisting of acting, music, dance, scenic design, stage lighting, costume design and architecture along with the audience and actors present in the theatre come together in varying combinations in dramatic modernism. The rise of modern drama can be equated to the advent of realistic drama and stage production under the leadership of Ibsen, Zola, Shaw, Antoine, and Stanislavsky. The appearance of realistic technique and style is the first phase of modernism in drama. It consists of a succession as well as interweaving of strands that may be called Ibsenism, Wagnerism, Realism and Symbolism, objective Naturalism and subjective anti Naturalism (subjective anti-Naturalism is evident in Expressionism and objective anti-Naturalism in Epic theatre as formulated by Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht)

Gassner believes the first ruling principle of modern theatre was the idea of freedom. The idea was associated with the revolt against neoclassicist who believed that there are rules to which theatre should adhere to. The

importance of decorum, the idea that tragedy deals with the fate of princes and nobles, and the primacy of unities of time, place and action, were banished from the theatre. It was Victor Hugo's diktat of complete emancipation of form, subject and style, in the dramatization of reality which marks a watershed in the history of theatre. His romantic play *Hernani* manifests the end of domination of the theatre by arbitrary rules, including the absolute separation of comedy and tragedy. He opened the floodgates to every kind of tabooed material, even the most sordid, and advocated the employment of any form and style. It was this freedom that sparked the Naturalism of Zola, the critical Realism of Ibsen and Expressionism of Strindberg.

Zola sought to put the clinical method of experimental biology to all life. According to him the work of art is a demonstration of a problem. Out of his parallelism between art and science there came a significant expansion of the subject matter of literature and the outgrowth of styles and techniques transmuting both fiction and drama. Zola's objectives were shared by the reformers of theatre in Germany. Duke George II of Saxe-Meiningen gave a new shape to German stage with a stress on scenic design including setting and costume. The walls of the closed room conveyed the illusion of reality and the authenticity of stage properties strengthen the air of truthfulness. Thus, the idea of stage as an environment rather than just a platform of acting affected fundamental changes in dramatic art. Stage setting now becomes essential to the meaning of the play.

The direct influence of Zola's Naturalism was evident in the *Theatre libre* of Andre Antoine, which adhered to the drama of horrific and astonishing effects. Even the plays of Strindberg and Hauptmann establish that Naturalism transcends the limits of documentary Realism and could embrace symbolic and psychological techniques as well. What Antoine did in Paris, Otto Brahm did in Berlin and J.T. Grein in London. The same pioneering spirit activated Stanislavsky in founding Moscow Art Theatre with the motto:

we protested against the old manner of acting , against theatricalism, false pathos, declamation, artificiality in acting, bad stages and decor conventions , the emphasis on new productions that spoiled the ensemble work, the whole system of presentation' and the insignificant repertoires of the time .

Chekhov made further developments on these precepts of Stanislavsky.

In the twentieth century the psychological studies became fused with Realism and Naturalism. Ibsen and Strindberg are important anticipations of this propensity. The later playwrights have combined psychological Realism with the anatomy of the motives and values of the whole society. This tendency is apparent particularly in modern American drama, and can be explicitly seen in Eugene O'Neill. The playwrights such as Ibsen and Strindberg, Chekhov and Shaw, Gorki and O'Casey, Miller, just to name a few transcend the dogmas of arbitrary rules and theories to create a drama of imaginative power and deep human significance.

England was not unaffected by the departures and variations in drama and dramaturgy during the two world wars. The efforts were dimmed during the hostilities of the two wars but immediately after the armistice they started again with fresh zeal. This was a period of exaltation when subjects and things never discussed before were being fervidly delineated. The ideas of Gordon Craig, the technical brilliance of Appia, movements such as Impressionism and Expressionism carrying a sense of social purpose; and claims that the stage should explore and experiment with fresh forms and ideologies, led to an incredible extension of the horizons of theatre. Consequently very rich and effective series of plays began to be written in the realistic mode which is reflected in the works of James Birdie, J. B. Priestly, T. S. Eliot, Christopher Frye, Noel Coward, and G. B. Shaw.

At the turn of the century when Realism and Naturalism revitalized the theatre all through the continent, other different approaches to drama were also in vogue. Symbolism, in which drama is evocative and suggestive, brought to the stage rhythmic and introspective language of poetry. The embellishments of the stage were reduced to a few draperies or a curtain of blue gauze, to imply the vague and remote. Detheatricalisation together with the concern on language was the centre of dramatic expression. In order to show the soul of the drama and to sustain and enhance the emotions, Adolph Appia, Gordon Craig, and Meyerhold, and the other scene designers brought about the complex union of the art which Wagner had visualized by drawing upon the flexible properties of light and color. The symbolist theatre gave a new

emphasis to the creation of new atmosphere and mood in modern drama. It shaped the plays of Hauptmann, Strindberg, Claudel Garcia Lorca, Ghelderode and many other dramatists. Both Lorca's surrealist fantasies and Ghelderode's grotesque farce depend on symbolist evocations as does the repetition and pauses of the "static drama" of Samuel Beckett. Pirandello revitalized the art of elaborate pretence and make-believe. His successors animated, by the playful exuberance of Dadaism and Surrealism, reinvented elasticity in the dramatic form. Cocteau, Giraudoux, Wilder, Brecht- to name but a few repudiated the fourth-wall convention of the realistic tradition. Drama remained no more a copy of real life, theatre is something more than common reality, and demanded that the plays be performed in such a way that the audience does not forget for a single moment that they are watching a play.

All these experimental techniques led to the advent of Expressionism. Following this technique the playwrights probe into the mind of the character, reveal the dynamics of inner man, through the representation of hallucinations and other modes of subjective experience. In his 'dream plays', Strindberg virtually creates a new dramatic dimension. The depiction of external reality coupled with the illogical and frenzied behavior of the hidden self-results in the theatre of weird angularity and distortion. Fragmented episodes took over the linear narrative. The heroism of the single character give way to multiple and depersonalized abstractions. With the use of epigrammatic and ironic language the dialogues become nervous and explosive, resulting in piercing soliloquies and bizarre pantomime.

The anarchy and the catastrophe of the two world wars give rise to a distrust of readymade ideologies, and high sounding phrases in the theatre. Modern drama shows the revival of grotesque indicating the dissolution of moral and spiritual absolutes of our times. Weird fantasies and horrific nightmares far removed from reality. These call to vary question the existence of any norms. Wedekind and Pirandello had discovered that the grotesque can mould the experiences that are inaccessible to the light of common day. Viewed in the perspective of contemporary history, the grotesque has a rational of its own Surrealism and Existentialism leads to the Theatre of the Absurd.

The expression 'Theatre of the Absurd' is devised and given by a Hungarian born author and critic Martin Esslin to the plays of numerous writers, written in the 1950s and 1960s. The term is derived from an essay 'The Myth of Sisyphus' by a French philosopher Albert Camus who defined existence as meaningless and absurd and one that end in "casual slaughter"(The Absurd). The plays written in this theatre form by Beckett, Adamov, Pinter, Albee, Genet, Ionesco and others share similar view that man lives in a universe which is empty of reason and logic. It is a purposeless existence in which he remains bewildered disturbed and obscurely threatened. An English lexicon describes the Theatre of the Absurd:

A form of drama that emphasizes the absurdity of human existence by employing disjointed repetitions, and meaningless dialogues, purposeless and confusing situations, and plots that lack realistic or logical development.(American Heritage).

Webster's Dictionary explicates the technique as:

A theatre in which naturalistic conventions of plot and characterization are ignored or distorted in order to convey the irrationality of existence and isolation of humanity.

The situations that compel to relinquish reason have brought the Theatre of the Absurd to the fore. The essential idea is the metaphysical anguish of the times. The sense of futility and emptiness was reflected in an era where the mechanical nature of human beings leads them to question the purpose of their living, where time was synonymous with a destructive force. Man feels isolated in a world which is devoid of reason and logic. The Absurd theatre is a strategy to come to terms with that universe. Jean Paul Sartre observes, "we are nothing and in action become conscious of that original nothingness".

The tradition of the absurd is rooted in the avantgarde experiments in art and literature in 1920s. It is also an outcome of the shocking experiences of the revulsion of the Second World War, which manifests the devaluing of morals, loss of religious faith, disregard for the conventions and insignificance of human life. It can also be perceived as an effort to restore the significance of myths and traditions to the contemporary age by making man conscious of his true condition in this alienated world. The Absurd theatre achieves this by startling human beings out of their mechanical and complacent reality. In a post world war world which lacks religious faith, the authors of the Absurd plays

debunked the old forms and standards that cease to be conclusive and lost their validity.

The Absurd Theatre is thus an anti-theatre which rises against the conventional theatre. It is surreal, illogical and without plot or necessary conflict. The dialogues seem unrelated and nonsensical and defy comprehension. The devaluation of language is the most striking feature of the technique of Absurd. Language is shown as an inadequate instrument of communication and is reduced to meaningless exchanges. Since the dramatists do not aim at solving mysteries of human condition, but to present them within the dramatic structure, they adopt 'silence' as an effective technique to present life as they perceive it. The unsaid meaning is delivered through ellipses, gaps, and half-finished sentences and leaves the motives of the characters concealed or partially revealed. Hence, disrupting logic and breaking language to fragments, Absurd drama creates a form which expresses content. Esslin expounds:

The Theatre of the Absurd strives to express its sense of the senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought. While Sartre and Camus express the new content in the old convention, the Theatre of the Absurd goes a step further in trying to achieve a unity between its basic assumptions and the form in which these are expressed (Esslin 24)

Thus, theatre of the Absurd has influenced the modern drama with liberation of form, fractured language and shattered reason. Even violence is no longer a part of contemporary stage only; it has become a familiar portion of everyday history which resulted in the advent of Antonin Artaud's 'theatre of cruelty' which relies on gestures, images and perceptions.

During all these alterations, transformations, expansions, revivals and reformation of forms to accommodate the increasing content, language has undergone a sea-change. Theatre language in modern drama incorporates verbal communications, pauses, silences, punctuation marks, irrational and sometimes prolonged sounds (Oooo..., Grrrrr), jargons, private symbols, tropes and metaphors. Incomplete monosyllabic, fragmented sentences to convey that reality itself is broken, distorted likewise; startling language with the element of surprise, repetitions, stichomythia indicate lack of communication. Either the sentences are too short and cryptic or too long apparently meaningless, leading nowhere but actually logical.

With this glimpse in the techniques of modern drama round the globe, this thesis proposes to analyze the respective dramaturgies of Albee, Brecht and Pirandello along with the detailed analysis of their selected plays.

Edward Albee (1928) attacked the very foundation of American optimism and was acknowledged as a playwright of the Absurd stream. The influence of the Absurd theatre was discernible in all forms of art and literature throughout the continent. As remarked earlier, the tradition of the Absurd

originated from a feeling of deep disillusionment. Post-war disorientation and discontentment led to the growth of absurdist elements in America as well. Unlike France, Germany and Britain America did not see the corresponding loss of purpose and meaning in life. This frustration and disillusionment came very late on the American scene. After experimenting in the realistic mode, Albee produced a play that takes the form and content of the absurdist and translates it into a 'genuine American idiom' (Esslin 23). The language used is a combination of clichés, characteristically American; excessive use of punctuation marks, prolonged apparently meaningless sounds (Graaaa!), and many other modern tricks are employed by the playwright to make his intention more precise. Also the use of language of Absurdist plays is evident in Albee: pun, nonsequiturs, nonsense pattern, jokes or incoherent babbles that seemed unrelated to the stage action. The characters are like subhuman types who seemed to live outside law and society. For all this he was indebted to Beckett and Ionesco, the pioneering dramatists of the theatre of the Absurd. Like the other absurdist, in Albee too one finds the deliberate creation of the atmosphere of threat and menace. The body of his work is replete with uneasiness disorder, senselessness or meaninglessness in existence. Sometimes he appears to go out of his way to tell the audience that they are witnessing a play not life. But later in his career Albee deviated from the Absurd stream and could be seen as a dramatist of the American life or as a satirist. "One finds caricature, which is to say, one finds such qualities as a delight in exaggeration

and in improbability” (742), as observed by the critics S.Barnett, M.Berman, W.Burto and K.Draya.

Luigi Pirandello (1867-1935), an Italian playwright belongs to the peer group of continental dramatists such as Ibsen, Hugo, Jarry, Artaud, Gorky, and Hauptmann. They initiated, gave direction and transformed the theatre with their respective innovative styles and techniques. Pirandello did not adhere to any one exclusive theatre technique; his works incorporate Verism, Naturalism and Futurism. He was associated with an Italian theatre through the teatro del grottesco, the theatre that adopts the ancient native Italian tradition of *Commedia dell'arte* and provided him with all necessary components for his experimental strategies.

Raymond Williams in his book, ‘Drama from Ibsen to Elliot’ points out the puppet nature of the characters in Pirandello’s dramatic art (as Pulcinella and Arlocchino of the *Commedia dell'arte*).

It provides him with a means of manipulation which is essential to the realization of fantasies. It involves a dependence on certain highly skilled methods of acting, including the capacity for improvisation which was a central method of *Commedia dell'arte* (189).

The conflict between life and mask, broken personalities and disjuncted psyches become the hallmark of the plays of Pirandello. He was dissatisfied with the conventional theatricality because he felt that life which is constantly

changing is distorted and killed when presented on the stage. He believed that human motives cannot be reduced to simple formula; therefore, he denied the validity of all drama or wants it to be as fragmentary as life itself. His proficient dramatic technique, Block and Shedd observe, comprises of his command over art of compression, dexterity in the portrayal of characters and sudden climax, and the fractured language enhances his art. Preoccupations with illusion and reality, instinctiveness and love of artifice coalesce in his plays to produce the effect of improvisation. The employment of unconventional theatre techniques sustains the readers' interest as deliberate obscurity compels them to stay, notice and think (Ahmed 14). Block and Shedd comments upon his art of dramatization in these words:

To speak of Pirandello as a writer of intellectual drama, of problem plays or of plays of ideas is to emphasize only one aspect of his art, for in Pirandello's best work the plane of ideas cannot be separated from the vividness and immediacy of his dramatic representation (508).

His powerful artistry along with his concepts and attitudes kept his work alive and transformed it into drama.

Bertolt Brecht (1896-1956) appeared on the scene with an entirely new dramaturgic concept, alienating empathy from the stage, destroying the fourth-wall convention to demonstrate his ideologies. He disregards emotional identification and purgation on the ground that a play should perturb viewers,

prompt their critical faculties, unnerve and jolt them out of complacency. He argues in his article 'On the Experimental Theatre' that the function of the conventional theatre was morally and intellectually degrading because "the more the public was emotionally affected, the less capable it was of learning".

The hypotheses of the 'Epic Theatre' is to arouse the spectator from his narcotic slumber, destroy the "habitual way of looking at a thing", hinder the identification between the stage and the audience and still unite them in mutual enjoyment (Tarannum 104). Brecht has been a frequent opponent of Naturalistic theatre and believed that the theatre should give up its attempt at portrayal of truth on stage. What Brecht recommended is a kind of distancing; a certain degree of separate existence from what was happening on the stage so that the spectators would be able to enter into an unusual dramatic experience and would be able to grasp things rather than be mastered by them. This is attained by what Brecht called 'verfremdungseffekt', which is the foundation of Epic theater. The reaction of the audience forms the crux of the alienation technique. The theatre maneuver also introduces an element of aloofness, starts a method of revival of the banal mundane things which appeared strange and evoked a sense of wonder and curiosity among the spectators. The well-knitted episodic structure of his plays led the spectators to see, ponder and criticize. The complete effect is achieved by the juxtaposition of contrasting episodes. Placards are used to display the theme on curtains. Music, songs interludes are some other alienating devices employed by Brecht. He also made use of gestures and recommended the study of Chinese theatre because he believed in

their mastery over the treatment of gestures. What Brecht demanded is an active participation of the audience rather than an “illusion of sitting in front of a key-hole”.

The ‘modern dramatic techniques’ are thus the playwright’s ways, methods and devices to achieve their desired ends. Baker quotes Sir Arthur Pinero to explain innovative methods and their representation on stage:

The art-the great and fascinating and most difficult art-of the modern dramatist is nothing else than to achieve that compression of life which the stage undoubtedly demands, without falsification (15).

Steiner opined that probably no other literary form has been so burdened with the conflicts of objectives and meaning. Modern drama effectively combines Realism and Naturalism, Symbolism and Expressionism, Surrealism and Existentialism to ably express and depict a sensibility torn apart by disillusionment and disintegration. The accomplishments of the masters of modern drama are unforgettable not simply for the innovative techniques they employ, but for the quality of perception that transforms their art into an unprecedented vital and rich expression.

The portion of the material followed in the next five chapters seeks to assess the inventions and discoveries and changes and developments brought about in modern dramaturgy by the three dramatists in their selected works.

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Chapter II

Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*: A Pastiche of the Old and New Technique in Drama

In contemporary dramatic criticism Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936) is “...suffering fashionable rejection without ever having had-outside Italy-widespread fashionable acceptance” (Bentley vii). Despite Pirandello's reputation as a prominent dramatist, there have been relatively very few studies and translations in English of his large oeuvre of essays, novels, poems, and dramas. Despite the omission the Nobel Prize winner is one of the greatest writers in the history of Italian literature.

Pirandello's plays are widely appraised both by the public as well as critics and continue to be staged in a large number of countries in varied languages. Such universal recognition is remarkable for a playwright. Thomas Bishop termed his works as “difficult” (Bishop xvii) and observes that wide acclamation is rare for such an abstruse dramatist. To substantiate his observation he continues that the content of Pirandellian theatre is intellect oriented. The themes of reality and illusion, the mutability and multiplicity of human personality, the conflict between life and art and the essential conundrum of producing a work of art persist in his plays. Pirandello dexterously blended the artifice of the theatre with the reality of life. His plays brought singular ideas into the realm of modern drama.

The drama of ideas which foregrounded a detailed description of contemporary life and culture of people from all echelons of life and society no longer appealed to the Italian public. The experience of war had already familiarized them with the thrill of the 'Grotesques' and its multiple auguries. The infuriated futurist became incensed opponents and completely condemned the past. Pirandello was the most serious of them and he categorically disapproved the conventional norms of old sentimental theatre. His plays with grotesquely comic tone sounded the knell of old drama. Speaking in high admiration, Starkie says that with his peculiar philosophical way of looking at life he is placed apart and calls him a "giant amidst these Lilliputians" (9). Thus 'teatro grotesque' was a reaction against the old sentimental drama that had ruled the stage over the years. The concept of the Grotesque theatre together with the futuristic philosophies had spread throughout the theatrical world through Pirandello's literalism and one can witness in every country the death of bourgeois well made plays together with the inception of a new critical idiom which is the manifestation of modern theatre mentality. The drama brought to Europe by Pirandello is cerebral and intellectuality is its hallmark.

The "Encyclopedia Britannica", defines the well-made play as a drama adhering to certain strict technical principles that dominated the stage in Europe and the United States for most of the nineteenth century. The technical formulas called for a very complicated and highly artificial plot based on a secret known to audience but withheld from certain characters, a climactic scene in which all the difficulties are solved, and a happy incul-de-sac. Hermon

Ould defined “a well-made play” as, “the play which conforms to certain reasonable, well tied rules and does not seek to break away from accepted practice.”(Ould42). A likely believable dramatic situation is indispensable to such plays. No amount of inventiveness can save a play if it is implausible as the audience fails to believe in a situation which is innately impossible or absurd. Under such conditions it became imperative to have a script, proper stage settings, actors, producers and lights. A series of events in a logical connectivity were scrutinized before being produced before the audience. Non-realistic dialogues with lofty expressions and elevated language became an essential prerequisite to the well-made play.

A glimpse into the tormented life of Pirandello reveals severe financial crises coupled with the mental breakdown of his wife. Nevertheless, the adversities of private life did not hinder him. Before attaining recognition as a famous playwright, he wrote a large number of successful novels and short stories. Expertise in the art of sharp compression, adept characterization and abrupt climax form a part of his later dramatic technique.

The vicissitudes of his life had a direct impact on his art. It is hard to separate Pirandello the artist from Pirandello the man. They are so closely homogenized that a scrutiny of his art necessitates an intimate understanding of the playwright. He began his literary career as a poet progressing to short stories and novels and finally reaching fruition in theatre where one can witness his genius as an artist.

After the detachment and objectivity of Realism and Naturalism in the earlier stages of his career, Pirandello turned his attention to serious treatment of humour and grotesque. To him the tragic sense combines with the comic to produce the essence of humor. He felt that if a humorist laughs; there is a semblance of grief in his laughter. Demolishing the dividing line between laughter and grief the dramatist based his writings on these psychological dimensions in the human psyche. Starkie maintains that “the true protagonist of the Pirandellian theatre is King thought” (32). He quoted Pirandello from an address at Barcelona in 1934 where explaining the theatre strategy adopted by him the playwright observes:

People say that my drama is obscure and they call it cerebral drama. The new drama possesses a distinct character from the old: whereas the latter had as its basis passion, the former is the expression of the intellect. One of the novelties that I have given to modern drama consists in converting the intellect into passion. The public formerly were carried away only by plays of passion, whereas now they rush to see intellectual works (Starkie 33).

With his brilliance, intellect and powerful imagination he transformed (his characters) them into the stillness of his art. And for the manifestation of his philosophy, he revived the old tradition of *commedia dell'arte* which originated in Italy in 1550. It was characterized by the use of stock characters.

A kind of improvised stage show *commedia dell'arte* was basically an actor's drama. The author provides for the 'scenari', an outline framework, for the actors who with their skills and proficiency, replenish the act with stock phrases and stock actions. The reaction of the audience is also made part of the dramatic structure. To entertain the audience the authors of the scenari constructed weird plots and ensnared them to an extent that resolving seemed virtually impossible. But to audience's surprise, the end unravels the truth. Pirandello operated on the mechanism of *commedia dell'arte* but the plays moved a stage further. Hence, in Pirandello's plays the actors are of prime importance.

Pirandello has always been preoccupied with the problem of personality. He illustrated that there are as many logics and reasons as there are individuals. The individuals appear to him in double, triple, in multiple forms because there is no fixed personality. The readers locate the most dramatic portrayal of the delusion of personality in *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. The guilty father says:

For the drama lies all in this – in the conscience that I have, that each one of us has. We believe this conscience to be a single thing, but it is many-sided. There is one for this person, and another for that. Diverse consciences. So we have this illusion of being one person for all, of having a personality that is unique in all our acts. But it isn't true. We perceive this when tragically perhaps, in something we do, we are as it were, suspended,

caught up in the air on a kind of hook. Then we perceive that all of us was not in that act, and that it would be an atrocious injustice to judge us by that action alone, as if all our existence were summed up in that one deed (16).

The theme of relativity of truth is developed out of contrast between reality and illusion which is the operating unit of Pirandello's technique. This contrast between illusion and reality juxtaposing two forms of drama and two sets of people is a manifestation of the technique. Characters frozen in single emotion assert their reality over the actors' reality which is subject to change. Just as a person's nature is in a state of continuous flux, so is the actors' reality. The self, changes with time, develops, imbibes new experiences, sometimes retreats to contemplate on old one, but never remains stable. Thus art is more real than life because it is not subject to changes that constitute life. It is fixed and therefore immortal. For instance the playwright explicates in the *Preface*, the tragic encounter at Madame Pace's between the Father and the Step-daughter:

If the father and the daughter began their scene over one hundred thousand times in succession, always, at the appointed moment, at the instant when the life of the work of art must be expressed with that cry, it would always be heard, unaltered and alterable in its form, not as a mechanical repetition, as a return determined by external necessities, but, on the contrary, alive every time and as new, suddenly born thus forever! embalmed alive in its incorruptible form... All that lives by the fact of living, has a

form, and for that very reason it must die – except the work of art which lives forever in so far as it is form.

The flux and movement of life is trapped into moments, transformed into drama and are presented on stage. As it was difficult to present the ever changing reality through realistic drama therefore he chose adlib which can accommodate truth and multiple personality of individual.

Six Characters in Search of an Author Pirandello's best known endeavor at dramaturgy astounded theatre practitioners with its singular technique, complex and cerebral quality and pitiful grim human tragedy. The playwright provides the crux of the play in the '*Preface*'

The delusion of mutual understanding... is the passion and torment... of each one of them.

The play opens with a rehearsal of one of Pirandello's own drama titled *Mixing it up*. A disgruntled troupe of actors is trying to rehearse for the aforementioned play. The setting is a theatre where the actors, producer, prompter, light man have assembled to practice their parts. Suddenly the rehearsal is interrupted, with the arrival of six people on the stage. They call themselves '*characters*' and claim to carry a drama within themselves. An enigmatic aura surrounds them and intensifies the confusion. Pirandello introduces the six characters as the Father, the Mother, the Stepdaughter, the Son, the Young Boy, and the Little Girl. They are literary characters created by an author who left them to protect themselves. And their desperate search for

an author led them to the theatre. They insist that they be allowed to perform their drama, claiming to be a creation of the author's fancy who created, abandoned and condemned them to incompleteness. They were searching for an author who would complete them, and demand to relive the act in which they were frozen. The drama that begins is 'a play within a play' wherein the dexterity of the playwright exhibits his themes of appearance and reality, life and art, and the problems of artistic creation, with a dramaturgic exercise of juxtaposing the conventional realistic theatre with the unconventional impromptu experimentation of the *commedia dell'arte* and *teatro grottesco*. The characters carry an innate vivacity. It becomes obvious from the very beginning that an actor created illusion is being engineered through a well written script and traditional props. In contrast to this deliberate effort a presentation of theatrical inversion without the customary anchors is taking place right in front of the audience. On the surface it involves no support to sustain the dramaturgic contents. "The playwright thus categorically demolishes the myth of theatre but refrains from allowing a replacement by another fabrication" (Ahmed 56).

