



CHAPTER I

SELVES, LONELINESS, AND SOCIAL PRESENTATION

The presentation of self is a persistent theatrical theme with immense dramatic potentiality. An inquiry into the contemporary Western theatre concerning the paradigms of self presentation can provide interesting insights into human self and its relations with others.

When the self is identified as a distinct entity, it will invariably feel separate from others. This feeling can, at times, lead to a sense of loneliness. But the sense of loneliness need not be always disclosed in everyday discourse. A presentation of the lonely self before others can be expressive, manipulative or unintentional. Moreover, a self's presentation of its loneliness is indicative of the stances it takes concerning the socio-political relationship of an individual. Drama, being a social art, can project, question or clarify a society's basic concerns. The varied aspects in the presentation of a lonely self through theatre, then, can imply the society's attitudes towards the status of an individual within a social organization.

This thesis proposes to explore the presentation of the lonely self in select plays of two popular and critically acclaimed dramatists of contemporary Western mainstream theatre: the Czech-born British playwright Tom Stoppard and the Jewish American dramatist, David Mamet. The plays of these two dramatists have not been subjected to an extensive comparative study so far with regard to the theme of self presentation. The application of relevant psychological/sociological theories, concerning self presentation and loneliness, to the works of Stoppard and Mamet, may provide a better understanding on the deep-rooted assumptions regarding an individual's role in society.

Drama, being primarily a concentrated structure presenting a rising conflict through its resolution, each of its ingredients has to be relevant to this purpose. The presentation of

the lonely self in this context becomes significant because a properly structured play will present a lonely self only when it is absolutely essential to the resolution of the play. A conflict involves a differentiation of a self from another person or persons. Even when an inner conflict is presented, in a play, conflict can only be represented through a division between the self and others. The resolution