'Play within a play' or 'in-set play' as it is termed now, is a device wherein some of on stage *dramatis personae* adopt the role of actors and present the play to the rest of the crew who become the audience. Kenneth Pickering observes that:

"It is now seen as an aspect of meta-theatre: theatre that concerns itself with the nature of theatre, and it is interesting to explore just

how frequently the theatre has both examined and celebrated its own nature in various ways” (40).

The earliest known examples of play within a play are found in *Kyd's Spanish Tragedy* (1589) followed by *Shakespeare's A Midsummer Nights Dream* (1595). The technique may be derived from the metaphor of the world as a stage. The concept displays the impediments that are encountered while producing a play. ‘The real audience is watching an on-stage audience watch the same play that they are watching’ (Pickering 42). The playwright endeavors to make the audience observe and analyze its own role.

Heightened reality is achieved when the audience watches actors in the process of creating a play: this double theatricality draws attention to the meta-theatrical nature of the activity and investigates the states in which it is no longer possible to discern life from art. When we see a play within a play it is as if we were putting the concept of theatre itself under microscope (Pickering 42).

The play is a demonstration of the mechanical nature of the well-made play, its artificiality and moral flaccidity placed adjacent to the drama of improvisation. The adlib of unrealized characters is the vital part of the play. Creations of imagination they exemplify values and feelings akin to human aspirations and apprehensions and conflicts. In Pirandello’s opinion, had they been given a life

on stage they would be more real than life itself. The preface explicates the process of the birth of characters from the playwright's imagination:

This little maidservant of mind, Fantasy, several years ago, had the bad inspiration or ill-omened caprice to bring a family into my house. I wouldn't know where she fished them up or how, but, according to her, I could find in them the subject for a magnificent novel.

Ultimately through that entire process they had become 'alive' to the level that they are tangible, so alive that they are given a form by the playwright in a short story, novel or a play. But they were left unfinished. Though they had not yet met definite artistic form, still they carry a drama within themselves, a drama that makes them dramatic characters:

... every creature of fantasy and art, in order to exist, must have his drama, that is a drama in which he may be a character and for which he is a character. This drama is the character's *raison d'être*, his vital function necessary for his existence (Preface).

Their drama bears a resemblance to late nineteenth century romantic play, in plot as well as in spirit.

As Pirandello describes them, the Father is a fifty year old man with a pale high forehead, thinning reddish hair and sharp clear eyes. He is the central figure in the family's eventual tragedy as well as conflict of characters with actors. The Mother seems to be worried and terrified, overcome by her burden

of shame and humiliation. Dressed like a widow with her eyes constantly downcast, she is completely passive. Pirandello calls her “nature”. The Stepdaughter is eighteen years old, arrogant and aggressive. She is beautiful and she knows it and makes her opinions known. The Son is twenty two, and his contempt towards the family is made clear throughout the play. The Young Boy is fourteen years old but appears to have the same mental level as the Little Girl. Not much is known about them and they speak silent.

The story of these vibrant figments of playwright’s imagination emerges spasmodically from the outbursts of the Father and the Stepdaughter and occasionally the Mother and the Son. The Father who married this poor simple woman soon begins to realize that he can no longer communicate with her. Having already sent his son to the country, he slowly detaches himself from the family. The father makes a grand gesture of sending the Mother with the Secretary. One of the reasons was the Mother’s unspoken shared bond of understanding with the secretary. But he continues to show interest in the extended family. On discovering about the family and stepdaughter’s school he gradually starts satisfying himself by offering gifts. This increasing nearness frightens the Mother and they move to another city.

With the unfortunate death of the Secretary the family is forced to return to the native city. Faced with severe economic crisis the Mother finds job as a seamstress at Madame Pace’s outwardly respectable retail shop for designer garments. The shop is a brothel where the Stepdaughter is forced into prostitution to ensure the family’s survival. The climax of the characters’

catastrophe lies in the encounter of the Father with the Stepdaughter. The Father as a client to the Stepdaughter is interrupted in the act by the Mother who saves them from shame. After the discovery, the Father takes them home. The grown up Son is indifferent to the Mother and he condemns the two children as illegitimate treating the Father with constraint and reservation. The intensity of the Mother's pain is felt by her two small children who clutch her hands tightly. The little girl drowns and the young boy shoots himself, but the predicament of others remains unresolved.

Their anguished story unfolds sporadically through the three acts. The reluctant producer finally agrees to let the characters live their roles on stage and later the actors assume the part of six characters on the stage. But the attempt is a non-success as the actors merely feign as characters whereas the characters had actually lived their life in the roles. The reality of the latter is but masquerade of the former. Hence the drama of the six characters first done by characters themselves through impromptu is again performed through another inversion in which the characters become the audience and the actors play the drama with a difference. For them the script has been written and the stage has been prepared.

The drama began in chaos and concludes in chaos. The Boy's suicide is baffling and only the Father knows his reality— the point at which he is frozen by the author.

SOME ACTORS. He's dead! dead!

OTHER ACTORS. No, no, it's only make believe, it's only pretence!

THE FATHER. (*with a terrible cry*). Pretence? Reality, sir, reality!

THE MANAGER. Pretence? Reality? (52)

Reviewed from the point of view of dramaturgy, a deliberate conflict is introduced in the genre. Each member of the alienated family is an isolated individual operating within their self-contained domain. These distinct perimeters encroach or overlay the common areas of related human activity and give rise to an encounter which is a basic functional unit of any drama form. A clash between the actors of the organized rehearsal of a well-made play and the six characters who represent the unrehearsed drama is deliberately staged at the very outset. The play also encompasses numerous dramaturgically maneuvered altercations among the six characters and the actors. This inherent discordance is manifested in the layers of illusion and reality which are constantly contending to eliminate the counterpoint. The hostile clashes between characters and actors, on the one hand and among the improvisers themselves on the other hand enables the playwright to employ inversion as theatre technique and place art against life, illusion as opposed to reality, rationality in contrast to irrationality and cold logic against frenzied outbursts. These conflicts foreground the different forms of drama moving simultaneously.

The play opens when the curtain goes up and the spectators find the stage in a state of disorder. The rehearsals of Pirandello's play *Mixing It Up* is in progress. This seems to be purposeful and symbolic because the dramatist 'mixed' the two modes of theatre in the play. The actors were rehearsing the play which was fashioned as old bourgeois well-made play. It gets interrupted by the characters whose drama is of improvisation. The subtitle implies growth and development as actors and characters are involved in an unresolved venture and thus 'comedy is in the making'. The playwright reverses the traditional model of assigned roles based on written script, prompter's book, props, lights, sets, furniture, action, exits, entrances and actors who synchronize to accomplish the perfect illusion of reality. The appearance of the Six Characters discontinues the realistic drama of the original actors.

The stage is arranged with the essential prerequisites of realistic conventional drama. The opening dialogue between the manager and leading actor communicate the significance of the script and the author.

LEADING MAN (*to manager*). Excuse me, but must I absolutely wear a cook's cap?

THE MANAGER (*annoyed*). I imagine so. It says so there anyway (*pointing to the "book"*)

Moreover, the producer and his team supposedly accustomed to performing conventional sentimental, romantic plays of the turn-of-the-century bourgeois



theatre fail to comprehend the avantgarde “Pirandellian Theatre”. The manager complains:

THE MANAGER (*jumping up in a rage*). Ridiculous? Ridiculous? Is it my fault if France won't send us any more good comedies, and we are reduced to putting on Pirandello's works, where nobody understands anything, and where the author plays the fool with us all? (*The actors grin. The Manager goes to the Leading Man and shouts*) Yes sir, you put on the cook's cap and beat eggs. Do you suppose that with all this egg-beating business you are on an ordinary stage? Get that out of your head. You represent the shell of the eggs you are beating! (*Laughter and comments among the actors.*) Silence! And listen to my explanation, please! (*To Leading Man*) “The empty form of reason without the fullness of instinct, which is blind” – You stand for reason, your wife is instinct. It's a mixing up of the parts, according to which you who act your own part become the puppet of yourself. Do you understand?

LEADING MAN. I'm hanged if I do.

THE MANAGER. Neither do I (2).

At this juncture the six characters enter the stage. They are creations of the author's fancy, hence a ‘dream-like’ effect in the guise of green light is

created on stage. The purpose lay in distinguishing the two sets of people present.

‘A tenuous light surrounds them, almost as if irradiated by them – the faint breath of their fantastic reality.’

They had a fixed reality. Each one of them is fixed in one emotion which is one part of a personality. Pirandello employed this technique of splitting different attributes of a single complex personality where distinct characters embody distinct aspects of a single personality called the ‘role-playing technique’. The Father embodies remorse, Mother shame and pure feelings, Daughter defiance, Son scorn and the two children lack awareness. The technique is akin to *commedia dell’arte*. Having frozen in one single emotion, the characters extemporize on stage. They produce their own stock actions and stock phrases within the provided ‘scenari’, the roles in which they are fixed. Regardless of the number of times the characters enact their part the emotion remains the same.

The Characters proclaim to be more real and assay to capture the stage to enact the drama they profess to carry within themselves, thus demolishing the concept of author.

THE MANAGER (*furious*). I am rehearsing, and you know perfectly well no one’s allowed to come in during rehearsal!
(*Turning to the Characters:*) Who are you, please? What do you want?

THE FATHER (*coming forward a little, followed by the others who seem embarrassed*) As a manner of act... we have come here in search of an author...

THE MANAGER (*half angry, half amazed*).An author? What author?

THE FATHER.Any author, sir.

THE MANAGER. But there's no author here. We are not rehearsing a new piece.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER (*vivaciously*). So much the better, so much the better! We can be your new piece.

AN ACTOR (*coming forward from the other*). Oh, do you hear that?

THE FATHER (*to Step-Daughter*). Yes, but if the author isn't here...

(*To manager*) ... unless you would be willing (4).

The playwright conveys that work of art is more significant than its creator. It was apparent from the beginning that the actors produce an illusion with the aid of traditional props and deliberate effects. Opposed to this, an exercise of theatrical inversion is going to take place before the audience. The illusion is created and destroyed. The author abandoned them (characters) and "the orphaned though recalcitrant figures imbued with live germs from the

strong fantasy that nourished and fortified them refused to wane and subside” (Ahmed 56). An outlandish argument that explains the entire subject is as follows:

THE FATHER. ... one is born to life in many forms, in many shapes, as tree, or as stone, as water, as butterfly, or as woman. So one may also be born a character in a play.

THE MANAGER (*with feigned comic dismay*). So you and these other friends of yours have been born characters?

THE FATHER. Exactly, and alive as you see! (*Manager and actors burst out laughing*).

THE FATHER (*hurt*). I am sorry you laugh, because we carry in us a drama, as you can guess from this woman here veiled in black.

THE MANAGER (*losing patience at last and almost indignant*). Oh, Chuck it! Get away please! Clear out of here! (*To property man:*) For Heaven’s sake, turn them out!

THE FATHER (*determined, coming forward*). I marvel at your incredulity, gentlemen. Are you not accustomed to see the characters created by an author spring to life in yourselves and face each other? Just because there is no “book” (*pointing*

to the Prompter's box) which contains us, you refuse to believe:...

THE STEP-DAUGHTER (*advances towards Manager, smiling and coquettish*). Believe me, we are really six most interesting characters, sir; side-tracked however.

THE FATHER. Yes, that is the word! (*To Manager all at once:*)

In the sense, that is, that the author who created us alive no longer wished, or was no longer able, materially to put us into a work of art. And this was a real crime, sir; because he who has had the luck to be born a character can laugh even at death. He cannot die. The man, the writer, the instrument of the creation will die, but his creation does not die. And to live forever, it does not need to have extraordinary gifts or to be able to work wonders (5, 6).

With arguments and coaxing, the characters convinced the manager and actor to listen to their drama. Though this unpremeditated audience evinces interest in the family drama of the six characters as it has the essence of the bourgeois sentimental theatre, yet they can never be expected to ascertain the complexity of these 'characters' and the issues they embody as 'characters'. The drama of improvisation starts:

THE FATHER. ... But if you and your actors are willing, we can soon concert it among ourselves.

THE MANAGER (*annoyed*). But what do you want to concert?

We don't go in for concerts here. Here we play dramas and comedies!

THE FATHER. Exactly! That is just why we have come to you.

THE MANAGER. And where is the "book"?

THE FATHER. It is in us! (*The actors laugh*) The drama is in us, and we are the drama (6).

The reader is reminded of the *commedia dell'arte*, its stock character and the *scenari* with which the participants are provided. This is followed by conflict a major component of drama, among characters manifested impromptu on stage. The Father was involved in an emotional tussle with the Mother, Step-Daughter, and Son, and the Mother is in conflict with the Son and the Step-Daughter. A long but spasmodic speech by Step-Daughter establishes the scuffle and enlightens the readers to a tale of anguish:

THE STEP-DAUGHTER (*to Manager*). Worse? Worse? Listen!

Stage this drama for us at once! Then you will see that at a certain moment I ... when this little darling here ... (*takes the Child by the hand and leads her to the Manager*) Isn't she a dear? (*Takes her up and kisses her*). Darling! Darling! (*Puts her down again and adds feelingly*) Well, when God suddenly takes this dear little child away from that poor mother there; and this imbecile here (*seizing hold of the Boy roughly and*

pushing him forward) does the stupidest things, like the fool he is, you will see me run away. Yes, gentlemen, I shall be off. But the moment hasn't arrived yet. After what has taken place between him and me (*indicates the Father with a horrible wink*), I can't remain any longer in this society, to have to witness the anguish of this mother here for that fool.

(Indicates the Son) (7)

The discourse could be analyzed as a prologue to the drama of the six characters. Responding to her speech the Mother faints. The actors surprisingly inquire:

Is it true? Has she really fainted?

Hence the readers witness the power of imagination. There exists a very thin line of demarcation between illusion and reality that the actors find hard to discern. The playwright very artistically creates the illusion of reality on stage. Further, the actors question the Mother's mourning. "But how can she be a widow if you are alive?", asks the Manager. The answer gives rise to another story. Gradually, the characters take over the stage and actors start taking interest in their drama. Now the characters capture the stage and the actors become the audience.

LEADING LADY. We are the audience this time.

THE MANAGER. (*Beginning to get really interested*) Let's hear them out, listen (9).

The Son calls his Father's actions 'the Demon of Experiment'. The phrase carries twofold connotations. It could refer to the husband's decision of sending the Mother with the second man. The second is the dramaturgic experiment by the playwright. The play begins with an acting troupe rehearsing for a play with realistic settings. It is suspended due to an unexpected appearance of the six characters on the stage. Their life on stage is seen through Pirandello's use of the play-within-a-play technique. Thus the encounter of the actors with the characters is the external play and the catastrophic story of the six characters is a play within the external play. The author rejected the characters without casting their story into a definite artistic form.

But while rejecting them as characters in that tearful bourgeois play, he cast them in another play, a deeper, more modern play, the play of the rejected characters in search of an author, whose real drama is the need and the difficulty of human communication (Mariani 47).

The play has been operating at two levels. At one level the playwright explores the method and the problems of artistic creation which juxtaposes life and art. At another level, the readers witness the breakdown of values and communications, guilt, transcendental dilemmas and morals. The playwright revived the old Italian drama form *commedia dell'arte* and put it adjacent to the traditional drama in vogue. The evaluation of the two contrasting techniques adds to grotesqueness. It allowed Pirandello to be more innovative and made use of the technique of play within a play so that he could accommodate very

inventively rather a weird drama of the six characters. In order to underscore the differences between the two forms of drama the dramatist introduced several conflicts within the genre. The creatures of the dramatist's fancy appear as real as any living creature can be. They can talk and even defend themselves. They assert being more real than life and are intellectually superior. To prevent 'mixing up' of the two sets of people on stage, the playwright used mask for the characters:

“The elemental difference between the Actors and born characters lies in the fact that the latter are residue of imagination existing outside the work of art even though they carry the burden of their drama. The Actors on the other hand labour at creating the spectacle of reality ably assisted by standard props of the trade. When the former stay charged with a vital essence of eternal existence the latter is imparted ephemeral life from a marginal substructure (Ahmed 57,58).

The masks were designed not to appear otherworldly or ghostlike but as created realities rooted in author's fancy as devices more genuine and consistent than actors' illusions. The dramatist inverted the traditional parameters, the characters relived their drama which moves sporadically in bits and pieces, produced at the spur of the moment giving the effect of improvisation. Throughout the play the playwright peeps into the human psyche and explores different sections of the human mind. He brings the audience face to face with some startling situations so that they sit up and think.

Act I concludes with the characters capturing the stage from the manager and his troupe. The actors are not fully convinced of the practicality of the reversal theatre craft where play-acting precedes the written script. In a complete dramaturgic retraction the actors who create the effect of illusion become the audience of a drama which is against the norms of conventional stage play. The second act begins in a similar manner. The stage is prepared for the rehearsals of the characters' drama.

THE MANAGER. Fix up the white parlor with the floral decorations. Two wings and a drop with a door will do.

....

THE MANAGER (*to Property Man*). Just have a look, and see if there isn't sofa or divan in the wardrobe...

PROPERTY MAN. There's a green one.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. No no! green won't do. It was yellow ornamented with flowers-very large! And most comfortable!

PROPERTY MAN. There isn't one like that.

THE MANAGER. It doesn't matter. Use the one we've got.

THE STEP-DAUGHTER. It doesn't matter? It's most important!

(23)

The stage is set, the prompter is asked to write down the dialogues of the characters which the actors would enact later. An inversion of the old form of

drama is thus taking place before the audience. The script prompted drama is replaced by an impromptu performance that later becomes the script. The improvisation of the character would later be a conventional drama for the actors to act on stage:

THE MANAGER (*to Prompter*). You follow the scene as we play them, and try and get the points down, at any rate the most important one. (*Then addressing the actors:*) Clear the stage ladies and gentleman! Come over here (*pointing to the Left*) and listen attentively.

LEADING LADY. But, excuse me, we...

THE MANAGER (*guessing her thought*). Don't worry! You won't have to improvise (24).

The story of the six characters enthralled the Manager. After listening to the family the Manager decides to recreate a play from the content provided by the six characters. The actors who are not acquainted with the novel technique of impromptu seek for a written script which is to be dramatized. The prompter is asked to write the script for the actors to enact in the realistic setting of the backroom of Madame Pace's shop. The Manager assures the actors that their script has been prepared. An argument between the characters and actors explains the issue further:

THE MANAGER. All right: "characters" then, if you insist on calling yourself such. But here, my dear sir, the characters

don't act. Here the actors do the acting. The characters are there, in the "book"...when there is a book!

THE FATHER. I won't contradict you; but excuse me, the actors aren't the characters. They want to be, they pretend to be, don't they? Now if these gentlemen here are fortunate enough to have us alive before them... (25).

Besides the two major modes drama, that is, the old sentimental drama and the improvisation by the characters, drama is happening at several different levels. The outer play, that is the rehearsal of one of Pirandello's; the internal drama of the six characters; the encounter of the actors and characters; and lastly the actors adopting the roles of characters to perform their story are the multiple levels where drama is being enacted in one form or the other. These layers of dramatization form a part of Pirandello's technique of writing a play. As the play progresses, one encounters a plethora of conventions of well-made play placed against the impromptu drama. The concept of grand hero has been ridiculed and other norms are also disregarded. The actors prepare themselves to play the role of the characters. This back and forth repositioning by the actors in the drama of the characters gives the effect of alienation. This is followed by a series of arguments among actors and characters both claiming priority and distinction over the other. The illustrations are:

THE MANAGER. ...your soul or whatever you like to call it takes shape here. The actors give body and form to it, voice

and gestures. And my actors-I may tell you-have given expression to much more lofty material than this little drama of yours, which may or may not hold up on stage. But if it does, the merit of it, believe me, will be due to my actors.

THE FATHER. I don't contradict you, sir; but, believe me, it is a terrible suffering for us who are as we are, with these bodies of ours, these features to see...

THE MANAGER. ...The make-up will remedy all that, man, the make-up...

THE FATHER. ...But the voice gestures...

THE MANAGER. ...On the stage, you as yourself, cannot exist. The actors here acts you, and that's an end to it!

THE FATHER....now I think I see why our author who conceived us as we are, all alive, didn't want to put us on the stage after all (26).

The technique is constantly developing and each method is staggering. By reversing the conventional boundaries the dramatist presents the glimpse of life from standpoint of the 'visitants' who assume improvisation in a fresh dramaturgic experiment. The appearance of Madame Pace, the mysterious seventh character is yet another aspect of startling stagecraft. She does not come with the rest but demonstrates dramaturgically before the twin audience

the magic of the stage and the power of imagination conjuring a figure. The entire process of creation has been shown on stage. How a character comes into existence from the author's imagination into a concrete form is displayed for the viewers to see and analyze. The sudden appearance of Madame Pace amazes the actors and to their surprise the Father comments:

“ ...why are you so anxious to destroy in the name of vulgar, commonplace sense of truth, this reality which comes to birth attracted and formed by the magic of the stage itself, which has indeed more right to live here than you , since it is much truer than you...” (29).

Concerning the birth of this character and the manner of its creation Pirandello explicates in the Preface to *Six Characters*:

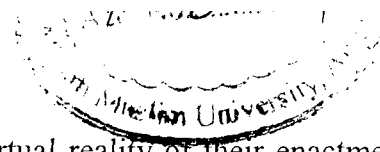
The birth of a creature of human fantasy, a birth which is a step across the threshold between nothing and eternity, can also happen suddenly, occasioned by some necessity. An imagined drama needs a character who does or says a certain necessary thing; accordingly this character is born and is precisely what he had to be. In this way Madame Pace is born among the six characters and seems a miracle, even a trick, realistically portrayed on the stage. It is no trick. The birth is real. The new character is alive not because she was alive already but because she is now happily born as is required by the fact of her being a

character. She is obliged to be as she is. There is a break here, a sudden change in the level of reality of the Scene, because a character can be born in this way only in the poet's fancy and not on the boards of a stage...I have gathered it up again into my own fantasy without removing it from the spectator's eyes.

That is, I have shown them: instead of the stage, my own fantasy in the act of creating-my own fantasy in the form of this same stage.

Thus Madame Pace mysteriously comes to life among the six characters. The death of two children is equally mystifying. To some it is an illusion because the Characters' drama is demonstration of art, while others insist on the boy's reality. It is unclear whether the children will reappear having completed their roles in the dramatic act. The illusion appeared more real than reality. Beings of imagination, the characters jostle and search for realization and theatre is the place where they can find that fulfillment. The drama of characters provides a contrast between life and art.

The curtain falls abruptly indicating the end of Act II. When it is lifted, the stage is set for the last act. The Manager and the Leading lady appear preparing in accordance with the traditional norms of drama. The characters interrupt and the act ceases to be realistic. The author assigns discrete dimensions of reference to the actors and characters separating "operational illusion" and "illusionary illusion" of the characters from the innate reality of



the actors as human beings and the virtual reality of their enactment (Ahmed 73). The characters manifest a complete inversion of the script prompted actors. These stage players have to conform to a screenplay and the directions of the director, who is a central figure, supervising, coordinating and instructing. He teaches them to create an illusion of reality on stage. The characters have no such predominant personage. Their drama is a spontaneous performance wherein each contributes to the total effect. The spasmodic and sporadic outbursts, in the furtherance of discourse, from the characters is a deliberate strategy on Pirandello's part to create an effect of extemporization and adlib. The playwright demonstrates a variety of techniques through which illusion is created. The performance of actors generates illusion but remains objectively alienated whereas the six characters who claim to carry their drama within them become the reflections of their own image. The emergence of Madame Pace is also a demonstration of stage magic that will disappear after the allocated time. Similarly the audience marvel at the death of two children that whether it is pretense or reality. The situations illustrate that a negligible border exists between fantasy and reality.

Language has always been an important device in understanding modern drama. In this play it provides the platform to the two modes of drama. The family drama of the characters is in the familiar naturalistic language of bourgeois theatre. The language they used is realistic while revealing their story. The illustrations are:

THE STEP DAUGHTER. ...do you know, sir, what that woman did when brought her back the work my mother had finished? She would point out to me that I have torn one of my frocks, and she would give it back to my mother to mend (15).

The manager and his company who represented bourgeois drama also use the familiar naturalistic language.

THE MANAGER. ...is it my fault if France won't send us anymore good comedies and we are reduced to putting on Pirandello's works, where nobody understands anything, and where the author plays the fool with us all? (2)

But when they tried to imitate or talk about modern theatre, they caricature a critical language which is not lucid and graspable:

THE MANAGER. ...do you suppose that with all this egg-beating business you are on an ordinary stage? Get that out of your head. You represent the shell of the eggs you are beating!... "the empty form of reason without the fullness of the instinct, which is blind." – you stand for reason your wife is instinct. It's a mixing up of the parts according to which you who act your own part become the puppet of yourself. Do you understand?

LEADING MAN. I'm hanged if I do.

THE MANAGER. Neither do I (2, 3)

But the Six Characters change the language entirely. A close reading of the text illustrates the manner in which the playwright employed language to deal with complex aesthetic questions. Given to the characters the language manifests the enthusiasm, the closeness and the vivid imagery of dynamic conversation. The discourse is often punctuated by frequent exclamation marks and ellipses:

THE STEP DAUGHTER. I won't stop here! I won't! I can see you've fixed it all up with him in your office. All this talk about what is possible for the stage...I understand! He wants to get at his complicated "cerebral drama", to have his famous remorse and torments acted; but I want to act my part, my part! (37)

THE FATHER. Well, to make seem true that which isn't true...without any need...for a joke as it were...isn't that your mission, gentleman! (4)

Rhetorical questions, frequent use of interjections and vocative for example: 'eh', 'sir', 'yes sir', 'please I beg you', 'nothing sir', 'just so,sir', 'no pardon me', 'I was thinking about you sir' and many more. These ornamentations produce the feeling of close proximity to realistic conversation. Similarly the frequent disruptions in the flow of the dialogues by parenthesis give the same effect. Umberto Mariani examines the speech of the Mother, the most instinctive of the characters, as an expression of "the difficult ideas of the

eternal actuality of the torment, is broken into very short sentences, explosive fragments of thought expressed almost exclusively through exclamations, a sequence of short, sharp cries of grief.” (Mariani, 46)

It’s taking place now. It happens all the time. My torment isn’t a pretended one. I live and feel every minute of my torture. Those two children there – have you heard them speak? They can’t speak anymore. They cling to me to keep my torment actual and vivid for me. But for themselves, they do not exist, they are’nt anymore. And she (*indicating Step Daughter*) has run away, and has left me, and is lost. If I now see her here before me, it is only to renew for me the tortures I have suffered for her too (39).

The frequent use of images and references lend an element of tangibility to the play. For example Umberto Mariani analyses the Father’s use of references in his statements: ‘we are here in search of an author’, as an expression of the character’s sense of lack of definite artistic form and their search for it; also he compares the reality of the creations of art to that of living persons; ‘living beings, more alive than those who breath and wear clothes’. The concrete images of Sancho Panza and Don Abbondino provides the confirmation of immortality, ‘he who has had the luck to be born a character can laugh even at death’. The dialogues of the son also exemplify imagery. For example the use of the mirror imagery is brilliant:

... haven't you yet perceived that it isn't possible to live in front of a mirror which not only freezes us with the image of ourselves, but throws our likeness back at us with a horrible grimace? (50)

Thus the dramatist used wide variety languages for people in order to differentiate in the genres of drama. One is the familiar realistic language in which the characters represented their drama and the other is the ideological one where the characters explain the importance of the creation of art and their role as 'characters in search of an author'.

Analyzing the play, critic and admirer, Thomas Bishop said:

The Italian master considered the basic flaw of the theatre as an art medium: the life with which the dramatist endows his work is choked by the directors and actors who cannot live it but only perform it. *Six Characters* is a long interrogation on the causes which can hamper or facilitate the birth of a dramatic work (69).

On the occasion of one of Pirandello's death anniversaries, a French periodical interviewed several French playwrights of the time about how far they were influenced by Pirandello. George Neveux a young contemporary playwright told not only his viewpoint but what the entire generation of French dramatists imbibed from Pirandello:

"Pirandello is first of all, the greatest prestidigitator of the twentieth century..."

Talking about his most important play *Six Characters* he comments:

he took the very centre of the real world and turned it inside outright in front of us, as the fisherman turns inside out the skin of an octopus to lay bare its viscera.

But what Pirandello laid bare before us is not only the work of the actor, nor that of the author, not only the other side of the scenery, but something much more universal: the other side of ourselves.

Further he adds 'it is our inner life which is suddenly found projected on the stage and decomposed there as if by a prism'. He also analyzes the play and opines:

What are these phantoms condemned to relive endlessly the same scene if not the most obscure part of ourselves? These six characters are not only the unfinished creatures of an author at a creative impasse, but also, and more important still, those impulses which each of us keeps within him and does not manage to live out.

Another critic Kaniz Khawaja Ahmed comments on the play:

Despite the managers' avid acceptance to substitute the original play hoping to exploit its melodramatic potential in impromptu style, the play which commenced as an anti-theatrical encounter

between Life and Art, is reduced to an unconvincing burlesque and a pastiche compounding subjective and objective dramaturgic constructs (76).

Therefore to conclude, in the words of Starkie:

It is the dramatic struggle in his mind between the phantoms of his reason and his fantasy that arouses our emotions and makes us throng to his theatre. He does not dictate he only discusses and suffers (98).

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Chapter III

Pirandello's *Each in His Own Way*: The Collapse of the Fourth Wall

The revolutionary theatre maneuver leading to the extraordinary success of *Six Characters in Search of an Author* firmly established Pirandello as a forerunner of new experimental drama. *Each in His Own Way*, the next play of the 'theatre-within-a-theatre' trilogy demonstrates parallel themes, situations and innovative theatre techniques first employed in *Six Characters*. The play concerned is again a reaction against old bourgeois theatre and a furtherance of "experimental stagecraft and thematic patterning beyond the parameters of credulity" (Ahmed 78).

In *Six Characters* the family melodrama of the six characters in search of their author to attain a definite artistic form served as a situation for yet another form of drama. Thus the fusion of the technique of improvisation and adlib with the realistic theatre for a probe into human psyche and theme of illusion-reality gave to Pirandellian drama an entirely different focus. Pirandello endeavors to bring drama as art in such close proximity to reality that it becomes difficult to distinguish between illusion and reality and art and life. *Six Characters* was 'comedy in the making' and *Each in His Own Way* is a 'comedy in progress' (Ahmed 79) the playwright inverts the convention by bringing among the audience real people who recognize themselves in the actors on stage. The *Six Characters* opens with a rehearsal of a play which was

directed at script restricted well-made drama with a proper beginning-middle-end pattern. This was placed against the very unconventional and startling strategy of impromptu drama of the six characters. *Each in His Own Way* instead deals with the problems of presentation on stage by incorporating the multiple nuances of dramaturgy including for the first time theatre spectators' responses critiques and appreciations as part of the total theatre experience. Pirandello being both inventive and experimental has breached the fourth-wall convention and extended the theatre to the lobby. In order to manifest his inventiveness he applied the technique of play within a play where actors appear as audience and audience as actors.

Play within a play, also mentioned in the previous chapter, is a theatre technique wherein some of the on-stage players adopt the role of the actors and enact a segment from the play before the rest of the members of the cast who then become the audience. In the trilogy this strategy forms a component of the larger practice of meta-theatre. It is a stage performance which explores the nature of theatre, appraising and scrutinizing how theatre celebrated its own devices and skills. Play within a play is a prime illustration of self-searching stagecraft. The execution of this dramaturgic experiment exhibits actual audience of the play in the theatre simultaneously witnessing the on-stage substituted actor audience viewing the same drama that they had come to see. Thus as another dimension is unfolded, the dramatist ingeniously enables the audience to observe and analyse its own role. *Each in His Own Way* demonstrates all the salient features of the technique, that is, two distinctly

different dramas woven into the larger construct of the principal play. Bishop comments:

In *Each in His Own Way*, the plot is given twice – the action on stage is a foreshadowing of what happens later among the ‘audience’ in the lobby-on-the-stage (36).

Pirandello artfully juxtaposed the two plots but only to employ a technique that differs from Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and Kyd’s *Spanish Tragedy*. One component consists of the performance on stage of the real life Moreno-La Vela-Nuti episode. The interruption of this stage business by the observant audience serves as a second component of the play. The playwright titled the interruptions as ‘Choral Interludes’. The intermezzo succeeds the acts. The enormous and vivid panorama of the lobby apparently makes it a separate play within the play. The application of the technique of play-within-a-play provides several planes of reality: reality of the audience, reality of actors as audience and audience as actors, presence of Baron Nuti and Amelia Moreno in the audience and their counterparts on stage. Reality and art intermingled breaching the proscenium arch such that it is hard to separate the two. The foregrounding of the sub-plot over the main play results in the triumph of art over reality as it furnishes a solution to the estranged couple.

The skill of play within a play is mostly used either to display a contrast between the main plot and the sub-plot or advance the content of the principal plot. In certain instances when the larger framework appears obscure this

method is employed, to make the intentions of the playwright more comprehensive. In *Six Characters* the application is designed for a contrast in the two genres of the theatre. But in the instant play the playwright has a completely different motive and intention. He widened the dramatic horizon. The 'lobby scene' comprising of the audience's reaction provides the subplot. Experimental and innovative Pirandello incorporated every comment, criticism and the judgment of the audience within the theatre fabric. The scene gets more theatrical on account of the presence of Nuti and Moreno among the audience and the rage of Amelia on seeing her image translated on stage. Moreover, the fragile line of demarcation that existed between drama and reality is severed when Amelia disrupts the stage proceedings to hurt the leading actress playing her part. The impromptu drama of the actors begins as a response to the apparently reprehensible behavior of real life Delia Morello. Thus there is barely any distinction between art and life. The dramatist applied this technique of play within a play, to illustrate the proximity of drama to life. Also, the technique is a manifest of the inversion of the roles of audience and actors at various levels. In the first choral interlude the actors become supposed audience watching the impromptu verbal war of the audience-actors. Then in the second choral interlude, both the actors and the real audience turn into audience and the real people, Amelia and Nuti who are alleged actors now enact or live their moment before them. Pirandello revitalized the old technique of metatheatre imparting it a fresh color and shape. Thus, the play can be

closely assessed as a complete piece illustrating two major techniques of stage and theatre, play within a play and meta-theatricality.

The play is in two acts, punctuated by choral interludes at the end of each act, and the non-existent third act. The lead pair supposedly enacts a real life incident on stage. The dramatist borrowed the idea from a report in the daily newspaper: the suicide of the sculptor Giacomo La Vela on discovery of an existing relationship between his fiancée, Amelia Moreno and Baron Nuti, his sister's fiancé. The playwright converted this event for the stage in the form of Giorgio Salvi-Delia Morello-Michele Rocca triangular affair. The dramaturgy culminated in coming together of the stage couple. The key to the life of the real characters is depicted through stagecraft. Art foresees what life cannot. The real life pair realized their sentiments and united as a final solution to their lives.

Hence what originated as art impersonating life concludes with life adopting the solution advocated by art as the enacted play (Ahmed 80).

The play displays different shades of real life on the stage bringing drama closer to life. Also cited before, the presence of the author among the spectators as well as of Amelia Moreno and Baron Nuti brought fictitious art in close proximity to reality. Pirandello elucidates:

The Moreno woman and Baron Nuti are present in the theatre among the spectators. Their appearance, therefore, suddenly and

violently establishes a plane of reality still closer to real life, leaving the spectators who are discussing the fictitious reality of the staged play on a plane midway between (40).

From the very beginning the dramatist separated the fictional characters from the real ones. While introducing the *dramatis personae* Pirandello clearly demarcated the two sets of actors: one set consist of characters of comedy on stage and the other set comprises of the ‘real’ people appearing in the theatre lobby. However in contravention to this proposed singularity, Pirandello’s dramatic handling of audience response obliterates the distinction between *mise en scene* and the audience.

At the outset, the spectators find themselves in Donna Livia Palegari’s palace, with its aristocratic décor. The stage directions show the “drawing room brightly lighted and with an animated company of ladies and gentlemen...” (5) standing in pairs exchanging confidences. The dramatist has elaborated the setting thus:

The front of the stage, less brightly lighted, is a small parlor ornately decorated in damask, and with ancient paintings (*of religious subject, for the most part*) on the walls. As we look at the stage we should get the impression of being in a Shrine, in a Church, of which the drawing-room beyond the columns might be the nave the Sacred Chapel of a very worldly Church! The parlor in the foreground in unfurnished save for one or two

benches or wooden stools for the convenience of people desirous of studying the paintings on the walls. There are on doors. The guests will come in this retreat two or three at a time to exchange confidences in private (5).

The play begins with dialogues between three sets of people who are unaware of each other. The first duo consisting of a young man and an old gentleman – ‘one eager, the other continues to the point of hypocrisy’ (Vittorini 129) is engaged in a discourse over opinions and their fickleness. This is followed by a discussion between two young ladies who cautiously enter to gossip on some private and personal issues. Their mundane conversation over mutability of human nature and impression contains incomplete sentences, adorned with hyphens and question marks and betray a deeper undercurrent. Through the vehicle of language Pirandello seeks out to present the variation in the conversation of various sets of folks in diverse age groups. He peeps into their minds and situates his observation into words. The punctuation marks make his efforts more comprehensible.

The third group is seemingly bored with the monotony. This clique includes Diego Cinci who is apparently the spokesman for the dramatist. Voicing the playwright’s intentions he denies the possibility of maintaining convictions, they change from person to person and according to the circumstances. He even disregarded the authenticity of conscience “which is nothing but other people inside you,” (9) that is, the public view decides out acts. Vittorini encapsulates the entire philosophy in the following words:

Everything is spasmodic, tortuous, torturing because there is no basis for the thinking and the acting of these being who are deprived of opinions, of beliefs, of conscience (Vittorini 130).

Subsequently, the act moves forward succeeded by a series of dialogues in which the changeability of convictions is dramatized. The dramatization encompasses the dispute of Doro and Francesco who inverted their opinions. But again they drew back to their original viewpoints. The act concludes with a crucial discourse between Doro and Delia Morello, leaving the audience wondering to which certitude he would stick to, seeing his instability in opinions. Thus the entire act is about the mutability and moving of convictions.

The structure of the act is linear where one object gives rise to the other one. The dramatist progresses gradually and develops the play with rigorous dramatic economy. In the beginning the stage directions displays the aristocratic ambience. Then through language use the different mindsets according to the age groups and backgrounds of the people is revealed. Therefore with the assistance of stage directions and language Pirandello draws the picture of existing bourgeois class. *Appraising the play more closely, it is* note-worthy that the playwright has divided the act into two quarters: the party at Palegari's aristocratic home where guests in groups exchange confidences. The author establishes three different parts of human psyche, that is, opinion, impression and conscience with the aid of their discussions. Then the second part where the guests leave with only Diego, Donna and Doro left on stage, later joined by Francesco and Delia till the end. These abstract ideas are made

tangible through dramatization in the second section of the act. Furthermore Pirandello probes again into the human psyche to see through their mind the inconsistency of the human nature. The following excerpt from Diego's speech explains the point further:

Our impression of things change from hour to hour! A word is often sufficient on just the manner in which it is said to change our minds completely! And then besides, quite without our knowledge, images of hundreds and hundreds of things are flitting through our minds suddenly causing our tempers to vary in the strangest way! (61)

Thus Pirandello initially creates a dramatic effect through the medium of language then allow the same set of actors impersonate what has been created. Doro's change of mind in the Amelia Moreno episode, Francesco realization of the mistake he made by holding a counter view, Doro's comfort for Delia and finally the altered impression of Donna towards her son Doro, are the dramatization of the dramatist's intentions.

As stated in the preceding chapters also, language is a constant and important instrument in comprehending modern drama. The entire act is punctuated by a myriad of ellipses indicative of unfinished sentences. But in certain instances the ellipses can be interpreted as 'pauses'. The half-finished sentences are completed by the subsequent person in conversation. The

illustrations are: exchange of dialogues between Delia and Doro when she came to Doro's place to acknowledge his concern and defense of her image:

DORO. There you are! Just as I said! All taken up with his own art...and as for feelings... no feeling for anything except for his art!

DELIA. Color...ah, color...everything was color with him! Feeling with him was nothing but color!

DORO. So he asked you to sit for a portrait?...

DELIA. In the beginning...yes! But later on... he had a way of his own in asking for anything he wanted – so funny petulant, almost impudent – he was like a spoiled child! So I became his model!

... it was very, very true what you said: nothing is more irritating than to be held aloof, excluded from a joy which...

DORO...which is living, present, before us, around us, and the reason for which we can neither discover nor define!...

DELIA. Exactly! It was a joy...well, a pure joy, but only for his eyes...and it proved to me that, after all, at bottom he saw in me...he prized in me...only my body!

DELIA. ...but only to get from me a purely... a purely.....

DORO. ...ideal joy...

DELIA. ...and a joy exclusively his own....

DORO. ...must have been all the stronger precisely because every tangible motive for an anger was lacking...

DELIA. ... and it was impossible for me to have the satisfaction of that Vengeance... (34, 35)

The language used is ordinary and colloquial comprising of typical Pirandellian vocabulary for example words such as, madness, hatred absurd, lying. Digressions and clichés endow a tinge of absurdism to the play. The audience is thus alienated and awakened. Very long speeches are ascribed to Diego Cinci in order to manifest the dramatist's philosophy whereas terse and short discourse to the subsequent actors. The repetition of words and phrases at times emphasize one's point and sometimes convey the inability to communicate and comprehend. Act I laid the foundation and the rest of the play revolves around it.

The curtains fall indicates the end of a scene. But when they rise again the focus is on the audience witnessing the play. The scene may be perceived as a separate lobby scene incorporating the actions of the spectators. At this moment the technique of play within a play is seen at work. Preceding the verbal war among the audience the dramatist inserts a stage direction which becomes a preamble to the 'lobby-scene'. This interpolation effectively

summarizes the entire play. In modern theatre the stage directions act as descriptive text located in brackets but still an important section of the play.

The stage directions could be a beneficial tool in making play a more useful document. It consists of the details about how the playwright has envisaged the environment and atmosphere. It aids the readers in knowing the complete story that is in the dramatist's mind along with establishing the overall tone of a production and explaining particular actions of characters. Therefore stage direction is a written text in parenthesis which encompasses expository prefaces or prologues not spoken, appearances and background of characters, settings, moods or emotions which the play should convey. It complements the dialogues and helps readers to visually imagine and understand the scene more comprehensively. The stage directions achieve all of this applying a simple precept that structurally separates it from the actual story. The avant garde movements and forms generated a need for explicit 'sub-text' in order to convey the subjective understanding of abstract thoughts. They often function as author's direct address to the readers without the filter of characters' dialogues.

The people present in the lobby are animatedly discussing the prevalent issues. Through apt words and fragmented phrases Pirandello captures the essential dynamics of multiple arguments, views and opinions. Between the two acts, he dramatizes the triangular love story of Delia – La Vela – Rocca as a play – within – a – play with real people. In order to meet this end, he intermingles the two lobby scenes in the principal plot making the spectators

recreate their perceptions after each act. It was announced beforehand that La Vela's suicide episode will be enacted on stage and because of the unexpected happenings likely to occur, the management were not sure of the number of acts which were to be staged. This uncertainty about the outcome of the play as well as its indeterminate nature left both the theatre audience and the supposed spectators in the play expectant. This was a part of Pirandellian strategy of leaving his drama open ended. The playwright thus gave his readers the freedom to interpret the play. Various groups of people come to watch the play: the friends of the author, his opponents and adversaries as well as the critics. Through the comments and criticism of the audience the playwright manifests varying viewpoints over Amelia Moreno incident and different perceptions over Pirandello's art of writing. The dramatist represented the characters in the audience as they are known to be: the friends speak in high reverence of the playwright while the opponents and adversaries are disapproving and unsympathetic. The critics are unbiased and nonaligned. A kind of a debate begins between the friends and adversaries. One of his friends, very precisely, articulated Pirandello's philosophy in the following words:

If you want to sleep, why don't you stick to the other plays? With them you can just lean back in your seat and take what is sent to you across the footlights. But with the comedy of Pirandello's you have to be on your pins. You sit up straight and dig your fingernails into the arms of your chair as though you were going to be knocked down by what the author has to say! (48)

The presence of real life counterparts of Delia and Rocca gives a new dimension to the drama. The illusion of actuality is enhanced by the vocal war among the audience which comprises of mixed opinions about the play and the story Pirandello dramatized.

In the interlude, even the minutest details were taken up explicitly. Every action of the audience and each prop have something to convey:

A few placid individuals are smoking unconcernedly, and the way they smoke will show their boredom, if they are bored, or their doubts, if they are in doubt... (40)

Every aspect of the audience, the color of their uniform, gestures and movements are taken up in great details. Before actually allowing the vocal war of the spectators (as actors) the dramatist provides the expected judgment of the onlookers as a common reaction to all plays: 'good', 'bad' well-constructed, badly constructed, 'obscure' 'improbable', 'paradoxical' 'cerebral' – all from the brain and so on. Thus the stage direction is a manifestation of the ambience and aura of the scene. Apparently, it is a prologue to the impending events in the play. Nothing is camouflaged from the readers. The subtext leaves no scope for the arcane and the readers are at liberty to observe and analyze. The following illustration from the first choral interlude spells out Pirandello's technique:.

SPECTATOR FROM THE SOCIAL SET.....don't you people understand that there is a key to this comedy?

ONE OF THE CRITICS: A key? What do you mean...A key?

SPECTATOR FROM THE SOCIAL SET: why yes! This comedy is based on the Moreno affair! Almost word for word! The author has taken it from real life!

VOICES: The Moreno case?

The Moreno woman?

Who is she?

Who is she?

Why, she's that actress that was in Germany for so long!

She's well known in Turin!

Ah, yes, She was mixed up in the suicide of that sculptor named La Vela some months ago!

Who do you think of that?

...But Nuti...who is Nuti?

SPECTATOR FROM THE SOCIAL SET: He is the other fellow in the triangle? La Vela killed himself on Nuti's account! Nuti was to marry La Vela's sister?

ONE OF THE CRITICS: And he spent the night with the Moreno Woman – the night before her marriage to La Vela?

VOICE FROM THE HOSTILE GROUP: The same situation to a

T! It's a

Crime...a downright crime!

OTHER VOICES FROM THE SAME GROUP: And the actors

in the real drama have been here in the theatre? (50,51)

Moreover the fairly large portion from the stage directions given to Delia Morello is worth mentioning. She is outraged at seeing her imitation on stage. She is accompanied by three friends to the theatre who try to convince her to leave the place. The segment is not in italics but clearly written in direct speech.

SIGNORA MORENO. ...No! I will! Let me alone! One of her friends! But it's madness... It's sheer madness! What can you do about it!

SIGNORA MORENO: I am going behind the scenes! (52)

Thus the range of Pirandello's writings is widened for he had realized the immense potentiality of the theater. This is immediately determined by his 'meta-theatrical' venture. The play illustrates all the possible levels of representation, moving the action of the play outside the theater itself. *Each in His Own Way* is Pirandello's experiment with the codified theatrical artistry. But before moving on into further analysis, let us elucidate the concept of meta-theater and how the play concerned falls into the category.

The term metatheatres has been variously interpreted by prominent intellectuals. K-Ferlic says, "Meta-theater is only a theatrical production with the intention of looking beyond the physicalness of what occurs as to what we believe about what is occurring." The term 'Meta-theatre' is coined by Lionel Abel in 1963. He used it to classify 'serious' plays but argues that the plays cannot be categorized as tragedies (Cuddon 509).The word 'meta' is a Greek prefix which means 'above', 'beyond' or 'about' and implies a level beyond the subject that it qualifies. So metatheatres is theatre about theatre or drama about drama. It could also mean a play within a play. Abel described metatheatres as 'reflecting comedy and tragedy' where the audience can laugh at the protagonist while being empathetic for him simultaneously (Abel 133). The technique is a reflection of the world beyond human conscience making it more imaginative. It breaks the "fourth wall" of the conventional theatre to draw the audience in the theatre domain. The use of the device of play within play comments on the theatre itself and allow the theatrical characters to experience illusion and reality within a play. Moreover, it produces spontaneous response to a situation on stage as if it were real. It can be used to uncover any aspect of a being that the playwright wishes to reveal. In the well-made scenes of the play, different methodologies are applied to approach different issues. It contributes to locate the susceptible situations that trigger the response of the actual as well as supposedly real audience.

For instance, Delia's outrage on recognizing herself on stage:

SIGNORA MORENO: I won't! I won't! Let go of me! Let go of me! It's a disgrace! It's an insult! And they won't get away with it scot free!

THE FIRST FRIEND: But what's idea? What's the idea?... on the stage....in front of everybody there?

SIGNORA MORENO: Let go me, I tell you! Let go of me! Yes, there on stage, in front of everybody! (52, 53)

Thus the drama off the stage, the precincts extended, fiction and truth intertwined and the shadowy boundaries between the real and unreal collapse.

The playwright used the technique of metatheatre in order to explore the illusion of mind. Richard Hornby gave five distinct techniques in meta-theater: (1) Ceremony within a play (ii) role-playing within a play (iii) reference to reality (iv) self-reference of a drama (v) play within a play. Another critic, David M. Boje described it as "a network of simultaneous stage performances; a multiplicity of theater: formal or informal, on stage or off-stage."

If the play is analyzed as an experiment in meta-theatre in the light of the features enumerated by Hornby and Boje, It can be concluded that *Each in His Own Way* is an amalgam of all the characteristics. Play within a play one of the five major attributes given by Hornby is the major constituent of the drama that has been dealt with earlier in the chapter. Other techniques are also apparent. The union of two estranged lovers at the climax of the play could be interpreted as a 'ceremony in the play'. There is a constant reference to the real

event that was enacted. Following the definition of Boje, the play indeed is a 'network of simultaneous stage performances'; namely actors acting a real life drama on stage later the focus on the audience in the lobby, the real people whose life has been put on stage, and also the dramatist himself. The response of the general audience, the remarks of the dramatist as the audience, the outrageous Amelia Moreno seeing her duplication on stage converted the lobby into a stage. Pirandello widened the horizons, broke the boundaries and extended the play to the lobby. There is a multiplicity of theatre techniques where one portion is scripted and the other part is an impromptu drama which is 'off- stage and informal'

The meta-theatrical nature of *Each in His Own way* eliminates the demarcation between 'theatrical illusion' and 'illusionistic reproduction of reality and life' (Grande 53). The purpose is to examine the way in which Pirandello choreographed the entire transition. The transformation from theatricality to reality, the relationship between fiction and replication at the level of theatrical illusion as well as meta-theatrical manifestation resulted in the neutralization of replication and the amplification of fiction that goes beyond the conventional boundaries. Therefore, Maurizio Grande comments:

In this way he makes meta-theatricality the most external frame of the dramatic game playing one which leads us to the innermost threshold of fiction: the illusion of reality.

(Grande 53)

It (Meta-theater) moves the play from actually staging of the script to meta-simulation. It focuses on the event and fictionalizes it on stage. In the first choral interlude after act I, the focus shifts from the stage to the lobby resulting in the expansion of the theater perspective by merging the stage with the lobby. It is thus an illusion of continuity between theatre and non-theatre. Maurizio Grande remarks on the use of Meta-theater techniques:

Pirandello's meta theater does not expose the theatrical fiction of the theater; rather it shows the theatrical fiction that exists in life. (Grande 50)

Moreover, he adds:

But that is not all. Such a theatrical form speaks to us not of the world of performance, but of the way in which we can travel or transit through the performance into reality, by dint of a fiction that exasperates its own contrivance to such an extent that it become a real... (Grande 56)

Each in His Own Way becomes Pirandello's highly experimental and mind boggling oeuvre. With his genius Pirandello applied the pastiche of techniques with the aim of removing all the disparities between theater and life. This effort to create reality beyond the conventional stage, breaking the fourth wall on the level of actuality with the real audience that came to watch the play, resulted in the second choral interlude. The audience takes over the stage and puts an end to it. The central theme which deals with 'the relationship between

art and life' pervades as the play develops but it is dominant in the last intermezzo. Very skillfully the theme has been made a part of the playwright's technique and the readers witness an impressive and forceful explosion of action and dialogues.

VOICES FROM THE CROWD OF SPECTATORS (*all talking at once, with occasional hoots, jeers, and applause*). Signora Moreno! The Moreno women! Who is she! She slapped the leading lady face! Who! Who slapped her! Signora her! Signora Moreno! The Moreno women! Who is she! The leading lady! No! No! It was the author's face she slapped! Pirandello? She slapped his face! Who? Who slapped his face? Signora Moreno! No! The leading lady! The author slapped her face? No! No! The other way about! The leading lady slapped the author's face! Not at all! Not at all! Signora Moreno assaulted the leading lady and pulled her hair! (84)

VOICES OF SPECTATORS IN ARGUMENT. Slapped her face? Yes! Yes! Signora Moreno! And she was right! Who near right? The Moreno women! Why did she slap her face? The leading lady!

ONE OF THE ACTORS. Because she saw an illusion to herself in the play. (86) Spectators: Oh! Really! It can't be!

Incredible? How horrible! There they are! Look! Delia Morello and Michele Rocca!

A SPECTATOR (*Who has not grasped the situation*): And they complain because the same thing was done on the stage!

MANY VOICES: Incredible! Incredible! Absurd!

...A SPECTATOR WHO UNDERSTANDS: But no! It's all natural enough! They rebelled because they saw themselves there, as in a mirror, forced into a situation that has the eternity of art!

...A SPECTATOR WHO UNDERSTANDS: And that's natural, too! They have done, here before our eyes and quite involuntarily, something that the author had foreseen! (89,90)

In the above cited instances, one cannot overlook the playwright's dexterity in handling the blend of fiction and virtual reality and of art and life. The diction and the discourse, embellished with the magnitude of punctuation marks in conjunction with the stage direction, in agreement with the situation, is a manifestation of the dramatist's virtuosity and determination.

Through the discussion among the ticket takers the audience is informed of the closing of Act II. An insolent action of the enraged Amelia Moreno created disarray on stage turning it into frenzy. Her impertinent attitude towards the lead actress imitating her made the lead actress leave the play

midway. Consequently the entire cast protested due to the indignation caused. On the other hand Baron Nuti and Signora Moreno are heard complaining terribly. But unexpectedly they see each other and fall into each other's arms, expressing themselves exactly in the similar fashion as done by Delia and Rocca in Act II. The unrest and confusion on stage led the manager to request the audience to leave for home. They are informed that the play cannot be continued to Act III owing to the disorder on stage. For this reason probably, Pirandello deliberately calls 'play in two or three acts'.

The dramatic intensity of the play is enhanced through the representation of various levels of drama and the playwright's brilliance in managing its complexity. Primarily, it is a real life incident converted into dramatic form. Subsequently the criticism of the ongoing performance by the real characters as well as by the spectators who come to watch the play is another level of presentation. There is yet another plane of performance: the drama of those who discuss the actual episode (Doro, Diego, Francesco) and the spectator-actors who debate over the theatrical performance. The multiple theatre forms; adlib, play within a play, impromptu, metatheatre, realistic drama, and commedia dell'arte, are used to explore multiple personality and in trying to create diverse theatre activities taking place simultaneously Pirandello illustrates the flux of time, life, thought, opinions, the instability of all that appeared stable and the multiplicity of human personality.

Moreover, the dramatist used the variety of breaking up of the generally straightforward class of actors and characters into the sub-categories: there are

real people comprising of the audience. it is further divided into two categories. One is the actual audience and the second is half real audience which includes the real people of the translated drama. Then there are semi-real people; the actors who are the imitation of the real ones. They are the imagined people presenting the real. And the real people are among the audience presenting the imagined. This is where he is moved ahead of *Six Characters*. Here the segments of actors and characters are further split into multiple categories making the categorization confusing as real and imaginary are constantly mingling.

Bishop observes the three levels of reality in the play and remarked that the level of readers and the spectators' reality is supreme and the lowest is that of the play without the choral interludes and in-between the two the audience and actors as they make their appearance in the foyer turning it into a stage. Furthermore, he adds

The action of the interludes serves mirror to that of the play itself. It is life and the play is form, each having its purpose and each its good features. By seeing a few moments of their lives crystallized before them, given the eternity that only art can bestow. (Bishop 38)

Thus, technically, the dramatist has inverted the convention making art a mirror to life rather than life as a mirror to art. Art has laid bare truth and the couple unites. Moreover it (reality) disrupted the play finally leading to its

discontinuation. Pirandello's persistent concern with building a relationship between art and life pervades the play. The dramatist introduced real characters, on whose life's incident the comedy is based, in the interludes. Pirandello makes them sit with the audience and watch their lives reincarnated on stage. They stand for life as it is in reality whereas Delia and Nuti embody virtual reality. Marcel Achard, a French Critic states: "art is fixed while life changes and when the two comes in contact, they tend to interfere with one another". In *Each in His Own Way*, "The characters exist on the twin levels of their own existence and of their theatrical portrayal of themselves," says Bishop, a well-known critic of the dramatist.

Another distinguished feature noted is the 'multiple perspectives' evident from the title of the play itself '*Each in His Own Way*'. The tragedy of Delia Morello, the centre of play appears differently to different people. Everyone has his own perception of reality which is the keynote of the play, also evident from the title '*Each in His Own Way*'. The opinions are introduced as antithesis to the other corresponding one characterized by symmetrical inversion of views in the two adjacent characters. For example the two antithetical characters, Doro Palegari and Francesco Savio hold two contrasting opinions of the same fact twice in the play. On the first occasion they articulate different interpretations of Delia Moreno's triangular affair. On the following day they found themselves favoring the opposite to their previous interpretation. Therefore, mirroring each other reciprocally, taking the place of one-another by overturning of their own view over the matter.

The play ends in typical Prindellian manner. Nobody knows where the couple goes? An open ended end, leaving the audience bewildered. After the commotion in the foyer, the play was suspended but a part of the audience waits impatiently for the non-existent third act till the stage manager announces.

“The management in grieved to announce that is view of unfortunate incidents which took place at the end of the second act; we shall be unable to continue the performance this evening”
(90).

Art foresees what reality could not perceive. It mirrors the feelings the real people cannot realize.

BARON NUTI: You heard that on stage

SIGNORA MORENO: Let me alone! I am afraid of you!

BARON NUTI: But it was true! It's our punishment! It's our punishment! And we must suffer it together! Your place in with me! Come! Come! (89)

And brought them together in the most unusual manner. This is the immense power of theater that Pirandello has realized.

By extending the boundaries of his writings beyond the four walls he provided the basis to the modern theater. Whereas the *Six Characters* is about the problems that come in creating an art work, *Each in His Own Way* manages

the difficulties and the complications that come in the process of representation and has been taken to its apex in the play.

In a reverential tone, Block and Shedd sum up Pirandello's artistic genius in the following words:

It is not merely his concepts and attitudes that keep his work alive, but the powerful artistry with which they are transmuted into drama. In the vividness of his dramatic dialogue, the trenchancy of his character analysis, the depth and poignancy of his rendering passion, Pirandello is unsurpassed in the theater of our time. (507)

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Chapter IV

Brecht's *Good Woman of Setzuan*: Exercise in

Alienation Technique

Continental drama is known for investigation and experimentation with distinctive styles and techniques. Dramatists such as Pinter, Brecht, Beckett, and many others used material which had never been exploited by the playwrights of the well-made play. This material consisted of psychological probes, existential dilemmas, oriental fables, parables and many more unexplored areas of the human mind and personality. Most of these modern dramatists experimented with innovative form and content combining different genres for its depiction. With Brecht the content also consisted of Chinese fable. The genesis of Brecht's theatre self-titled, the Epic Theatre –lies in the premise that conventional contemporary theatre was no longer valid to the audience and 'a new theatre that instructed' was required (Gallant 104). The dramatists wished for a theatre where the intellectual abilities of the audience could be vigorously employed and the emotional quotient remained detached.

Theatre was a vehicle of social change for the German dramatist, director and poet Bertolt Brecht. In his own words:

I wanted to take the principle that it was not just the matter of interpreting the world but of changing it, and apply that to the theatre.

He emphasized and succeeded in propounding the same objective rules for living that Wedekind preached:

Rules based on undeniable truth that reality is a flux which life can come to terms with only by virtue of its plasticity, its capacity to accommodate. The star performers in the circus of existence are those with limbs of rubber; tragic moments do not leave them crushed but merely endow them with an added appreciation of the absurdities with which they have to contend (Spalter72).

In Brecht's works the desire to caricature always yielded at substantial junctures to the desire to enunciate existential misery. He gave to the world of theatre an impressive body of writing, a new method of producing and acting plays, and a theory of drama to the literary canon. After his death in East Berlin (14 Aug. 1956), his theatrical work was carried forward by Berlin Ensemble am Schiffbauerdamm, where Brecht's widow Helen Weigel guarded the techniques and policies which Brecht developed for modern stage production.

Brecht coined the term Epic theatre to enunciate the modern practical techniques and theatrical methods he expounded. Historically, Erwin Piscator pioneered 'Epic theatre. However it was Brecht who perfected the form. Piscator observed, "the epic theatre was invented by me primarily in production and by Brecht primarily in script". Thus the term did not originate with Piscator, although it is generally applied to his work today. In 1926 Brecht used it for the first time. The dramatist maintains:

"When the human being must be grasped as the totality of social relationships, only the epic form can enable the dramaturgist to find a comprehensive image of the world. The new dramaturgy must acquire a form which will not make use of throbbing suspense, but will have the suspense in the relationships of its scenes which will charge each other with tension. This form will therefore be anything but a stringing together of scenes such as we find in revues" (Bentley 217).

Thus by 1927, he was fully equipped with the prerequisites needed for establishing his great epic and documentary theatre. In connection with this 'Epic theatre' he wrote in the same year:

To expound the principles of the theatre in a few catchphrases is not possible. They still need to be worked out in detail, and include representation by the actor, stage techniques, dramaturgy, stage music, use of the film etc. The essential point of the epic theatre is perhaps it appeals less to the feelings than to the spectators reason. Instead of sharing an experience the spectator must come to grip with things. At the same time it would be quite wrong to try and deny emotion to this kind of theatre (Willet168).

In Epic theatre Brecht employs certain theatrical patterns that are now termed as 'Brechtian'. Their foremost function is to disrupt the flow of the narrative. As a result the audience does not empathize through responses, but gets

the opportunity to question and examine what is witnessed onstage. The new techniques, and the novel theatre conventions include songs, music, title, pastiche, anti-illusionist affects, montages resulting in a style which was "presentational as opposed to representational one" (Gallant 404).

The naturalistic illusionist theatre which was prevalent in the 1920s was anathema to Brecht. The playwright felt that:

The audience was held emotionally spellbound with all critical faculties suspended and left in the same state of ignorance and apathy which prevailed beforehand (Nicol 204).

And the audience, "wept, applauded, dried their eyes" (204) and returned with no memories of the theatre experience. Brecht exhorted his audience to view the play with an estranged eye with total consciousness of its content as a play and not an 'illusion of reality'. He formulated a fresh vision for familiar things which included an understanding of human nature in particular and society in general. The theory of Epic theatre aimed at accomplishing this sense of detachment. However the playwright recognized that the quintessence of the playhouse can only be realized through some degree of attachment and sympathy. These viewers could not be roused to respond to basic issues outside theatre if they were not moved to exasperation and resentment by the vices of stupidity depicted on stage. By its very clarifications that the action is not happening in the present, the theory of Epic theatre avoided risks of self-identification or illusion of reality. Another reason for Brecht's disapproval of naturalistic theatre was that it accepted the world as it was, devoid of any

possibility for change. For him social reality remained a human construct therefore eminently alterable, and there was nothing absolute about the chain of events. Consequently, in his theatre the dramatist sought to breach the chronology of events or actions to encourage the audience to stop accepting a preconceived existence which could not be improved. By deliberately dissociating the dramatic action from associated event, Brecht's Epic theatre destroyed the illusion that the characters in the drama were living rigidly determined lives.

Brecht transfigured theatre at both, the aesthetic as well as ideological levels. In his essay "The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre" Brecht termed 'Classical Theatre' as 'Dramatic Theatre'. He simultaneously defined its polar opposite 'Epic Theatre'. The dramatist's Epic theatre theory propounds that in addition to entertainment, theatre should appeal to the reasoning faculty rather than the emotions of the spectators. In such conditions audience can be moved to action to bring change. In realistic theatre he argued, the audience emotional involvement and identification with the characters prevents stimulated thought. In order to inspire in the spectator a more critical attitude to the performance on stage, Brecht developed the technique called 'Verfremdungseffekte' (alienation effect). It uses anti-illusory or anti-realistic techniques to constantly remind the spectator that the drama enacted before them is merely an illusion of reality not reality itself.

Brecht regularly used aesthetic devices (that are taken into account separately in more details later in this chapter) such as the actors' direct address to

the audience as narrator; placards and other forms of writing which breaks the story line. Critical commentary on the action; songs exhorting the audience to question; the stage performance itself; flooding of the stage with harsh white lights regardless of actual action, keeping the stage in full view of the audience, use of minimal props, and intentional songs interrupting the action at key junctures are some significant methods employed by him to break audience identification. Brecht demands from his actors not Realism and role identification but an objective style of acting, similar to the detachment expected from the spectators gathered in theatre.

Consequently the audience experiences a twin perception of involvement and detachment which is termed as 'Alienation'. Brecht observes that Alienation' or `Verfremdungseffekte' is not just breaking of illusion, but also:

... is a matter of detachment, of reorientation: exactly what Shelley wants when he wrote that poetry 'makes familiar objects to be as if they were not familiar', or Shopenhauer when he exclaimed that art must show `common object of experience in a light that is at once clear and unfamiliar (Willet 177).

Alienation is operative in proportion to the actor's ability first to empathize with the character and then to step out of the role. Brecht always desired that his actor must first learn to identify with the portrayed characters and then step out of the role to break this spell of identification. Over-familiarity breeds insensitivity. By impeding further identification between

onlookers and characters he enables both the audience and the presenters to adopt a critical attitude to the action. These startling techniques lend a fresh touch to the stage performance and provide the audience with a new perspective. The evocation of empathy followed by unexpected spell of detachment awakens sensitivity, added understanding and cognition in both the audience and the actors. The theatre public should be made to look at relationships "with a critical estranged eye of the discoverer" (Esslin 129). "The natural must be made look surprising" (129)

Brecht sought to replace illusion, magical effects, trance and sentiments with rationality, vivacity, grace and transparency. The spectators find the illusion of "spontaneous, transitory, authentic, unrehearsed events" (Willet 79) missing in the epic performance. The alienation effect awakens the audience from stupor and breaks the illusion of the fourth wall by making them aware of the performed illusion. 'Epic' is an Aristotelian term for a form of narrative that is not time bound. Both Aristotle and Brecht's application of the term is similar, as both define it as:

A sequence of incidents or events, narrated without artificial restrictions as to time, place or relevance to a formal plot (Willet 169).

Yet the Epic theatre is non-Aristotelian as it disregards one of the major components of Aristotle's tragedy: the succession of time. In the earlier years of writing, Brecht stated in the notes to *Mahagony*, 'narrative' is to replace plots; each scene is to be "an entity in itself", instead of being a part of the whole;

"moving in jerks rather than in the evolutionary necessity by which one follows the other". Just a dismantling of Aristotle's sequence of time is not enough to make any dramatic theatre Epic theater. Aristotle explained, "The Epic should have for its subject a single action, whole and complete, with a beginning, middle and an end.

Brecht attacked the set rules of the Aristotelian theatre form which move the audience to the state of trance. The difference between the two dramatic forms is, as the dramatist himself points out, Aristotelian plot is supplanted by epic narrative; spectators are no more passive recipients, Brecht intends them to observe and participate. Reason has an important role to play while emotions and instincts do not find place in Epic Theatre. Linear and logical development of events as propounded by Aristotle is replaced by circular structure. The theatre ceased to be a mere source of entertainment as Brecht used it for edifying purposes also and did not ignore the idea of amusement altogether.

For all the above mentioned techniques that were put to use and exercised, Brecht always acknowledged debt to an extensive range of theatrical conventions and traditions: Chinese, Japanese, Indian and Elizabethan theatre, the use of chorus from Greek tragedy, the technique of clowns and fairground entertainer, the Bavarian and Austrian folk plays. Many of the other staging techniques adopted by Brecht come from earlier sources. The use of three dimensional set in a huge hall stems from Jessner; insistence on actors displaying through *gestus* is derived from Meyerhold; projection of captions prior to scenes to make the audience aware about what will happen next,

mostly used as an alienation device is taken from Piscator's jotter screens and film captions.

All these have contributed, in some measure, to the broad canvas on which Brecht painted his themes. By making use of these techniques, the Epic theatre stimulates the audience's power of action and extract verdict from them. This non-Aristotelian theatre has made a remarkable contribution to the growth and improvement of the modern stage.

Heinz Politzer observes in his essay "How Epic is Bertolt Brecht's Epic Theatre?" that Strindberg, O'Neill, Pirandello, Artaud and Brecht belong to those "who have conquered the reality of imagination for the contemporary drama" (62,63). Thus with the intention of making Brecht's theory of alienation and Epic theatre more comprehensible all the techniques he employed will be dealt with separately and in greater detail later.

In a brief account of Brecht's theory of estrangement J.L. Styan in a post war statement, explained that the purpose behind this phenomenon is 'to induce an enquiry, critical attitude on the part of the spectators towards the event shown'(231). The stage and the hall should be cleared of all dramatic, enchanting and magical elements. The actor should play openly to the audience. His speech delivery should not be 'like an improvisation, but like a quotation' (231) acting out the events as historical occurrences. Styan writes, Brecht summarizes the effect of such methods upon an audience:

Since the actor does not identify himself with the person he represents, he can choose a particular point of view regarding

him, and invite the spectator (who also was not asked to identify himself with the character) to criticize the person represented ...
 A critical attitude on the part of the spectator is a thoroughly artistic attitude (232).

Hence the actor performs the twin tasks of being an actor and a character. Earlier Stanislavsky tried to bridge the gap between the performer and the performance but Brecht purposely retained the split to ensure the possibility of an unsettling internal inconsistency. Brecht had an aversion for Aristotelian drama which, according to him attempts to create pity and fear among the playgoers to purge their emotions so the spectator leaves the theatre relaxed and refreshed. Aristotelian drama attains this empathy by creating before the spectator an illusion of real incidents and inviting near identification with the protagonist which reaches a level of complete self-oblivion. These enchanting effects of stage illusion enthrall the audience into a dream-like state which Brecht regarded as "physically disgusting and downright obscene"(Esslin123). He considered such audience as uninstructed and unimproved.

A theatre that seeks to prevent identification of the audience with the character cannot allow identification of the performer with the character he portrays. Esslin in his book on Brecht observes:

The villain as he was acted in Victorian melodrama is a perfect example of a style of acting without identification between the actor and the character he portrays (131).

Negative portraiture is more fascinating than positive as the negative role is performed in the spirit of criticism. This realization of both actor and character reminds the audience that the performance they witness is not reality, but a play, a drama, a human construct that is inconsistent and changeable.

Gesture is a term employed by Brecht to describe the basic attitude of human beings, consolidating the entire gamut of outward signs of social relationship. It comprises of gaits and mannerisms, cadence and facial expressions, and much more.

While writing dialogues Brecht was very specific about the suitable *gestus*. He coerced the actors to adopt correct tone, movements and stance. Brecht was well versed in this gesture language (*gestische sprache*). His contrapuntal construction of sentences, fine and delicate rhythms, artfully placed pauses, their biblical correlation and sudden changes in intonation compel the speaker to follow the author's objective and to act as he utters them.

The story is of major interest in the epic narrative historical theatre; it provides a conflict, a dialectical framework for the interaction of social forces from where the lesson of the play emerges. Brecht's plays do not have the tones of suspense and thrill. They are constructed out of a number of scenes whose relationship with one another is vague and sketchy.

Instead of rising to a dynamic climax the story is revealed in a number of detached scenes, each complete in itself. The dramaturgic effect of the play is reinforced through collocation and "montage" of contrasting episodes. The

"epic plays" can thus be dissected and still make sense giving the same pleasure at all points. But the links between these sections should be clearly denoted, so that the spectators instead of mentally wandering through the story may get the time to analyze and criticize. The different scenes are cautiously placed together with a suitable heading for each division pointing towards the subsequent action. The titles are suggestive of the future course of events.

Songs, music and subtitles are other devices used by the playwright to give a sense of estrangement. They are deliberate means of interrupting a play so that the audience can think and reflect. They interrupt the flow, "break the illusion, and thereby render the action strange" (Esslin 128). The onset of such disruptions is usually announced in advance by some visible changes on stage: the title of the song may flash on the screen, special lights may be staged, or a symbolic emblem (e.g. flags and trumpets) may descend. The musical numbers not only express the mood of the scene but often comment on them and disclose the falsity of the sentiments they contain. The use of music and decor by the epic theatre is not to produce diabolically strong narcotic effects but to obliterate the illusion of reality.

In this whole new concept, one more principle is added. The process of showing must itself be shown, the actual mechanics of the work, the visible musicians, and lights deliberately breaking all the illusions because Brecht's theory concerns the reaction of the audience.

...and make

My curtain half-high, don't seal off the stage!

Leaning back, in his chair, let the spectator
Be aware of busy preparations, made for him
Cunningly; he sees a tinfoil moon
Float down, or a tilted roof
Being carried in; do not show him too much,
But show him something! And let him notice
That you are not Wizard,
Friends, but workers... (Esslin136)

Brecht did not support the use of lighting effects to create atmosphere and feel:

the stage must be bathed in light:

Give us light on stage. Lighting engineer! How can we,
Playwrights and actors, present our images of the world
In semi-darkness? Nebulous Twilight
Lulls to sleep. But we need the spectators'
Wakefulness, even watchfulness. Let them dream
In blazing clarity! (Esslin36)

The coming of the night was flashed by props like lamps or displaying a moon disc, not by reducing bright light in which the stage was immersed. Therefore

in order to keep the playgoers calm and yet receptive to arouse their critical faculties to knock at their conscience and complacency, the Epic theatre makes use of all the above mentioned techniques.

As for the various themes, human sexuality and its perversion pervade his works. Being a Marxist ideologist his plays reflect his distaste for bourgeois culture and capitalist economy. Within the body of Brecht's plays love is transient and obscure while sex is explicit and tangible, human dignity is constantly tested and challenged and an undercurrent of all the issues and problems and yearning to bring change is overspread.

The Good Woman of Setzuan is considered to be a chefs-d'oeuvre in the literary canon of Continental drama. The play comes into the category of Brecht's parable plays where he manifests his intensive desire to educate audience so that they gain a proper consciousness. On account of the dramatic form of his parable plays, Brecht does not only adopt the parable that appears mainly in a narrative form throughout history, he also combines it with his Epic theatre technique, thus, creating a unique form of parable: the epic parable. The parable puts forth several contemporary issues and problems. To cover the wide gamut of growing content ranging from the commercial society's 'modus operandi' to the conflict between good and evil, Brecht experimented with several styles and approaches.

"If conflict is the heart and stuff of drama", then critics regard *Good Woman* as "the most dramatic of Brecht's works". The main idea is the conflict

between good and evil, principles and practicality, instinct and reason symbolized by Shen Te's split personality, her dual role as Shen Te and Shui Ta. The play literally translated is the good 'person' of Setzuan. The reason perhaps is that the main character is a woman who later disguises herself as a man. Brecht calls it a parable and specified that the province of Setzuan is any generic city where virtuous and morally upright people are exploited by others. Shen Te, a prostitute is given enough money by the Gods as reward for her kindness to start a reasonably humble business. But to safeguard herself from parasitic humans taking advantage of her kindness she wears a mask of a male ruthless cousin Shui Ta. Phallus is a symbol of power. She too feels empowered with her declaration to society that she is a man. Androgeneity is considered to be the best form of existence in the contemporary mindset. It can be taken to be symbolically distinct from biological reality. Masculinity in this case is not proven by any sex determination. The society is not anxious about ascertaining it. Just hawkishness and violence in tone, behavior and gestures—qualities ascribed masculine aspect of human species—creates a blanket of protection for her. Her male attire helps her to get rid of those parasites. Thus Esslin points out, reason and emotions are two contradictory aspects of the same personality and it is hard to survive with undue generosity. Thus "the ruthless hard-boiled, rational part of human nature must take command", says Esslin (252).

Three Gods descend to look for a kind 'good' human being else the world would cease to continue. Worn out by the search they enter the city of

Setzuan, and request Wong the water-seller to find someone who can give them accommodation for a night. The selfish and unhelpful society refuses them shelter. However a kind hearted prostitute provides them a place to rest. Delighted with her compassion, humanity and benevolence the Gods reward her with money, sufficient enough to buy a small tobacco shop. As news of her good fortune breaks out , the cluster of parasites, debtors, and relatives descend and start taking undue advantage of her magnanimity and generosity.

The story moves with Shen Te falling in love with an airman Yang Sun. To her disappointment he too wanted her money as bribe for an employment. Having lost her lover, a pregnant Shen Te is close to losing her shop also.

Shen Te and Shui Ta appear alternately on stage. When Shui Ta appears on the scene, Shen Te is said to be out on some trip. In her absence he manages her affairs and dealings by establishing a tobacco factory where Yang Sun is given a job. Wong keeps the Gods informed about Shen Te. The long absences and lack of news of Shen Te's whereabouts worry both Wong and the Gods. They suspect Shui Ta of murdering her. Shui Ta is taken into remand and tried in the court where the gods are the judges. To prove his innocence he unmasks himself and reveals his real identity as a disguised Shen Te. The underlying moral of the story is that it is impossible to survive in this world with kindness and liberality. Only under the appearance of insensitivity and unkindness 'the good woman' is able to survive with her unborn child. This anti-moral statement has a desired effect on the audience and they become conscious of their complacent state. The end of the play presents ShenTe

yearning for attention and the Gods avoiding the issue maintaining that she would manage. They are presented as inept, feeble and powerless. Having found one good person in the world that would keep the world going they ascend to the heavens. The play concludes with an earnest call of the dramatist that if the 'good' cannot survive then the world has to be changed.

The present analysis takes into account the 1948 translation of the German version by Eric Bentley. He translated the play thrice with slight variations in each edition such as difference in dialogues and endings. Moreover the original German play is different from the three translations. But for this version, Bentley says in the introduction to "Parables for the Theatre", "the present Good Woman adheres far less closely to *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan*" (18).

In order to explicate his themes, Brecht employs a pastiche of techniques to this play. Retaining the aesthetics of drama the playwright starts the play with the conventional technique of prologue. But unlike the conventional one, this prologue involves more than one character: Wong, the water seller; the three Gods; and Shen Te, a prostitute. Following the tradition it (prologue) states the theme of the play: 'Gods descend to look for the good person' and manifests Brecht's desire of changing the world: 'the world must be changed because no one can be good and stay good.'(23) The stage directions provide no suggestion of special decor or ornamentation on stage. The prologue begins with Wong's direct address to the audience. The 'direct address to audience' is a major alienation device which is most frequently used

by the dramatist, and the actor is an important instrument that creates the same. In order to break the imaginary fourth-wall, he is made to speak directly to the audience. In terms of context these direct addresses include the actor's reflections on the action that precedes his speech. Not only Wong but other characters like Shen Te, Shui Ta, Shu Fu, Mrs Sun, and Yang Sun also come out of the character to interact with the audience and instead function as narrator-participants to break the trance-like state of the onlookers. At certain instances the address to audience is such that it seems woven into the dialogue. This furnishes the play with an effect of improvisation which can be seen in the following dialogue:

WONG(*to the audience*). They gave me such a look when I
picked up my cup just now. (24)

SHEN TE. They put me up when I first came in from the country.
(*To the audience*) of course, when my small purse was empty,
they put me out on the street, and they may be afraid I'll do
the same to them. (*To the newcomers, kindly*) come in, and
welcome, though I've only one little room for you – it's
behind the shop. (29)

In the above exchange Shen Te does not refer to a particular situation in which she is addressing nor does she name the person to whom the speech is addressed. She speaks in an abstract manner and suddenly turns to the

audience. In another instance the situation is inverted. Yang Sun interacting with audience abruptly starts conversing with Shen Te:

YANG SUN (*with loud conviviality*) . And now, friends, before the wedding gets under way, I have to ask the bride a few questions. I've no idea what kind of wife she'll make, and it worries me. (*wheeling on Shen Te*) For example, can you make five cups of tea with three tea leaves? (73)

The spectators are constantly reminded that they are in a theatre, watching a play not a figment of reality. The play consists of more elements of epic theatre that are unique to the playwright. For instance, the use of salutations 'Mr.', 'Mrs.', 'Miss', before the names of actors. This is in stark contrast to generic titles as 'Husband', 'Wife', 'Sister-in-law', 'Waiter', 'Carpenter', 'Old man', 'Boy', 'Nephew', 'Niece', 'Priest', 'Brother', 'Policeman', 'Whore', to prevent any form of sympathy or identification.

The recurrent use of multiple 'pauses' by the dramatist – short pauses, slight pauses, little pauses and silences function as devices that break the communication and generate curiosity for the subsequent action among the audience.

WONG. (*Shouting at him*). Godless rascal! Have you no religion, gentleman of Setzuan?

(*Pause*) Patience, illustrious ones! (*Pause*). There's only one person left (23).

First he shouts at the gentleman, after a ‘pause’ the speech is directed towards the Gods. At certain instances ‘pauses’ perform the function of a full stop. The subject of conversation changes but the dialogue remains the same. Thus each ‘pause’ seems to convey a different message.

YANG SUN.*(breaking off)*. You’re easily satisfied, I must say.

(Pause) what a tone! (50)

YANG SUN.*(fed up)*. This isn’t much of an entertainment.

(Pause)

SHEN TE: I can play the zither a little. *(Pause)* and I am music man *(pause)* (49).

SHEN TE: Oh no *(little pause)* Oh! A drop of rain! (51)

Similarly the actors make their entrances and exits breaking the orientation of the spectators. The voices off-stage also distance the audience from the play performed in front of them. They are heard amidst the progressing conversation and are skillfully integrated within the discourse:

VOICES *(off)*. The police, the police! Going to the tobacco shop!
Something must have happened!

....

VOICES *(off in sequence)*. Shen Te’s clothes!

-They’ve been found under the table!

-Body of murdered girl still missing!

-Tobacco king suspected! (96)

The play has an intricate arrangement of the scenes. The structure is linear comprising of numerous scenes. Loosely knitted and blended with interludes each scene stand for itself. The scene division is a characteristic feature of Brecht's art of writing. Of the ten scenes, seven have sub-division (1,1(a); 3,3(a); 4,4(a); 5,5(a); 6,6(a); 7,7(a); 9,9(a)) whereas scene 2, 8 and 10 are not given this segmenting. This eccentric configuration is seemingly peculiar to *The Good Woman of Setzuan*. The play is placed within a Chinese setting but it could be the slums of any big city. Wong the water-seller introduces the play with his address to audience. He connects the front scene through his recurring dialogues with the Gods, commenting upon the situation and informing them about Shen Te who is the connecting link in the play. Like Greek chorus, he takes part in the action and stands apart as a spectator also. The movement of the play is disrupted from time to time through songs, each with its own significance. They are used as a major distancing device. 'The Song of the Smoke' synthesizes the major theme of the play. The verses ascribed to grandfather, husband and niece manifest the thoughts and opinions of the three successive generations. Their expectations are contrary to the existing reality. 'The Song of Water Seller in the Rain' introduces Wong, the water seller. This song is complementary to his character. 'The Song of Defencelessness' mocks at the ineptness of the gods. 'The Song of the Eighth Elephant' refers metaphorically to Yang Sun. 'The Song of Nevercomes Day' echoes

hopelessness for the utopian world. The untitled song in the last scene contains the justification for the Shen Te's double role, her alter ego Shui Ta. And lastly 'The Valedictory Hymn' is a reverential song dedicated to the 'Good Woman of Setzuan'.

Language is a significant instrument in modern contemporary drama. In Brecht too, language forms a major tool to elucidate the epic style. In this didactic oeuvre he made use of irregular and unrhymed verses in between the prose:

SHEN TE...(*To the audience*):

They've stopped answering

They stay put

They do as they are told

They don't care

Nothing can make them look up

But the smell of food (60)

SHEN TE....

He is eating the refuse in the garbage can!

Only look at his grey mouth! (83)

Prose slides into inflated prose or irregular unrhymed verses. Blank verses and prose oscillates alternatively and songs interrupt the irregular flow of dialogues. The pastiche is suited to Brecht's idea of conflict. Influenced with Nietzsche's philosophy of 'god is dead', Brecht establishes the loss of faith among people and presents the gods as feeble beings, ineffective and ignorant of the happenings in the world. The playwright introduces a song in which he loathed their (god's) incompetence and lack of abilities. Moreover Wong refers to the gods sarcastically as "illustrious ones". Looking for a dwelling place for the gods Wong is disappointed at every doorstep:

VOICE FROM MR CHENG'S. Keep your gods. We have our
own troubles!

...

SECOND GOD....people just aren't religious anymore, let's face
the fact (22).

The responses of the people indicate a definite incredulity in gods, or at least the gods who are benevolent and helpful. The second god is disheartened that people just do not believe anymore.

Thus from a description of stage décor to an account of lights, from silences and pauses to long discourses, ellipses, word repetition, gestures, and movements everything communicates that meaninglessness is meaningful. The dramatist used cryptic dialogues which are short or monosyllabic in contrast to

long monotonous speeches that recur alternately in the play. The illustrations are:

YANG SUN. And now you're marrying one! The one at the tea-room by the pond?

(Shen Te *is silent*)

YANG SUN. What do you know about love?

SHEN TE. Everything.

YANG SUN. Nothing (*Pause*) or d'you just mean you enjoyed it?

SHEN TE. No.

YANG SUN. You like that?

SHEN TE. Yes (50).

And the long speeches:

POLICEMAN (*taking two cigars and placing both in his pocket*):

Thank you, Sir – I see your point. Miss Shen Te – let's mince no words – Miss Shen Te lived by selling herself. 'What else could she have done?' you ask. How else ... (44)

SHU FU. Not a word! Total silence! I know all. You have sacrificed your own love and happiness so as not to hurt a dear old couple who had put their trust in you! Not in vain ... (79)

The speeches are punctuated by pauses, broken short sentences marked by hyphens, exclamatory and interrogative sentences, ironical remarks, keywords in italics. The speeches are in indefinite present and past tense.

Further, the dialogues in the play are interposed by ellipses at several places; each time conveys a different idea. For example:

MRS MI TZU. Where is your shop, Mr...Ma Fu? (33)

suggests that Mrs Mi Tzu is trying to recall his name.

SHEN TE. I have ... a cousin.

SHEN TE. He lives ... in another city.

SHEN TE (*with an effort*). Mr... Shui ... Ta (33)

The above mentioned instances allude to Shen Te's inability to speak a lie. She, being a 'good woman', finds it difficult to form an imaginary cousin. The ellipses give a suggestion of reluctance but it was impossible for her to survive without forming her alter ego Shui Ta.

SHUI TA. I can hardly say how sorry I am that my
establishment... (42)

MRS MI TZU. No sentimental rubbish Mr Shui Ta. Your cousin
was a common... (43)

WONG. That Shen Te is still in Setzuan. She's been ... (*He
breaks off*) (93)

SHU FU. My dear Shen Te ten thousand apologies! Perhaps
you... (70)

HUSBAND. Tell them the place isn't your's to dispose of.
Belongs to... some relative who insists on all accounts being
strictly in order... (31)

In the above mentioned examples the dialogues are curtailed and incomplete indicating the unwillingness to communicate or to carry the conversation. The Husband's speech shows the incompleteness of thought.

Besides words in italics the playwright used the technique of repetition to emphasize the ideas. He embellished the play with clichés and platitudes figurative language and proverbs.

Though the play is in expressionistic mode one finds it a pastiche of different genres. Symbolism, Surrealism, parody, the implication of pantomimes, commedia dell'arte, makes the play a 'montage'. Wong the water seller could symbolize Christ, the savior, his dreams to be interpreted as visions, burnt hands as biblical overtones; rain water is the symbol of hope. Reference to 'friendly mail' can be indicative of Brecht's desire to bring change, a transformation of world into a better society. The playwright is hopeful that someday somebody would bring that 'friendly mail'. The ascent and descent of *Deus ex machina* with symbolic clouds and the transparent pipe where Wong retires illustrates Brecht's notion of showing every happening on stage to the spectators so that they can think and react and become active

participants Brecht explored several ideas and throws light on contemporary issues and problems. Constant references to theories of profit and loss, business, bargain, exchange and silver dollars become a manifestation of the influence of capitalism in his writings. Brecht concerns himself with the plebeians therefore like epic there are no superheroes with supernatural powers. The predicament and dilemmas can be the predicament and dilemmas of any ordinary human being. He wished his audience to grasp the ideas and attitudes he communicates through his works. "There is nothing in Brecht's writing that is obscure", says Willet (104).

After the two startling climaxes the playwright introduces a mock eighteenth century epilogue to mark the end of the play. It is a humble call of the dramatist and an earnest desire to bring change. The epilogue summarizes the unresolved problem and leaves the play open ended. A single actor appears on stage and talks directly to the audience and present problem of a disappointing end in rhythmic form. The last words of the epilogue are a direct appeal to the audience to find an appropriate end. He ends the play with an exclamation mark and a modal word "must". Through the anti-moral theme and epilogue the dramatist appeals to the audience to change the conditions in real life.

The problem from the beginning is solved. Watching the ambivalent action of Shen Te is being approved by the three Gods, who alone can actually answer the question, the audience comes to the conclusion that one has to be mean in order to survive. On the other hand Shen Te struggles because she

follows these values. Using this anti-moral statement Brecht manages to show a form of parable that preaches through an unethical message.

Applying this anti-moral message to their real lives, the audience comes to terms with the actual state of the world and consequently cannot be satisfied with this type of conclusion. Brecht is therefore successful in attaining his objective, to instill proper consciousness among the audience. The audience would disagree with the anti-moral theme and expected to react and formulate its own opinion. As a result audience becomes a part of it as judges. This role change is a part of alienation technique, reduces the distance between audience and stage, breaks the fourth wall convention and destroys dreamlike state created by earlier drama forms. It also disregards the role of actors as active participants and audience as passive onlookers. They are deliberately made part of the plot by judging it. Brecht's aim was more than that. He wished his audience to criticize and change it in real life.

The real essence of his writings lies in unrelentingly varying inventiveness which he mixes with his techniques. He embellished them with pseudo Shakespearean blank verse, classical hexameters, formal prologue and epilogue, music and lyrics, pastiche of prose and poetry, and rhymed and unrhymed verses. His compositions are a blend of Expressionism, Symbolism, and Surrealism and other doctrines.

To conclude, a critique of capitalism by a socialist playwright, *The Good Woman of Setzuan* interrogates whether it is possible to be good and remain good in an evil society.

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Chapter V

Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*: Dramaturgic

Use of a Chinese Fable

The Caucasian Chalk Circle, Brecht's last major endeavor has been acclaimed both as a 'masterpiece of Brecht's technique of the epic drama' and a 'parable for the theatre'. When '*Good Woman of Setzuan*' catapulted Brecht into fame, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* entrenched him on the pedestal of success. Written in 1945 the theatrical piece manifests contemporary preoccupations and concerns. The play perpetuates the human image etched out in *Good Woman*, though with meaningful modifications, greater perception and comprehensiveness. The manifest difference lies in the theme of 'goodness rewarded'. Max Spalter mentions in 'Brecht's Tradition' that the play also repeats several prominent and recurrent Brechtian motifs. Satire of the class driven selfish, immoral high society, the fascinating bait provided by goodness and virtue, compassion for the deprived, miserable, and downtrodden were some of Brecht's perennial themes. He remarks in connection with *Caucasian Chalk Circle*:

In the *Caucasian Chalk Circle* Brecht came close to writing the kind of escapist theatre against which he had once inveighed, theatre that serves to entertain and reassure rather than to disturb the audience that it compelled to make decisive reformulations of attitude (196).

Klabund's *Circle of Chalk* was a probable primary source of the play. Its roots date back to a 1300 A.D ancient Chinese drama which carried a similar name. The initial translation by Eric Bentley closely followed the original German text but omitted the prologue. In all probability Brecht who lived as an exile in United States restrained the inclusion of the prologue due to the notoriety the drama received as a piece of brazen communist propaganda.

Simplistically scrutinized *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* is a droll and ironic commentary on greed and corruption. The background of the play is provided by civil strife, political unrest, uprisings and the disenchantment of the populace with the rulers. Amidst this chaos Brecht plants his multiple tales. These fictional territories are skillfully woven into the dramaturgic fabric, effectively foregrounding the value structure of the central tale of the Chalk Circle. The multiple fictional boundaries begin with the generous hearted Grusha, a kitchen maid at the Governor's house, who is perpetually surrounded by misfortunes. Countering this principle of goodness is the Governor's wife Natella who abandons her only child as she organizes her wardrobe for flight to safety from the enemy. The two years of uprisings, strife and chaos conclude with the restoration of the Grand Duke to his seat. Natella the Governor's wife marshals together 'ironshirts' to search her abandoned son who is now heir to her former husband's fortunes. The final story of the chain is 'Azdak's reign' as a judge and his surprise judgment of imparting custody of the infant to Grusha instead of the biological mother. These major incidents which constitute the play become the embodiment of Brecht's collective creativity.

The conclusion of the Chalk Circle manifests Brecht's communist ideology that 'whosoever makes best humanitarian use of resources deserves final possession of the same'. The parable, a variant of the Biblical story of the 'Judgment of Solomon', is employed later to determine the identity of real mother. Brecht radically inverted the old story in order to arrive at the moral:

That what there is shall go to those who are good for it, (Thus)
Children to the motherly that they prosper (207).

The inversion of not just the fable but the entire feudal system is witnessed in the play. The issue of disposition of land is decided in favor of the farmers instead of goat herds who were the traditional owners and inhabitants of the valley. As for the judicial system, the trappings are replaced and Azdak is converted into a judge. He forthrightly disregarded the code of law and uses the large law book as a cushion to sit on. His sense of judgment is equally weird and strange.

Therefore, in Brecht's version it is not the real mother who is identified by Solomonic judgment of the *Chalk Circle*. Azdak awards the child to Grusha, his foster mother who risks her happiness, interest and very existence to rescue and protect him. The climax is singular for Brechtian drama as Grusha's sufferings unexpectedly end. This tale is narrated by the Singer, Arkadi Tsheidze and his musical troupe who stand outside the play to annotate the events and create an atmosphere and milieu for the forthcoming events.

A play within a play, it commences with a story teller's narration of the old Chinese legend of the 'chalk circle' which was used to determine the true mother of a disputed child. Set in a Caucasus mountain in Grusinia, medieval Georgia, the tale takes its ideological cue from the curtain raiser. *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* begins with the prologue which dramatizes a dispute over the possession of the valley abandoned in the Second World War during German invasion. The State Reconstruction Commission sends a delegate to arbitrate. The goat-herders group on the right side of the representative assert their claim based on well-established domicile and extensive use of the land for grazing their herd. The warring set from the neighboring valley which specialized in fruit and wine growing, had drafted an irrigation project to convert the contentious tract into a vineyard. After deliberations it was unanimously decided to award the fruit farmers the possession of the land as that would make it more productive. A Georgian folk Singer is invited to illustrate the ethics of this decision and celebrate the triumph of the decision through a musical performance. The renowned Singer Arkadi arrived only to be informed by the duty conscious officer to abridge the performance as the delegate has to return to town. Underscoring the alienation technique still further Brecht punctuates the discourse with terms regarding Arkadi's remuneration and his repast. Emphasis on such details was Brecht's technique of keeping the audience alert to the fact that they were witnessing a performance arranged for the entertainment of the officer. Commencing with Arkadi's melody the play is frequently interjected with songs; each occurring at

crucial junctures to aid in the progression of the drama. Brecht conveniently interpolates the story of the Chalk Circle as a theatre metaphor into this space. Experimenting with an innovation in the technique of play within a play the playwright skillfully employs the prologue as a dramatic strategy. The fable of Caucasian chalk circle with two discrete though noteworthy tales – the story of Grusha and the tale of the Judge are related in sequence before the spectators. With the preamble as the external framework the story of the chalk circle becomes the core play in the drama. The actors remain in their designated roles and do not substitute as audience. The Singer links each episode and externalizes some tacit thoughts and sentiments which aid in promoting the evolving drama.

The Caucasian Chalk Circle originates in a preamble; a dramaturgic strategy similar to *The Good Woman*. Essentially this stage manoeuvre is one long speech narrated by a single character. Brecht thwarted audience's perception by converting it into a spectacle, comprising of characters, arguments, conflicts and a concluding resolution. Thus the stagecraft provides ample introduction to the main plot and serves as a preamble to the principal play. However prior to the prologue there is an excerpt from an anonymous Chinese drama. The citation is possibly employed to explicate or make the readers familiar with the famous 'Chalk Circle' as a reference point in identifying the biological mother of the baby. It initiates the subject and anticipates the principal plot. The playwright used this Chinese legend as a metaphor for the exposition of the theme.

The beginning of the prologue, establishes the issue of the dispute which is later decided by the delegate. In the discussion the playwright scripts a 'pause'. Two entirely different subjects are stated before and after the 'pause'. It is employed prior subsequent and between dialogues where disparate views are discussed. The placement offers it multiple explications. For example:

Lavrenti is in conversation with Grusha while she is sitting with the child in a terribly cold room:

LAVRENTI. If it's too cold, you shouldn't be sitting here with the child...Aniko would never forgive herself! (*Pause*) I hope our priest didn't question about the child? (156)

The frequent use of 'laughter' at the end of several dialogues is also significant. Very similar to the forced and false laughter of modern tele-shows, this mock amusement targets the goat-herders delusion that the decision may in all probability favor them as they were the original owners of the land.

OLD MAN, right (*sighing*): ... (*A peasant woman from right takes from a basket an enormous cheese wrapped in a cloth. Applause and laughter*) OLD MAN, left (*suspiciously*): Is this a way of influencing us?

OLD MAN, right (*amid laughter*)...everyone knows you'll take the cheese and the valley, too. (*Laughter*) (116)

Stage directions also play an important role in modern drama providing details of the playwright's vision of the environment and atmosphere. Structurally different from the actual story, they are the playwright's attempt to reveal vital information. Plot, settings, atmosphere, mood, gestures, actions, characters, the integrants of a well written script require two essential components: dialogues and stage directions. Dialogues are spoken words and stage directions form the written module. They consist of unspoken expository information, appearances and background of characters, emotions, settings of the play. Brecht too, has used it as a subtext. For the purpose of stagecraft the playwright rendered visual facial expressions and movements in parenthesis. The illustrations of this technique can be witnessed during the argument over the valley. A girl tractorist quotes a poet:

GIRL TRACTORIST... (The DELEGATES excluding the OLD MAN have got up, and with the DELEGATE specified proceed to study the Agriculturist's drawings. Exclamations such as: Why is the altitude of fall 22 metres'? -This rock must be blown up' - 'actually, all they need is cement and dynamite' - They force water to come down here, that's clever!') (118)

Though the prologue is apparently disconnected from the play, yet a close reading discloses that the Singer Arkadi proposes to revise the legend of 'Chalk Circle' and he sings the altered version:

THE SINGER: A very old one. It's called 'The Chalk Circle' and comes from the Chinese. But we'll do it, of course, in a changed version.... (120)

When asked how long the songs will last, the Singer replied:

THE SINGER (*casually*): It's actually two stories. A couple of hours (121)

The entire prologue intends to propagate the author's communist ideology that claim should pass to an individual who makes best possible use of the land. The beginning is the manifestation of Brecht's socialist agenda and the principal play, introduced as play within a play, is instituted right after this. Thus the introductory scene imparts the dialectical basis for the rest of the play. The major episode of the uprising in the state is announced through Arkadi's song. It is later dramatized by the characters on the stage.

The first section recounts the story of Grusha the central figure in this section of the drama. It comprises of the trials and tribulations she endured while protecting the abandoned child. Charles Isherwood remarks that her love and care for the forsaken child "represents humanity's dormant but inextinguishable compassion which is often coaxed by the force of circumstances-the same power that more often encourages brutality and selfishness" (Isherwood)

Arkadi Tsheidze as storyteller wryly comments, "fearful is the seductive power of goodness"(139). Like the ancient Greek Chorus, the Singer is a key

contributor to the production of the play's epic and dramatic elements. In addition to announcing entries and exits, he anticipates, comments on and summarizes events. This intrusion at intervals highlights the action's status as fictional drama, simultaneously encouraging social awareness of the onlookers towards the on-and-off stage worlds. Whether contributing to narration, commentary or drama, the Singer appealed to both the intellectual and emotional faculties of the audience, inducing a critical attitude in them similar to his own. For example, the Singer illustrates the downfall of Georgi Abashwili at the very outset of the section. As the arrested governor is taken away, the narrator not only informs the audience that he will be executed but also comments on the social significance of his death.

When the house of a great one collapses

Many little ones are slain.

Those who had no share in the good fortunes of the mighty

Often have a share in their misfortunes.

The plunging wagon

Drags the sweating oxen down with it

Into the abyss.

Discouraging pity and fear created by suspense of the Governor's fate, it inspires reflection on the outcome and consequence of the unrest. He becomes still less important the moment the articulate Azdak enters to assume the role of

a social commentator. Divided in three scenes, Grusha's story includes the rescue of the governor's deserted child and flight to her brother's house, her marriage to a supposedly dying peasant, and the return of governor's wife Natella and her claim for the child. The first act commences on Easter Sunday the day of resurrection of Christ. Brecht who favored communist ideologies and undermined religion converts the day of resurrection into an insurrection. The Singer, a link between the prologue and the main play, begins by introducing the family of the Governor and their visit to church on Easter Sunday. As the legion marches towards the church the single voices of beggars and supplicants combine to create the multiple effect of a crowd:

BEGGARS AND PETITIONERS: Mercy! Mercy, Your Grace!

The taxes are too high.

- I lost my leg in the Persian War, where can I get... My brother is innocent, Your Grace, a misunderstanding... The child is starving in my arms!

- Our petition is for our son's discharge from the army, our last remaining son!

- Please, Your Grace, the water inspector takes bribes (124).

The title of the first scene 'The Noble Child' indicates that the entire act is developed around the Governor's son 'Michael'. The play is not divided in 'scenes' or 'acts' but the strategy of billboards and notices as effective instrument of alienation divide the play. The placards written as 'The Noble

Child', 'The Flight Into The Northern Mountains', 'In The Northern Mountains', 'The Story of A Judge' and 'The Chalk Circle', are displayed before the spectators in order to make them imagine and anticipate the unrevealed.

Michael is the central motif of the scene, 'the bone of contempt', and the issue analogous to the 'valley' in the prologue. The main plot apparently dissociated, does share affinities with the prologue and is organized on a similar motif. The persistent intervention of the storyteller engenders alienation, arouses the intellectual abilities of the audience, fosters doubts, stimulates questions, motivates debates and discussions among the theatre audience. This development is apt to extend the theatre experience of the audience beyond the boundaries of the theatre itself. In this scene the playwright gradually reinforces the significance of the 'Noble Child'. Prince Kazbeki who later assassinated the Governor and the latter's family are also presented. It forges ahead with an outline of other two important characters of the play; Grusha, the kitchen maid and Simon Shashava, a soldier. The Singer introduces them in the following verses.

THE SINGER:

The city is still.

Pigeons strut in the Church Square.

A soldier of the Palace Guard.

Is joking with a kitchen maid (126).

As she comes up from the river with a bundle

Both Grusha and Simon indulge in a meaningless conversation. The use of clichés and the distortion of clichés by the playwright pointedly distract the audience.

GRUSHA: What goes on? Won't the soldier say what he means
and have done?

SIMON: Something goes on. Something can be seen.

GRUSHA: Could the soldier mean I dip my toes in the water
when it's hot? There's nothing else.

SIMON: There's more. Your toes. And more.

GRUSHA: More what? At most my foot?

SIMON: Your foot. And a little more (126).

The playwright does not allow his audience to relax. He intermittently narrates and interrupts the discourse inducing thought and reaction from the viewers. The royal lineages of the child, Natella's greed for the Governor's estate, disgust for her child are apparent from the following speech:

THE GOVERNOR'S WIFE (*passing the ADJUTANT*): it's
impossible to live in such a slum. But Georgi, of course, will

only build for his little Michael. Never for me! Michael is all!

All for Michael! (128)

The audience is more or less prepared for her abandonment of the child later in the scene. The script seemingly revolves around Michael. At this juncture Arkadi is made to deliberately interrupt with comments on prevalent social conditions, criticism of the insensitivity and callousness of the powerful and influential. Brecht compares it with the overweening self-importance of Gods. Moreover, the song is given dramatic effects. The stage directions inform that the action on stage run correspondent to the song. Together with the exits and entries of the actors, the dramatist incorporates gestures and movements in the subtext.

O blindness of the great!

They go their way like gods,

....

Trusting in the power

Which has lasted so long.

But long is not forever.

O change from age to age!

Thou hope of the people!

(Enter the GOVERNOR, through the gateway, between TWO SOLDIERS armed to the teeth. He is in chains. His face is grey.)

Up, great sir, deign to walk upright!

.....

(The ARRESTED MAN looks around)

....

(The GOVERNOR is led off. A horn sounds an alarm. Noise behind the gateway.) (129, 130)

The point discerned is that several episodes move parallel, and are loosely linked in the scene: the episode of Governor's family; his wife and Kazbeki's; Simon and Grusha's. The narrator's intrusions after each tale separate the incidents.

The plot advances with meaningless words (Ffffft), phrase repetitions (oh dear, oh dear) and use of exclamatory and interrogative sentences. Grusha wavers, hesitates and is apprehensive of taking the responsibility of the royal child. She settles down and watches over the child through the night and her motherly instincts prompt her to take the infant with her. Arkadi Tshaidze narrates her dilemma while the stage directions inform:

“she does what the SINGER says as he describes it”

Thus a type of dumb show is displayed before the audience. The performing artist uses only expressions and gestures. This entire act is reminiscent of the theatrical performance called 'pantomime'. The Chorus whose role is complementary to the Singer's appears in the subsequent scene. Lending philosophical overtones to the narrative both Arkadi and the Chorus exhibit their correspondence. When the Ironshirts come looking for the baby:

THE SINGER:

As Grusha Vashnadze went northward

The Princes' Ironshirts went after her

THE CHORUS:

How will the barefoot girl escape the Ironshirts?

The bloodhounds, the trap-setters?

They hunt even by night.

Pursuers never tire.

Butchers sleep little (141-142).

Similarly, when Grusha returns cheerfully after leaving the baby at the threshold of a peasant's house.

Then the Singer says:

Why so cheerful, making for home?

Very thoughtfully the Chorus replies:

Because the child has won new parents with a laugh,

Because I'm rid of the little one, I'm cheerful.

THE SINGER:

And why so sad?

THE CHORUS:

Because I'm single and free, I'm sad

Like someone who's been robbed

Someone who's newly poor (144).

Thus the Singer as narrator participant in the action advances the drama. This dramaturgic activity is followed by complementary comments of the Chorus. Furthermore the songs recurrently interrupt the flow of the performance. 'The Song of Four General' sung by Grusha graphically delineates the predicament of Simon and Grusha. It mentions that 'fighters' like Simon and Grusha who survive when slothful cowards perish:

Sosso Robakidse

Went marching to Iran

With him the war did not agree

He soon had won a victory.

For him the weather was always right.

For him the man would always fight (140).

Theatrically, the play observes all the strategies of the epic technique but these are more pronounced and complex than in *Good Woman*. Realistically incorporated voices from the audience, constant allusions to Rosa Luxemburg, repeated reference to unfamiliar names such as ‘Mayakovsky’ and ‘Sosso Robokidse’ challenge the reader and foreground obscurity. Clichés are also copiously employed as device for alienation. The following illustrations fully demonstrate the strategy:

PEASANT WOMAN, *right*: Comrade Specialist, we haven't come here to haggle. I can't take your cap and hand you another, and say 'This one's better'. The other one might *be* better, but you *like* yours. (117)

OLD MAN, *right*: I'm not going to look. I knew the project would be good.

I won't have a pistol pointed at me.

DELEGATE: But they only want to point a pencil at you!

(Laughter) (119).

In addition to this there is a recurrent use of dramatic monologue, a device which compresses all the elements of drama into a solitary speech, the speaker, listener, situation, gestures and emotions move simultaneously in a

dramatic moment. Past and present coalesce through juxtaposition and parallel activities. The long speeches by the corporal which incorporate the physical movement of the listeners with responses, Grusha's protracted monologues addressing the child are some illustrations of this technique. In the scene of the 'rotten bridge' Grusha approaches an old man in the mountains for milk, her encounter with the corporal and Ironshirts, the peasant woman's episode, and her escape from the soldiers happen consecutively. The Singer and the Chorus separate them into minor segments and Grusha connects the entire scene. The succeeding scenes are similarly structured. Epic is a long narrative consisting of several small episodes, each complete, discrete yet contiguous. Hence the major episodes – The Noble Child, Grusha's journey to Northern Mountains, Grusha's stay in Northern Mountains, the Judge's tale and the Chalk Circle – each comprises of smaller situations, incidents and songs.

Grusha finally arrives at her brother Lavrenti's dwelling where she is not welcome. There were material as well as ideological reasons for the couple's unfriendly reception of Grusha. The Singer, who leads the action, initiates the act in unrhymed verse. But Brecht employs an altered technique of compression in the discourse:

THE SINGER:

Seven days the sister, Grusha Vashnadze,

Journeyed across the glacier

And down the slopes she journeyed.

'When I enter my brother's house', she thought,

'He will rise and embrace me.'

Is that you, sister?'

He will say,

'I have long expected you (152).

Later when Simon returns from the war:

THE SINGER:

So many words are said, so many left unsaid

The soldier has come.

Where he comes from, he does not say. Hear what he thought
and did not say:

The battle began, grey at dawn, grew bloody at noon.

The first men fell in front of me, the second behind me, the
third at my side (169).

Contrary to the long speeches of Lavrenti, Grusha's replies are incisive and cryptic. Her 'silences' as answers to her brother's queries have negative connotations. For instance, on being asked about the return of Simon she remains silent. The mention of the overpowering sound of melted snow dripping as a hyphen between the conversations is intentional. Brecht employs

sounds and silences to dislocate normal linear narrative and impart original exegesis to the dramaturgic fabric. Grusha's predicament does not end here. Sociological concerns compelled her to marry a supposedly dying peasant Jussup to get a father for the child. The dramatist highlights their bizarre marriage ceremony. Two extreme emotions are juxtaposed. Guests who come to the wedding and eat the funeral cake of the dying groom. Brecht criticizes the insanity of people and society through the weird combination of a wedding funeral. The entire incongruous exhibition of the wedding; situations, dialogues, and its representative characterization are designed to startle the viewers and disturb their sensibility. The wedding feast doubles as a funeral procession.

Experimenting with novel technique Brecht used indirect narration as a fresh distancing device. The exchange of dialogue between them is not individualized and seemingly unorthodox. The nature of their conversation is atypical and can be interpreted as a distancing device that promotes alienation:

SIMON: ...may I ask if the young lady still has parents?

GRUSHA: No, just a brother.

SIMON: As time is short - my second question is this: Is the young lady as healthy as a fish in water? (132)

Grusha who had previously employed indirect speech with Simon continues the experiment with Jussup. The discourse assigned to her is penetrating and even

monosyllabic that impart a remote dignity to her character. The repetition of phrases marks her desperation and helplessness:

GRUSHA (getting up): Simon Shashava, don't go away! He isn't mine! He isn't mine! (170)

The Singer narrator is made to comment on previous actions and introduce the subsequent scene:

THE SINGER:

The Ironshirts took the child, the beloved child

The unhappy girl followed them to the city, the dreaded city.

She who had borne him demanded the child.

She who had raised him faced the trial.

Who will decide the case?

To whom will the child be assigned?

Who will the judge be?

A good judge? A bad?

The city was in flames.

In the judge's seat sat Azdak (170-171).

Thus Singer concludes the scene and provides the connecting link for the next scene which focuses on Azdak.

The drama next opens within the same war settings. As made evident by the title 'The Story of the Judge', the whole scene focuses on the 'village scrivener' Azdak. The narrator lapses into flashback and recollects the day of the great revolt when the grand Duke was overthrown. He recollects the disreputable career of Azdak, a village rogue whom the 'ironshirts' appoint judge. Block and Shedd opined, "Azdak performs his office with uncommon sagacity" (871). They believed that 'Azdak is one of the Brecht's most striking and most attractive comic characters" (871). From the beginning till the fourth scene the drama apparently follows Aristotelian linear structure which is non-Brechtian. But the fourth scene breaks the audience's trance through alienation. Instead of developing the plot by disclosing the child's fate, Grusha's future, and Natella Abashwili's claim for her abandoned child, Brecht distorts the linear course of action. He entrusts an entire act to his most powerful character Azdak. The Singer designates the motif dramatically:

Hear the story of the judge

How he turned judge, how he passed judgment, what

kind of judge he was.

.....

The village scrivener Azdak found a fugitive in the woods

and hid him in his hut (171).

The conversation between the old man and Azdak was incomprehensible. To Azdak's long speeches the old man replies with half-finished sentences that are either too short or monosyllabic. The syntax of old man uses no prepositions, conjunctions or pronouns. Seemingly the dialogic replies of the old man give the effect of a scared and frightened individual who is too petrified to speak. The illustrations are:

When Azdak inquired him the reason for hiding like this, he replied

Had to! Had to! (171)

Likewise, when Azdak suspects him to be a man of fortune not an old destitute and asked him to leave the place. The answer is:

Pursued. Need undivided attention. Make proposition... (172)

Azdak who refuses to shelter him is lured through:

Understand point of view! Persuasion! Pay hundred thousand Piastres one night! Yes? (172)

The conversation is interrupted by a voice "Azdak" coming from off stage. The device is exercised in order to surprise the audience from any emotional participation with the old man.

The utilization of clichés in Azdak's long speeches while conversing with Shauwa, the policeman, is yet another distancing device. Brecht does not

permit his audience/readers slip into a trance by constantly reminding them at regular periods that they are watching a play and not a segment of reality.

Before Azdak's appointment as a judge, the Fat Prince attempts to employ his nephew for the same position. Thus in order to give the nephew a chance to show his skill in judging, a mock-trial is set up in which Azdak assumes the role of Grand Duke on trial. After the test it is established that the nephew is not fit for the position and Azdak is to be given the judge's office.

"The judge was always a rascal! Now the rascal shall be a judge!"

(183)

His reasoning before and after becoming a judge though preposterous on the surface, is directed towards advantage for the underdog. Nearly every proceeding in his court is bizarre. Azdak begins all his cases by saying, "I accept ", implying his willingness to bribe.

The playwright returns to Grusha's story in the fifth and the final scene. In correspondence to the preceding scenes, the Singer opens the scene in the court. The courtroom trial was one of Brecht's favorite models for epic theatre. The subtext creates an atmosphere and demonstrates the position of all the characters.

Throughout the scene the actors move through exits and entrances breaking empathy and creating detachment. Azdak prepares himself for the trial and uses a large law book as a pillow to sit on. This can be perceived as the insignificance of the law book for Azdak because he has his own code of

law and does not believe in any constitution. The trial is complete with arguments and counterarguments. The altercation between Azdak and Simon is full of clichés. The judge's consequent discourse is a compounding of the arguments presented by Simon and the lawyers. The heated disagreement becomes hackneyed. To Simon and Grusha, Azdak is apparently favoring the Governor's wife for they had bribed him heavily.

AZDAK. When you go to the butcher you know you have to pay.

But you people go to the judge as if you were off to a funeral supper."

Simon reacts:

"When the house was shod, the housefly

Held out its legs, as the saying is"

The confrontation later is clichéd:

AZDAK. (*Eagerly accepting the challenge*): better a treasure in manure than a stone in a mountain stream.

SIMON: A fine day. Let's go fishing, said the angler to the worm.

AZDAK: I'm my own master, said the servant and cut off his foot.

SIMON: I love you as father, said the Tsar to the peasants, and the Tsarevitch's head chopped off (202).

The clichéd language lends monotony to the drama. Brecht's socialist concerns are also manifested in this scene. During the trial it was revealed that Natella only wants the child because all the estates and finances of the Governor are tied to the heir and cannot be accessed without him. The above mentioned illustrations reveal that Grusha's defense was ineffective. After contemplation Azdak announces he could not find the true mother, and has to formulate a test for discovery. A Circle of Chalk is to be drawn and Michael is placed at the centre. The real mother, Azdak states, will be able to pull the child from the centre. If they both pull they will tear the child into two halves. The test begins but Grusha refuses to pull him. This trial and Grusha's dilemma are interspersed by a poignant song reflecting her thoughts towards Michael. Sensing her discomfiture Azdak declares Grusha to be Michael's true mother. Brecht ignores the original story and concludes the parable in the similar manner as the prologue. Thus the play acquires a circular structure with the end returning to the beginning. He favors the selfless commitment of an individual who acts for the good of others over any claim of natural right. Thematically, Esslin assessed: the mother figure is split into two: The physical mother symbolizes reason and spiritual mother symbolizes emotion and it is emotion not reason that wins the battle.

People gathered to celebrate the strange and an unexpected judgment of Azdak. Further, instead of divorcing the elderly couple, he separates Grusha and the old peasant, enabling her to marry Simon. It is important to note that Azdak has left behind 'Azdak Garden' which might be a representation of

Biblical Garden of Eden. Azdak's character can be judged as a spiritual figure who leaves behind a memory of his reign and justice that it created for the people. Heinz Politzer assessed the story teller as "a crossbreed between Greek Chorus and personified Alienation effect" who has the final words:

Take note what men of old concluded

That what there is shall go to those who are good for it,

Children to the motherly, that they prosper,

Carts to good drivers, that they can be driven well,

The valley to the waterers, that it yield fruit (207).

The play ends on a note similar to the beginning, that is, 'the valley to the waterers, that it yield fruit'. Also, it connects the main plot and the prologue. Music and lyrics is incorporated throughout with the aid of the Singer, Chorus, Grusha and Azdak. The Singer often probes into the minds of characters and articulates their thoughts and enhances the dramatic scenes with complex narration rather than plain and simple dialogues.

Thus five key episodes constitute *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. As an operative device of alienation each episode is an independent play in itself and appears to be a 'playlet'. Moreover, the principle play has two seemingly different plots: The account of Grusha's predicament and the life of Azdak braided together in the end. With the weaving together of the two stories Brecht

raises the question of class difference, the influence and sovereignty of ancient laws, and the power of justice.

The play contains certain absurdist elements also. There are instances when the characters are unable to communicate properly. This inability to converse is motivated by reticence, circumstances and conventions. Grusha and Simon unable to speak for themselves, the Old Man's discourse is incomprehensible to Azdak, Grusha's hesitant speeches while conversing with his brother are the instances in the play. Incongruity in characterization is another device of Absurd tradition in the play. The bizarreness generates humor in a satirical, irrational and absurd fashion. Eccentricity is occasionally introduced through minor.

Natasha Hulugalle remarked, "it (*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*) was to be experienced as a play of ideas; it satirized the judiciary, mocked religious life and forced the onlookers to pick rides" While Robert Brustein assessed it with a different perspective. He says that the play "is not only permeated with the mood and atmosphere of Shakespearean comedy but also some of its dramatic conventions" (Spalter 197). Brustein goes on to note that apart from other borrowings there is "The Main Plot" which turns on suspense, understanding and intrigue". Commenting on the content Spalter says "The Caucasian Chalk Circle is the one play in which goodness is not without compensation". He observed that the reward of goodness 'plainly a wish fulfilling projection of Brecht himself. Oliver and Bogard revered Brecht and his works in the following words:

A Cryptic man and a champion in the art of leaving unwelcome questions open. When his work is at its best, it is just as unscrutable as he was.

To conclude in the words of Block and Shedd:

The lightness and simplicity of the action, the loose and seemingly random construction, the contrasting use of masks, the spirited interplay of song and choral narrative, all stamp the play as one of the Brecht's finest accomplishments (Block and Shedd 171).

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Chapter VI

Albee's The Zoo Story: The Interdependence of Form and Content

The Theatre of the Absurd projected a reality beyond the limits of logic and literal vigilance. Eugene Ionesco, Samuel Beckett, Jean Genet, Edward Albee, and Harold Pinter playwrights of Absurd drama experienced a deep sense of loss, despair and hopelessness due to the destruction caused by the two world wars and responded to the anguish in a similar manner. Theatre of the Absurd was not a movement because it neither had a slogan, flag nor a manifesto. Instead it was a state of mind and an attitude to life that became a common perception. The Absurd theatre is analogous to the wild fancy and dark humour of Surrealism and Expressionism and reminiscent of the many of the stylistic tricks and moves of the surrealist practitioners on the stage during the two world wars. It has deep affinities with Existentialism also as both reject the concept of man as a purely rational being. Absurd drama is a drama of being which deals with the elusive experiences of the inner world. And these experiences are revealed through the language which is a discourse of living experience not of conceptual thought and reason. It thus shunned the realistic techniques of presentation. The struggle for integration between the subject matter and the form in which Absurd drama is expressed separates the theatre of the Absurd from existential theatre. The absurdists ignore the rationally measureable ingredients of the theatre, the highly polished carpentry of plot in

a well-made play, the imitation of reality and the sharp motivation of characters. The theatrical effect may be achieved through the use of comic gestures, exaggeration, repetitive action and dialogues, and the use of incongruous or bizarre props. Instead of being provided readymade solutions the audience is exhorted to formulate queries that are related to the meaning of the play. Esslin in his path breaking book 'The Theatre of the Absurd' explicates:

It is a theatre of situation as against a theatre of events in sequence, and therefore it uses a language based on patterns of concrete images rather than arguments and discursive speech. The Theatre of the Absurd projects its author's personal world, it lacks objectively valid characters. It cannot show the clash of opposing temperaments or study human passions locked in conflict, and is therefore not dramatic in the accepted sense of the term. Nor is it concerned with telling a story in order to communicate some moral or social lesson, as is the aim of Brecht's narrative 'epic theatre' (Esslin 293).

Further he calls it a literature of "verbal nonsense". The plays have no story or plot and are often without recognized characters and present the audience with almost mechanical puppets. They have neither a beginning nor an end but often seem to be reflections of dreams and nightmares consisting of incoherent babblings, or witty repartees and pointed dialogues (Esslin 293). The plays reflect the preoccupations and apprehensions, the sentiments and thoughts

processes of the modern man of our times. The hallmark of this attitude is that the unwavering basic concepts and traditional axioms of the former ages have been discredited and debunked as cheap and childish illusions. The theatre of the Absurd is a return to an old even obsolete tradition. Its newness lies in its somewhat unusual coalescence of archaisms. A scrutiny reveals that what rattles the unprepared spectator as iconoclastic and unintelligible innovation is in fact a mere expansion and development of procedures that are familiar in just slightly different context.

The unprecedented and startling treatment of language is another striking characteristic of Absurd drama. This distrust and devaluation of language is in tune with the mood and temper of our times. Language has been so completely pulverized by clichés, banalities, mechanical thoughts and the conventional attitudes that it fails to convey meaning explicitly. The drama rises above the categories of comedy and tragedy and combines laughter with dark humour. Nicolle sums up the essence of Absurd drama:

Here is the dramatic mirror which shows us the basic Absurdities of present day men, able to achieve undreamt of wonders by the application of their scientific imagination and yet the constant prey of devouring thoughts and passions: here are the human beings so proud of their ability to communicate with each other, delineated in such a manner as to demonstrate the meaninglessness of their common talk; here are men and women outwardly logical and 'sensible', who are victims of

psychological and social irrationalities; here, in fact, is a vision of man and his universe which may seem entirely new and fresh (Nicolle 5).

American realistic drama which began at the turn of the century was goal-oriented depicting the socio-ideological concerns of its major practitioners. The objective was to be explicit and precise. The dramatic components of the realistic drama are thus structured to reveal the mystery in the drama and provide a solution to the problem raised in it. Characteristically the action progresses towards a single climax, meanings are 'accentuated, characters reveal their motives, the plots move linearly, and language communicates the confusion and mystery within the logical structure. By the 1920s the realistic conventions of drama began to show signs of changes giving way to the 'theatre of the Absurd'. John Mason Brown explicates the advent of the Theatre of the Absurd in the following words:

To speak for a world that seemed well-made, there was once the "well-made" play. That was before the threats and confusions of the present. To reflect a world that to more and more people has seemed ill-made, the "unmade" play came into being... It was, in the jargon of the avant-garde, "anti-play" and "anti-theatre" and as different from a conventional play as in painting the work of today's abstract expressionist is from yesterday's realist. Its lack of logic was its sole claim to logic, because authors employing its

form did not believe logic could be superimposed on an illogical world (537).

The impelling cause behind the disturbances in the twentieth century was the decline in moral and religious faith. Nietzsche's philosophy of 'God is Dead' led to the promotion of science, human progress and political ideologies. After the two devastating world wars humanity struggled for faith, companionship and compassion. The new philosophy of Existentialism led to an awareness of the true human condition and a search to regain humanity's lost sense of religious belief. The late 1920s witnessed that this philosophical development started to influence art and literature thematically as well as technically, and by the end of World War II the playwrights began to incorporate this content into their works. Consequently the existentialist ideas were transformed into an entirely novel theatrical idiom which later came to be referred as the 'Theatre of the Absurd'.

The theatre had become "middle-aged", says Brown, and "lacked daring" (535). For the major part it was a reiteration of the content without innovations. Apparently it does not synchronize with the contemporary times and unwilling to entangle with the problems of the times. Writers from different countries such as Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Arthur Adamov, Jean Genet, Edward Albee, Harold Pinter, and others revolutionized the theatre in their own nations, seemingly heading in the same direction. A Hungarian born author and a critic, Martin Esslin grouped them together under the title of the Theatre of the Absurd. His path breaking work and a comprehensive

document of the same name became a guideline for the study of contemporary stage. He indicates that originally “Absurd” was a musical term meaning “out of harmony”, hence its extension to “out of harmony with reason or propriety; incongruous, unreasonable, illogical”. It was on similar plane, Esslin points out, that Camus used the term “Absurdity” to “diagnose the human situation in a world of shattered beliefs”, and Ionesco defined the term Absurd as “that which is devoid of purpose” and adds, “cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless”. Hence the theatre is an expression of modern man’s endeavors to come to terms with the world in which he lives and to liberate him from the delusion that causes disappointments. Further, Gassner observes:

It (Theatre of the Absurd) uses antibourgeois shock tactics including, a deliberate resort to coarse even scatological speech, childish or freakish simplifications and exaggerations, clowning and acrobatic circus feats, mock-heroic passages, brusque transitions from apparent Realism to the wildest kind of farce, cultivated naiveté, and calculated incredibility (326).

The plays of the Absurd tradition are preoccupied with life’s intricate mysteries. The recurrent themes have been failure to communicate with people, the falseness of most human values, man’s isolation from his fellow human beings, the living who are unknowingly dead and the resemblance between animals and humans who live in a zoo of their own. In an essay, ‘Which theatre is the Absurd one?’ Albee calls the Theatre of the Absurd as the Realistic

theatre of our time because it mirrors man's condition as it really is. Also in the similar essay he describes the Absurd theatre as:

Man's attempt to make sense for himself out of his senseless position in the world which makes no sense – because the moral, religious, political, and social structure man has erected to illusion himself have collapsed (Gassner 332).

Whereas Albert Camus explicates the situation in the following words:

In a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights. Man feels an alien, stranger. His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of the lost home or the hope of a promised land. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, is properly the feeling of Absurdity (Camus xii).

To incorporate this content Absurd drama disrupts the logic and breaks the language into units. Esslin defines the plays written in this tradition as moving:

“toward a radical devaluation of language, toward a poetry that is to emerge from the concrete and objectified images of the stage itself” (Esslin 26).

He further explains:

The element of language still plays an important part in this conception, but what happens on stage transcends, and often contradicts, the word spoken by the character (26).

The aim of the Absurd dramatist is to present the mysteries and paradoxes in human existence within the dramatic structure. Logical communication is reduced to meaningless cries and screams. They use clichés, silences and ambiguities as effective techniques to represent life as they perceive it. The unsaid meaning is conveyed through gaps, fragmented speeches, incomplete stories that leave the hidden motives, facts concealed or cryptically revealed. These silences, incomplete sentences with pauses and ellipses used in the text open the drama to myriad interpretations. Actors engage in verbal and non-verbal dialogues and make silences speak through vocal intonations and gestures.

Thus Absurd drama is not a drama of ideas but drama of the spirit of existence. It abandons discursive thoughts and rational devices and uses the language of living experience. It overlooks the realistic mode of presentation since the absurdists find Realism inadequate to accommodate existing state of affairs, that is, “man’s loneliness anxiety vulnerability and the vision of his entrapment in a complicated, painful and incomprehensible situation”.(Zaidi 160). Absurd drama shares affinities with Existentialism but in its struggle to integrate content and form it distinguishes itself from the existential theatre. Zahida Zaidi condensed the philosophy into a few words.

It (Absurd Drama) does not seem to be motivated by a clearly defined philosophic system. Its insights are arrived at independently and intuitively and its artistic approach more experimental and imaginative (183).

The Zoo Story, *The Death of Bessie Smith*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, and *The Sandbox* established Edward Albee as a playwright of repute. With *The Zoo Story* which has Absurdist overtones Albee came to be regarded as the *enfant terrible* of American theatre, challenging and debunking the myth his country represented. As an avant-garde artist and an iconoclast, he attacked American materialism, breakdown of communication, and superficial values. One of the important preoccupations of Albee is to highlight the adverse effects of living in illusion and upholding myths as false forms of consolation in an otherwise inane existence.

His writing career is typified by experimentation and a long training of trial and error which eventually resulted in success and fame. At the age of twenty he walked out on his affluent adoptive parents and lived inconspicuously among artists and bohemians of New York's Greenwich Village. Albee attempted several genres of writing and received recognition for plays that depicted the quintessential contemporary American society. An accidental meeting of two strangers in a park (*The Zoo Story*), a satiric treatment of a marriage revealing the emptiness of the relationship between a couple (*The American Dream*), the life of an elderly couple revolving around a son who never existed (*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*) are easily recognizable familiar situations.

As a critic of American consumerist society living under the impact of marketing and advertisement, Albee attempts to debunk the fanciful American Dream. The illusion of a perfect and comfortable living with financial stability

and material prosperity is mocked at from the Absurdist point of view in his plays.

An exploration of the gallery of Absurd drama conjures a series of lively images on the screen of imagination: an old man sitting by his tape recorder, running a tape of his past life, (Krapp's Last Tape), two vagabonds waiting unendingly under a tree (Waiting for Godot), a middle-aged man in the park and his desperate attempts to make contact with a complacent companion. These images are the projection of human predicament made tangible through dramatization on stage. The study of this avant-garde movement as literature, as innovative stage technique, as an expression of modern sensibility and contemporary sufferings can be contained from the assessment of the works themselves. From the above cited instances, this chapter intends to examine '*The Zoo Story*' by Edward Albee more closely for its characteristic Absurd dramatic mode.

The movement appeared late in America because there has been no relative loss of faith and purpose. However Edward Albee attacked the foundation of 'American Dream', that is, American optimism of being superpower. By doing so he came to be known as the playwright of the Absurd stream. His debut play 'the Zoo Story' (1959) brought him world-wide recognition as a proponent of the Theatre of the Absurd'. Jean Gould comments:

He had spoken out at last, telling the truth in sweeping indictment of the world as he had found it—a world that made conformity a virtue and nonconformity a vice, a disease (277).

A brilliantly drawn discourse between Jerry, the outcast and Peter, the conformist, is interrupted by its sensational ending.

... the plight of the Schizophrenic outcast is turned into an act of sentimentality, especially as the victim expires in touching solitude and fellow feeling for his involuntary murderer (Esslin 311).

The play opens on a bare stage with a park bench. The place is the public park yet more secluded and lonely than a dark alley. The theme of Absurdity is apparent from the beginning, characterized by an empty stage without stage settings and props and just two characters to enact the entire drama. Comparable to Beckett's *Waiting For Godot*, the play neither witnesses any significant development in plot or action nor change in settings. Jerry impaling himself on the knife is the sole important action which forms the climax of the play.

The secluded park creates a vivid and realistic image of isolation combined with the quietness of mood, conveyed by Peter, a middle-aged respectable man sitting by himself on an idyllic Sunday afternoon reading in the park. However, the play's apparent serenity does not last long. The bench is an entity to take over, an arena for assertion. The brawl over the bench turns

out to be lethal. It ends with Jerry impaling himself on a knife held by Peter, shattering the self-reflecting world of this man. Peter does not get involved in the suicide/murder out of impetuosity. In fact he does not even know Jerry's secret intention. By the play's end, Peter has taken a man's life and had his own relentlessly transformed.

Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story* is a long one-act play in which "nothing happens" except the exchange of dialogues until the violent ending. It is a drama of language. Depicted in the play also, Absurd drama strives to integrate content and form. Language carries the subject matter thereby content converts into form and form is content. Language creates situations and gives momentum to the play. Through verbal communication only Jerry Albee's anti-hero depicts the haunting loneliness, and the human despair to establish a 'connect' with others. With the character of Jerry, Albee gave a new voice to American drama.

Albee empowered the disempowered. Living on the margins of the society, Jerry is the anti-establishment, counterculture hero. He is the dark stranger, the social outcast, the orphan, the Other (Stephen Bottoms 19).

The play with minimum number of characters, almost no props and stage settings, no action, no drama, in its accepted sense of the term, effectively portrays the predicament of contemporary modern man. The disillusionment, loss of religious faith, alienation, isolation and separation from fellow beings, breakdown of communication consequent to the second world war left man a

stranger in his own world. Absurd dramatists endeavored to display this human adversity on stage. Content and form are so completely merged with each other that seemingly content becomes form and form content. This is the Absurdity of Absurd technique of which *The Zoo Story* is an apparent manifestation. Therefore language has a very significant role to play in Absurd drama. On one hand human yearning to communicate, to establish some sort of contact is presented on stage through language. On the other hand, a breakdown in communication and failure of language to bridge this gap is also staged in the theatre. Language is used to highlight the failure of language to facilitate communication. It is only through words that the play is set in dramaturgic mode since action is conspicuously absent.

The narrative, in the simplest terms, recounts the events in the life of Jerry, who, bogged down with loneliness, starts up a conversation with a stranger in a park and eventually compels him to commit a brutal act. In the play's stage directions *Peter* is described as:

a man in his early forties, neither fat nor gaunt, neither handsome nor homely. He wears tweeds, smokes a pipe, carries horn-rimmed glasses. Although he is moving middle age, his dress and his manner would suggest a man younger (14).

The picture is suggestive of Peter's perfect life which he seems to be living on his own terms. He is a representative of the bourgeoisie, which Albee criticized throughout his writing career. For Albee, Peter's life is an epitome of American middle-class complacent existence. In contrast to the protagonist *Peter*, Jerry is

created as an antagonist, diametrically opposite to *Peter*. His portrayal is indicative of his deterioration:

What was once a trim and lightly muscled body has begun to go to fat; and while he is no longer handsome, it is evident that he was once (14).

His “fall from physical grace” suggests “a great weariness” (14). On the stage, Peter’s book stands for an intellectual escape which shields him from Jerry’s intrusion. He constantly turns away from Jerry and looks into his book to communicate his cautiousness and indifference to a stranger. Instead of addressing a person with formal greetings, Jerry abruptly tries to start a conversation, immediately upon entering the stage, “I’ve been to the zoo”. This weird manner of starting a conversation goes unnoticed. Albee devises Peter’s silence in parenthesis – “Peter doesn’t notice”. *The Zoo Story* serves as an introduction to the understanding of Albee’s characteristic use of “silence and pauses”. The author articulates collapse in communication, festering sense of alienation, camouflage the past, and the unclear and doubtful motives of characters during their interaction with each other through narrational silence. Peter uses silence to communicate his unwillingness to listen while Jerry who initiates the conversation evades his own emotions with his eloquent long speeches. To Jerry’s questions Peter’s responses are brief and cryptic. Jerry perceives a sense of inadequacy in his reactions. Peter’s faltering replies becomes clear when the conversation moved to the subject of family. For

instance, to Jerry's enquiry that whether his children are boys, his answer: "No, girls...both girls" (18) is an unscripted note of regret denoted by ellipses.

In order to attract Peter's attention, Jerry raises the pitch of his voice that Albee scripts in bold letters – **Mister, I've been to the zoo!** Which Peter is unable to ignore; he "puts his book down, his pipe out and away, smiling" (17). Albee does not use stage directions but a few to convey the change in emotions. Apparently, Jerry is successful in involving Peter to converse, and establish some contact with him. Thus, from the commencement of the play, the two characters, from two distinct classes are prepared to collide. Their meeting place, the central park, lies in between Peter's east-side 'paradise' and Jerry's west-side 'prison'. Albee's objective is, instead of focusing on their disparities, to present a sense of isolation and emptiness which is common to both the characters. The basic difference is that Jerry is aware of his loneliness while Peter's still lies buried below the superficial middle-class bliss.

Further, the frequent use of the phrase "I've been to the zoo/ "What happened at the zoo" is technically significant. Albee uses repetition as an important tool to escalate action or movements. The first and the major movement of the play is employment of 'repetition' for intensification. The dramatist uses the catchphrase to draw the audience's attention to human predicament in his Absurdist style. During the course of the play, Jerry tells some substantial stories from his personal life as an introduction to the awaited zoo story:

Jerry... after I tell you about the dog, do you know what then?

Then...Then I'll tell you about what happened at the zoo (26).

The untold story in the play is that the life in a zoo is analogous to the life of people in America. The Americans compartmentalized living wherein communication is not possible, mutual empathy does not exist and people are unable to come to terms with their true condition.

With the refrain "I have been to the zoo" which is repeated three times in the beginning of the play, Jerry is trying to communicate to Peter and to the audience as well, that he has experienced this world, contemporary America - the New York City. The dramatist assigns several digressions to the speeches of Jerry. The recurrence of the expression allows the readers/audience to retrieve the original idea. Also when the readers get carried away with Jerry's extensive tales about his past life, an abrupt and sudden use of the refrain, 'what happened at the zoo' breaches the concentration of the audience giving the feel of 'estrangement effect'. William I. Oliver in his essay 'Between Absurdity and the Playwright observes:

One of the advantages of the expressionistic control in Absurdist drama is its power to alienate the audience, keeping it alive to the ideological by-play of the symbols (Bogard and Oliver 9).

He further adds that Esslin is of the opinion that the Absurdist have succeeded in attaining this alienation effect more effectively than its inventor Bertolt Brecht.

Albee describes Jerry's dwelling place as a "laughably small room" conjoint with several other similar rooms (21). It connotes the weirdness of his living conditions. He knows a little about his neighbors - "the colored queen", "the Puerto Rican family", and "the lady who cries all the time" (20) - because, he has no genuine communication with them. This is a solitary existence characterized by his list of minimal belongings including empty picture frames and a pack of pornographic playing cards among other things. The Absurdity of his existence gets more obvious in the account of his carnal relationships. He remarks:

I wonder if it's sad that I never see the little ladies more than once. I've never been able to have sex with, or, how is it put?... make love to anybody more than once.. And now; oh, do I love the little ladies; really, I love them. For about an hour (24).

He does not form meaningful relationship with them – nothing worth remembering to put in one of the empty photo frames.

This picture of Jerry's confinement is a manifestation of his attitude towards American life. From the description of his hive-like rooming house to his story about the titular Zoo, Jerry draws a picture of a society in which people are ensnared and separated from each other due to sociopolitical and interpersonal barriers. The zoo provides the accurate analogy for such human isolation Jerry says:

I went to the zoo to find out more about the way people exist with animals, and the way animal exist with each other, and with

people too. It probably wasn't a fair test, what with everyone separated by bars from everyone else, the animals for the most part from each other, and always the people from the animals. But if it's a zoo that's the way it is (34).

For Jerry, zoo is a metaphor for American life. Realizing this, Jerry seeks an escape in the form of having some contact with Peter who is a complete stranger to him.

The next noteworthy situation is generated when Jerry is asked about putting his parents' pictures in empty photo frames. Jerry tells Peter that his parents died when he was very young. From this single incident stem many situations and thus drama is created. His mother deserted his father for adulterous relationship which lasted for a period of a year only. Her alcoholism led to her death at Christmas and then his father's accidental demise left him alone. The seriocomic loss of his parents can be assessed in the light of Esslin's statement: "Theater of the Absurd transcends the categories of comedy and tragedy and combines laughter with horror". (Esslin 300). After his parent's death his mother's sister looked after Jerry till she dies after which Jerry finds himself alone in the woeful world. Nevertheless, in a strange insensitive way, he admits:

that was a long time ago, and I have no feeling about any of it that I care to admit to myself (23).

From these entanglements emerge emotional decline of his relationship that never took shape. This is conveyed through his restless movements on stage, abrupt and unrelated questions, repressed anxiety and mood swings directed at Peter who does not understand his emotions. Peter, for whom life is confined to peaceful family life and economic stability, is unable to look beyond and finds Jerry's horrors of life incomprehensible. On one hand Jerry is desperate to have some contact with Peter to overcome his isolation. On the other, he wants to take Peter out of his complacent existence and make him confront the stark realities of life.

In increasingly frantic attempts, to establish a connection with Peter and make him responsive of the sterility of his existence, Jerry narrates the allegorical 'story of Jerry and the Dog'. Before that Jerry describes his landlady which serves as an introduction to one more drama in the play. He says, she is "fat, ugly, mean, stupid, unwashed, misanthropic, cheap, drunken bag of garbage" (25). The scatological language used at this point and throughout the play is peculiar to the Absurd playwrights. On introducing the engaging character of landlady, Stephen Coy, a well-known drama critic, comments on the introduction of this particular character to the play:

The land lady despite being one of the most arresting offstage presences in American drama is only the prelude to what might be called the third movement of the play.

The vivid and powerful portrayal of the landlady and her voluptuous advances towards Jerry makes her come alive on the screen of the viewers' imagination. Such is the sovereignty of language in Albee's plays.

The mention of the character of landlady causes consternation to Peter because this young publishing executive is a representative of a culture that negates the existence of such individuals like Jerry and the Landlady. Reality is defined by images presented on television and "Time" magazine for Peter.

PETER. It's so... unthinkable. I find it hard to believe that people
such as that really are.

JERRY. (Lightly mocking) It's for reading about, isn't it?

PETER. (Seriously) Yes

JERRY. And fact is better left to fiction (26).

But by the end of the play, Jerry has managed to change Peter's perception of reality to such an extent that Peter gets into physical fight over what he believes to be "his" bench and in self-defense helps Jerry kill himself. The reality which initially appears more real than fiction to Peter now fills him with starkness and force and he runs off screaming "oh my god!"

As Jerry narrates the story of the 'Jerry and the Dog', his continual back and forth movements on stage convey his deep anxiety. During the course of this encounter he narrates that he tries to pacify the dog, which growls at him whenever he comes into his apartment, using alternate gestures of love and

violence. In this long monologue by Jerry, the dramatist barely provides stage direction but for Peter's gestures and change in emotions. For example:

- *PETER* raises a hand in protest
- *PETER* indicates his increasing displeasure and slowly growing antagonism
- *PETER* sets to thinking...
- *PETER* reacts scoffingly
- *PETER* seems to be hypnotized

As for Jerry's movements, Albee recedes into background by staying reticent and leaves most of the interpretation of the drama to the discretion of the actor and director. Critics have carefully examined the story for its incoherent narration. The improper fluctuations in Jerry's tone of correlation of the unrelated objects into peculiar analogies lead to oddity of language:

It's just... It's just that... (*JERRY is abnormally tense, now*)... it's just that if you can't deal with people, you have to make a start somewhere. WITH ANIMALS! (*Much faster now, and like a conspirator*) Don't you see? A person has to have some way of dealing with SOMETHING. If not with people...if not with people... SOMETHING. With a bed, with a cockroach, with a mirror... no, that's too hard, that's one of the last steps. With a cockroach, with a ... with a ... With a carpet, a roll of toilet paper... (30).

The mounting menace and the growing angst are distinctly evident in Jerry's quick pacing on the stage and recurring shrieks amid the monologue. Critics observe linguistic uniqueness in the story in Jerry's frequent obstructions in his thoughts with the words "and" and "oh, yes", use of linking word "so" to connect his fragmented tale, and his repetition of the phrase, "it's just that..." as he struggles to find words for indefinable emotions.

By the end of the story, Jerry's broken speech, his tone and physical movements convey his hankering to form a connection, to communicate with some living breathing object. Jerry is thus an absolute personification of Absurd predicament very artfully projected on stage. The love hate theme is carefully developed in the story.

But during that twenty seconds or two hours that we looked into each other's face, we made contact. Now, here is what I had wanted to happen: I loved the dog now, and I wanted him to love me. I had tried to love, and I had tried to kill, and both had been unsuccessful by themselves I hoped... and I don't really know why I expected the dog to understand anything, much less my motivations... I hoped the dog would understand (30).

Before concluding the story Jerry is silent and the silence is prolonged. The silence is perhaps indicative of Jerry's hope for being successful in making contact with Peter. The reaction is contrary to what he probably anticipated as Peter is "silent" "disturbed" and "numb" at the end of the story. He spontaneously rejected Jerry's emotional encounters. Besides, Peter's silence

conveys to Jerry his realization of the unsaid content of the story that he instantly refuses to accept. The hesitant and disjointed utterances make this apparent:

PETER. I... I don't understand what ... I don't think I ... (*now almost tearfully*) why did you tell me all of this?

... I DON'T UNDERSTAND!

JERRY. That's a lie

PETER. No, No, it's not.

JERRY (*quietly*): I tried to explain it to you as I went along. I went slowly; it all has to do with....

PETER. I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ANYMORE. I don't understand you, or your land lady, or her dog... (31).

An understanding of the underlying meaning baffles the audience. The dramatist reverses the purpose of dramatic irony, for generally a play creates irony where audience perceives the meaning and characters are ignorant of it. Jerry and Peter share the understanding implied by the unspoken words which enhances the dramatic tension. The incoherent statement by Peter with 'pauses' inserted in between suggests the disturbance in Peters mind as he encounters the situation he always detached himself from and avoided.

The monologue is incredibly dramatic: Albee magnificently creates drama through linguistic coherence with rise and fall in the tone in accordance with the mood and temper of the story. Effectively enough, Jerry articulates the

entire speech acting out each situation and every character he mentions. Jerry provides momentum to the play. The representation of his life story, the story of Jerry and the dog, the description of the landlady, tenants of rooming houses remind readers of an ancient Roman theatrical performance of 'pantomime'. His effortless staging of different roles gives an impression of improvised stage show. Silences speak of the persistent loneliness in Jerry, his pain of alienation, his desperation to establish contact with anyone, his failure to achieve what he desires and the violent feelings of a disoriented character who desperately needs emotional fulfillment and can die for it. The expressions, gesticulations and movements highlight Jerry's desperation and Peter's horror to come to terms with stark realities of life. This drama without significant action appears instinctive and appealing. It seems to be unscripted and created impromptu on stage.

Owing to the frustration of failure to gain Peter's understanding and attention Jerry resorts to violent means to suppress his pain and anger. The park bench which is an object to seize, to gain or take control of becomes unusually important. 'Grotesquely fatigued' at the end of the story, Jerry sits down on the bench besides Peter. This is the first time in the play Jerry sits. He observes that instead of making a breakthrough in communication he has annoyed Peter. Suddenly acting impishly, he "tickles", "pokes", "punches" and "pushes" Peter off the bench. Moreover an insult to his manhood aggravates Peter's anger and he decides to fight for the possession of bench. But when Jerry opens a knife and tosses before Peter, he refuses to take it. Then he rushes over, grabs Peter

by collar, slaps him and spits on his face and drives Peter to rush over to pick the knife. Then with a heavy sigh Jerry runs into the knife and kills himself. Mita Mitra in her essay 'The Role of Silence in Edward Albee's plays' analyses the scene thus:

Taunted by Jerry, Peter denies in his response that the possession of the bench is indeed a "question of honor". But his anger at Jerry's encroachment contradicts his statement, and his effort to protect the bench implies that it has assumed an abstract meaning for him. In his turn, Jerry manipulates this "Absurd" confrontation over a bench to deflect attention from the despair he feels before he forces Peter to pick up a knife and then runs into it (31).

Albee depicts the quintessence of the scene in the subtext:

For just a moment, complete silence, JERRY impaled on the knife at the end of PETER's still firm arm... with the knife in him, he stumbles back to the bench that PETER had vacated. He crumbles there, sitting, facing PETER, his eyes wide in agony, his mouth open... JERRY is dying, but now his expression seems to change for the most part he seems removed from his dying. He smiles ... PETER's mouth drops open. He cannot move, he is transfixed (39).

Jerry concludes the play with a blend of mockery, contempt and a desperate supplication to god who fails to relieve of his sense of hopeless alienation:

Oh..... my... God (He is dead)

Anthony Hopkins, in an article, “conventional Albee: Box and Chairman Mao”, comments on Albee’s art of writing:

There is perhaps a formal departure from some conventions of the dramatic presentation, contain within their boundaries what is essentially an extension of Albee’s continuing examination of American moral collapse and ethical decay (147).

While Esslin remarks:

In the Realism of its dialogue and its subject matter - an outsider’s inability to establish genuine contact with a dog, let alone any human being- The Zoo Story is closely akin to the world of Harold Pinter (Esslin311).

The play takes shape with the combination of language and silences. The Zoo Story’ acts like a musical score which is repeated at every turn of the play. Jerry frequently alludes to the zoo assuring Peter to describe what happened at the zoo but always postpones the telling, thereby holding the interest of Peter and the audience. Mita Mitra quotes Oscar Lee Brownstein’s analysis.

He distinguishes Albee’s narrative technique as an example of “prospective” strategy that engages our interest in the future, but unlike the dramatic strategy of “foreshadowing”, it does not allow the audience to anticipate the outcome (Mitra 31).

The persistent allusion to the zoo without providing any details sustains the audience's interest and arouses curiosity. The unpredictable climax of the play leaves the audience astounded. Albee's technique of incomplete or limited revelation and withholding is parallel to the refrain in "Waiting for Godot" where the characters through bizarre activities and 'Absurd' discourse struggle for recognition and expression.

The play creates a tension through seemingly conflicting characters, their different geographical backgrounds, fictionalities, even props-Jerry versus Peter, rooming house against central park, animals contrasted with men, freedom as opposed to imprisonment, and conformity against confrontation. Through these opposing ideologies *The Zoo Story* unravels a parable about the existing human condition.

The Zoo Story is essentially the drama of language where words control the action. The opening is monosyllabic mounting to energetic flow of dialogues. Jerry with his long engrossing and stirring discourse has successfully shaken Peter out of his complacent existence that he refuses to acknowledge till Jerry loses his life through a knife held by Peter. The incident stimulates Peter and the death, perhaps passes on to Peter an understanding of the despair, the underlying pathos and alienation, crumbling faith, collapse of communication the sterility of human existence and other existential problems and dilemmas which threaten the comfortable existence of his life. As an embodiment of instability and menace, Jerry remains alive in the readers mind.

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Conclusion

The twentieth century witnessed major changes. The paroxysm caused by the two world wars left an indelible mark on the world and dismantled the edifices of faith and reality. Diminishing the stability of western civilization it raised doubts about the adequacy of traditional literary modes to represent the harsh and bleak reality of the post war period. Thus contemporary avant garde dramatists discerned the urgency to debunk old canons and experiment with new forms and content. The existing dramaturgy seemed insufficient to convey the growing perceptions of life's complexities. Major modern playwrights rejected outmoded maxims and endeavored with fresh constructions to portray the multi-layered reality and heterogeneity of human personality.

The creative oeuvres of pioneering writers have often been influenced by personal experiences, contemporary events and current ideologies. Pirandello, Brecht and Albee are no exceptions. The logic behind the choice of these three dramatists rests in their diverse singular and atypical treatment of contemporary subjects. The core of their technique was experimentation and quest for novel forms. Pirandello, Brecht and Albee explored and tested multiple formulae and emerged with their own unique styles and constructs.

Luigi Pirandello is associated with a peer group of continental dramatists who initiated, gave direction and transformed the theatre with their innovative techniques. He was associated with Italian theatre through the teatro grottesco a theatre that adopts ancient native Italian tradition of commedia

dell'arte and provided all the necessary components for his experimental strategies.

Six Characters in Search of an Author astounds the theatre practitioners with its complex technique and pitiful grim human tragedy. The playwright's obsession with the disparity between being and seeming, his spontaneity and love of pretense together constitute an effect of improvisation in the play. Pirandello had an irresistible spirit for analyzing conventions, beliefs and dogmas of the contemporary world of theatre. He carried the logic forward till it appeared illogical. The readers encounter a similar passion in the play concerned.

The play opens with a rehearsal of one of Pirandello's own play *Mixing it up*. The disgruntled troupe is trying to practice for this play. The setting is a theatre where the actors, producer, prompter, light man are displayed rehearsing their parts for the drama to be staged. The practice session is unexpectedly interrupted, with the arrival of six people on the stage. They call themselves '*characters*' and claim to carry a drama within themselves. The enigmatic aura surrounding them intensifies the confusion on the stage. The dramatist introduces the six characters as the Father, the Mother, the Stepdaughter, the Son, the Young Boy, and the Little Girl. Their desperate search for an author has led them to the theatre. They insist on performing their drama, claiming to be the creation of author's fancy. He left them alive but condemned them to incompleteness and they sought for an author who can complete them. The characters demand to relive the act in which they were

frozen. The drama that begins then is 'a play within a play' wherein the dexterity of the playwright exhibits his themes of appearance and reality, life and art, the problems of artistic creation, in a dramaturgic exercise of juxtaposing the conventional realistic theatre with the unconventional impromptu experimentation of the *commedia dell'arte* and *teatro grottesco*.

The play is a demonstration of the mechanical nature of the well-made play, its artificiality and moral flaccidity is placed adjacent to the drama of improvisation. The adlib of the unrealized characters is the vital part of the play. Creations of imagination they exemplify values and feelings akin to human aspirations, apprehensions and conflicts. In Pirandello's opinion, had they been given a life on stage they would be more real than life itself.

The anguished story of the six characters unfolds spasmodically through the three acts. The reluctant producer finally agrees to let the characters live their roles on stage and later the actors assume the part of six characters on stage. But the attempt is non-success as the actors merely feign as characters whereas the characters had actually lived their life in the roles. The reality of the latter is but masquerade of the former. Hence the drama of the six characters first done by characters themselves through impromptu is again performed through another inversion in which the characters become the audience and the actors play the drama with a difference.

These vibrant figments of author's imagination had a fixed reality. Each one of them is fixed in one emotion which is one part of a personality.

Pirandello employed this technique of splitting different attributes of a single complex personality where distinct characters embody distinct aspects of a single personality called the 'role-playing technique'. Father embodies remorse, mother shame and pure feelings, daughter defiance, son scorn and the two children lack awareness. The technique is akin to *commedia dell'arte*. Having frozen in one single emotion, the characters improvise on stage. They produce their own stock actions and stock phrases within the provided 'scenari', the roles in which they are fixed. Regardless of the number of times the characters enact their part the emotion remains the same.

The play operates at two levels. At one level the playwright explores the method and the problems of artistic creation which juxtaposes life and art. At another level, the readers witness the breakdown of values and communications, guilt, transcendental dilemmas and morals. To prevent 'mixing up' of the two sets of people on stage, the playwright used mask for the characters. The masks were designed not to appear otherworldly or ghostlike but as created realities rooted in author's fancy as devices more genuine and consistent than actors' illusions.

The technique is constantly developing, each method is staggering. By reversing the conventional boundaries the dramatist presents a glimpse of life from standpoint of the 'visitants' who assume improvisation in a fresh dramaturgic experiment. The appearance of Madame Pace, the mysterious seventh character is yet another aspect of startling stagecraft. She does not come with the rest but demonstrates dramaturgically before the twin audience

the magic of stage and the power of imagination conjuring a figure on stage. The entire process of creation has been shown on stage. The permanence of art and changeability of existence are bizarrely employed to explain life's mystery. Pirandello manifests simultaneously the drama of the visitors, its representation by the actors, the difference in their perception of the same role, and the virtual reality of the human beings doing the rehearsals.

Moreover, besides the two major modes, drama is happening at several levels. The outer play, that is the rehearsal of one of Pirandello's play; the internal drama of six characters; the encounter of the actors and characters; and lastly the actors adopting the roles of characters to perform their story are the different levels where the readers witness drama in one form or the other. These layers of dramatization formed a part of Pirandello's technique of writing a play. Furthermore the actors assume multi-dimensional roles in the play. They are introduced as the actors of the original drama and later become the audience to the drama of six characters. The reenactment of improvisations by the actors is another aspect of the part performed by the actors. At the inception they were rehearsing for the script based drama and later they were found to be preparing for the scriptless action. This back and forth repositioning of actors gives the effect of alienation.

Each in his Own Way demonstrates the parallel theme situations and innovative theatre techniques etched out in *Six Characters*. The play is advancement and a progress of experimental stagecraft and thematic patterns first employed in the *Six Characters*. Thus the play is a 'comedy in progress' in

which the playwright inverts the convention by bringing among the audience real people who recognized themselves in the actors on stage. It deals with presentation on stage multiple nuances of dramaturgy including first time theatre spectators' responses as well as critiques and appreciations, as part of the total theatre experience. Pirandello breached the fourth wall convention and extended the theatre to the lobby.

The play is in two acts and a non-existent third act, punctuated by two choral interludes added at the end of each act. The lobby and the theatre become interchangeable spaces rendering the play ambiguous. The application of the technique of play within a play provided several layers of reality. This consists of the reality of the audience, reality of actors as observers and viewers as actors, presence of Baron Nuti and Amelia Moreno among the spectators and their counterparts on stage. Reality and art intermingled breaking the proscenium arch such that it is hard to separate the two. The technique illustrates the proximity of drama to life. Also in the play Pirandello revitalized the old technique of metatheatre imparting it an originality and form. The play is closely assessed as a complete piece illustrating two major techniques of stage and theatre: play within a play and metatheatricality. 'Meta' is a Greek affix which means 'above', 'beyond' or 'about' and denotes a level beyond the subject that it qualifies. Hence meta-theater is theatre about theatre or drama about drama. The method of play within a play forms a segment of this theatre technique. It breaches the 'fourth wall' of well-made play to draw the audience in the theatre domain. The use of the device of play within a play observes the

theatre itself and allows the dramatic characters to experience illusion and reality within a play. Further it produces spontaneous response to a situation on stage as if it were real. The strategy contributes to discover the susceptible situations that trigger the response of the audience.

The lead pair supposedly enacts a real life incident on stage. Pirandello borrowed this idea from a newspaper report of sculptor Giacomo La Vela suicide prompted by the discovery of a relationship between his fiancée, Amelia Moreno and Baron Nuti, his sister's fiancé. The playwright converted this event for the stage in the form of Giorgio Salvi-Delia Morello-Michele Rocca triangular affair. The dramaturgy culminated in actual union of the errant couple. The key to the life of the real characters is depicted through stagecraft.

From the very beginning the dramatist separated the fictional characters from the real ones. While introducing the performers Pirandello clearly demarcated the two sets of actors: one set consist of characters of comedy on stage and the other set comprises of the 'real' people appearing in the theatre lobby. However in contravention to this proposed singularity, Pirandello's dramatic handling of audience response obliterates the distinction between *mise en scene* and the audience.

The dramatic intensity of the play is enhanced through the representation of various levels of drama and the playwright's brilliance in managing its complexity. Primarily, it is a real life incident converted into

dramatic form. Subsequently the criticism of ongoing performance by the real characters as well as by the spectators who came to watch the play is yet another level of stagecraft. Another plane of performance consists in the drama of those who discuss the actual episode (Doro, Diego, Francesco) and the spectator-actors who debate over the theatrical performance. Multiple theatre forms; *adlib*, play within a play, *impromptu*, *metatheatre*, realistic drama, and *commedia dell'arte*, are employed simultaneously to explore multiple personality. In trying to create the impression of concurrent theatre activities Pirandello makes use of the flux of time, life, thought, opinions, the instability of all that appeared stable and multiplicity of human personality.

Bertolt Brecht appeared on the scene with an entirely new dramaturgic concept, alienating empathy from the stage and destroying the fourth-wall convention to demonstrate his ideologies. He disregards identification and purgation (catharsis) on the ground that a play should rattle the critical faculties of the audience so that they would be enlightened and educated instead of maintaining a mere emotional involvement. Brecht encourages his audience to view the play with an estranged eye along with complete consciousness of its content as a play and not an 'illusion of reality'. He devised a fresh vision for familiar things including an understanding of human nature in particular and society in general. The Epic Theatre theory aimed at achieving this sense of detachment. In such state audience can be moved to action to bring the change. In realistic theatre, Brecht explores, the audience's emotional involvement and identification with the characters prevents motivated thought. Thus to

encourage a more critical attitude in the spectator towards a performance on stage, Brecht developed the strategy of *verfälschungseffekt*. It uses anti-illusive or anti-realistic technique to constantly remind the audience that the drama enacted before them is merely an illusion of reality not reality itself. Brecht concerns himself with the plebeians therefore the plays are without superheroes with superhuman powers. The predicament and dilemmas he portrayed can be the predicament and dilemmas of any ordinary human being. The real essence of his writings lies in unrelentingly varying inventiveness which he mixes with his techniques. He embellished them with pseudo Shakespearean blank verse, classical hexameters, formal prologue and epilogue, songs, pastiche of prose and poetry, rhymed and unrhymed verses.

Brecht an active socialist, was against the atrocities of capitalism on society. With the medium of 'epic parable' he attempts to reform the audience/readers. The application of alienation technique does not allow spectators to correlate with the ongoing drama. The dramatist perpetually narrates and interrupts making the audience introspect and act.

A critique of capitalism, *The Good Woman of Setzuan* interrogates whether it is possible to be good and remain good in an evil society. The play comes into the category of Brecht's parable plays where he manifests his intensive desire to educate the audience. Brecht dramaturgically combines the parable with his Epic theatre technique, creating a unique form: the epic parable. The main idea is the conflict between good and evil, principles and practicality, instinct and reason symbolized by Shen Te's split personality, her

dual role as Shen Te and Shui Ta. The underlying moral of the story is that it is impossible to survive in this world with kindness and liberality. 'The good woman' is able to survive with her unborn child only after taking refuge in a mask of insensitivity and ruthlessness. This anti-moral statement has the desired effect of startling the audience from complacency and insularity. Continuing the impact on the readers the gods are depicted singularly feeble, inept and powerless. The play concludes with an earnest call from the dramatist that if 'good' cannot survive then the world has to be changed. The playwright starts the play with the conventional technique of prologue. But unlike the practiced trend, this prologue involves more than one character: Wong, the water seller; the three Gods; and Shen Te, the prostitute. The stage directions provide no suggestion of special decor or ornamentation on stage. The curtain raiser begins with Wong's direct address to the audience. This strategy is a major alienation device frequently used to break the fourth wall illusion. The breach of the imaginary fourth wall is designed to enlighten the spectators and include them in the ongoing proceedings. In terms of context these direct addresses include the actor's reflections on the action that precede his speech. The play consist elements of epic theatre that are unique to the playwright. For instance, the use of salutations 'Mr.', 'Mrs.', 'Miss', before the names of actors. This is in stark contrast to generic titles as 'Husband', 'Wife', 'Sister-in-law', 'Waiter', 'Carpenter', 'Old man', 'Boy', 'Nephew', 'Niece', 'Priest', 'Brother', 'Policeman', 'Whore', to prevent any form of sympathy or identification. The recurrent use of multiple 'pauses' by the dramatist – short

pauses, slight pauses, little pauses and silences function as devices that break the communication and generate curiosity for the subsequent action among the audience. The actors make their entrances and exits breaking the orientation of the spectators. The voices off-stage also distance the audience from the play performed in front of them. They are heard amidst the ensuing conversation and are skillfully integrated within the discourse. The play has an intricate arrangement of scenes. The structure is linear comprising of numerous scenes. Loosely knitted and blended with interludes each scene stands for itself.

Thus from a description of stage décor to an account of lights, from silences and pauses to long discourses, ellipses, word repetition, gestures, and movements everything communicates that meaninglessness is meaningful. The dramatist used cryptic dialogues which are short or monosyllabic in contrast to long monotonous speeches that recur alternately in the play. After the two startling climaxes the playwright introduces a mock eighteenth century epilogue to mark the end of the play. It is a humble call of the dramatist and an earnest desire to bring change. The epilogue summarizes the unresolved problem and leaves the play open ended.

The audience may disagree with the anti-moral theme and be expected to react and formulate its own opinion. Consequently the spectators also become judges. This role change is a ploy in alienation technique, as it reduces the distance between the audience and stage, breaks the fourth wall convention and destroys the fantasy created by earlier drama forms.

The Caucasian Chalk Circle is a droll and ironic commentary on greed and corruption. The background of the play is provided by civil disorder, political unrest, lawlessness and the disenchantment of the populace with the rulers. Against the milieu of this anarchy Brecht weaves his manifold tales. These fictional spaces are adroitly interspersed into the play underscoring the moral in parable of the Chalk Circle. The multiple narratives commence with Grusha, a kitchen maid at the Governor's palace, who is perpetually surrounded by misfortunes. The Governor's wife Natella who abandons her only child is a counter point to the kind hearted menial. After two years of unrest order is restored and the Grand Duke returns to his seat. The mercenary Natella hires soldiers to search her son because he is heir to her husband's fortunes. The final tale revolves around Azdak and his momentous judgment of giving custody of the child to Grusha instead of Natella, the biological mother. The playwright contrives to interknit these five units into a cohesive ensemble. However Brecht intentionally demolishes continuity and fractures the narrative into fragments through his dramaturgic experiments of alienation.

The conclusion of the play manifests Brecht's communist ideology that 'whosoever makes best humanitarian use of resources deserves final possession of the same'. The parable of the chalk circle, a variant of the Biblical story of the 'Judgment of Solomon', is employed later to determine the identity of real mother. The inversion of not just the fable but the entire feudal system is witnessed in the play. The issue of disposition of land is decided in favor of the farmers instead of goat herds who were the traditional owners and the

inhabitants of the valley. As for the judicial system, the trappings are replaced and Azdak is converted into a judge.

This tale is narrated by the Singer, Arkadi Tsheidze and his musical troupe who stand outside the play. It originates in a preamble; a technique similar to *The Good Woman*. Essentially this stage strategy consists of a single speech narrated by a lone character. However Brecht startled his viewers by replacing the monologue by a spectacle consisting of characters, interactions, conflicts and even a concluding resolution. The Singer is a key contributor to the production of the play's epic and dramatic elements. In addition to announcing entries and exits, he anticipated, commented on and summarized events. This intrusion at intervals highlights the action's status as fictional drama, simultaneously encouraging social awareness of the onlookers towards the on-and-off stage worlds. Whether contributing to narration, commentary or drama, the singer appealed to both the intellectual and emotional faculties of the audience, inducing a critical attitude in them similar to his own.

Epic is a long narrative comprising of several small episodes, each complete, separate yet linked. Hence the major episodes – The noble child, Grusha's journey to Northern Mountains, Grusha's stay in Northern Mountains, the Judge's tale and the Chalk Circle – are made of smaller situations and occurrences.

From the beginning till the fourth scene the drama apparently follows Aristotelian linear structure which is non-Brechtian. But the fourth scene

breaks the audience's trance and is used as a distancing device by the playwright. Instead of advancing the plot by narrating the child's fate, Grusha's future and Natella Abashwili's claim for her abandoned child, Brecht impedes the linear course of action. He gives an entire act to his most powerful character Azdak.

The playwright returns to Grusha's story in the fifth and the final scene. In correspondence to the preceding scenes, the Singer opens the scene in the court. The courtroom trial was one of Brecht's favorite models for epic theatre. The subtext creates an atmosphere and demonstrates the position of all the characters.

Thus five key episodes constitute *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. As an operative device of alienation each episode is an independent play in itself and appears to be a 'playlet'. Moreover, the principle play has two seemingly different plots: the account of Grusha's predicaments and the life of Azdak, braided together at the end. With the weaving of the two stories Brecht also raises questions on problems of class difference, influence and sovereignty of ancient laws and the power of justice.

With *The Zoo Story* which has Absurdist overtones Albee came to be regarded as the *enfant terrible* of American theatre, challenging and debunking the myth his country represented. As an avant-garde artist and an iconoclast, he attacked American materialism, breakdown of communication, and superficial values. One of the important preoccupations of Albee is to highlight the

adverse effects of living in illusion and upholding myths as false forms of consolation in an otherwise inane existence.

Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story* is a long one-act play in which "nothing happens" except the exchange of dialogues until the violent ending. It is a drama of language. Depicted in the play also, Absurd drama strives to integrate content and form. Language carries the subject matter. It creates situations and gives momentum to the play. Through verbal communication Jerry, Albee's anti-hero depicts the haunting loneliness, and the human despair to establish a 'connect' with others.

The play with minimum number of characters, almost no props and stage settings, no action, no drama, in its accepted sense of the term, effectively portrays the predicament of contemporary modern man. The disillusionment, loss of religious faith, alienation, isolation and separation from fellow beings, breakdown of communication consequent to the second world war left man a stranger in his own world. Absurd dramatists endeavored to display this human adversity on stage. Content and form are so completely merged with each other that seemingly content becomes form and form content. This is the absurdity of Absurd technique of which *The Zoo Story* is an apparent manifestation. The narrative, in the simplest terms, recounts the events in the life of Jerry, who, bogged down with loneliness, starts a conversation with a stranger in a park and eventually compels him to commit a brutal act.

The play serves as an introduction to the understanding of Albee's characteristic use of "silence and pauses". The author articulates collapse in communication, festers a sense of alienation, camouflage the past, and the unclear and doubtful motives of characters during their interaction with each other through narrational silence. Peter uses silence to communicate his unwillingness to listen while Jerry who initiates the conversation evades his own emotions with his eloquent long speeches. The frequent use of the phrase "I've been to the zoo/ "What happened at the zoo" is technically significant. Albee uses repetition as an important tool to escalate action or movements. The dramatist uses the catchphrase to draw the audience's attention to human predicament in his absurdist style. The recurrence of the expression allows the readers/audience to retrieve the original argument. Also when the readers get carried away with Jerry's convoluted tales about his past life, an abrupt and sudden use of the refrain, 'what happened at the zoo' breaches the concentration of the audience giving the feel of 'estrangement effect'.

In increasingly frantic attempts, to establish a connection with Peter and make him responsive of the sterility of his existence, Jerry narrates the allegorical 'story of Jerry and the Dog'. But by the end of the play, Jerry has managed to change Peter's perception of reality to such an extent that Peter gets into physical fight over what he believes to be "his" bench and in self-defense helps Jerry kill himself. The reality which initially appears more real than fiction to Peter now fills him with starkness and force. As Jerry narrates the story of the 'Jerry and the Dog', his continual back and forth movements on

stage convey his deep anxiety. Albee recedes into background by staying reticent and leaves most of the interpretation of the drama to the discretion of the actor and director.

By the end of the story, Jerry's broken speech, his tone and physical movements convey his hankering to form a connection, to communicate with some living breathing object. Jerry is thus an absolute personification of Absurd predicament very artfully projected on stage. An understanding of the underlying meaning baffles the audience. The dramatist reverses the purpose of dramatic irony, for generally a play creates irony where audience perceives the meaning and characters are ignorant of it. Jerry and Peter share the understanding implied by the unspoken words which enhances the dramatic tension. The incoherent statement by Peter with 'pauses' inserted in between suggests the disturbance in Peter's mind as he encounters the situation he always detached himself from and avoided.

The monologue is incredibly dramatic: Albee magnificently creates drama through linguistic coherence with rise and fall in the tone in accordance with the mood and temper of the story. Effectively enough, Jerry articulates the entire speech acting out each situation and every character he mentions. Jerry provides momentum to the play. The representation of his life story, the story of Jerry and the dog, the description of the landlady, tenants of rooming houses remind readers of an ancient Roman theatrical performance of 'pantomime'. His effortless staging of different roles gives an impression of improvised stage show. Silences speak of the persistent loneliness in Jerry, his pain of alienation,

his desperation to establish contact with anyone, his failure to achieve what he desires and the violent feelings of a disoriented character who desperately needs emotional fulfillment and can die for it.

The Zoo Story is essentially the drama of language where words control the action. The opening is monosyllabic mounting to energetic flow of dialogues. Jerry with his long engrossing and stirring discourse has successfully shaken Peter out of his complacent existence that he refuses to acknowledge till Jerry loses his life through a knife held by Peter. The incident stimulates Peter and the death, perhaps passes on to Peter an understanding of the despair, the underlying pathos and alienation, crumbling faith, collapse of communication the sterility of human existence and other existential problems and dilemmas which threaten the comfortable existence of his life. As an embodiment of instability and menace, Jerry remains alive in the readers mind.

Modern drama is thus a pastiche of techniques as is evident in the analysis of the plays by three prominent dramatists belonging to three different countries. Content and form are two important components of drama. The content or the subject matter as manifested in the study of the plays is the same. It deals with man's sense of insufficiency and disillusionment, the constant war that wages inside the individual as well as the conflict between man and the environment or society. In all such situations it is the inner psyche of the individuals that shows the impact. Hence the content was nearly the same and virtually all the dramatist worked on similar grounds. The difference therefore had to be in the manner in which this familiar subject was presented before the

audience. Brecht used the medium of parable and applied epic theatre technique to present the startling content. Pirandello mingled the old and new form of drama to an extent that apparently there was no difference between fiction and reality. He tried to bring audience close to theatre experience thus bringing reality close to drama. The audience is witnessed responding to the ongoing performance. And lastly, Albee wrote static drama. Similar content exploited by yet another method. With lesser action and movements, his was the drama of language. Language created situations provided momentum and drama was thus created.

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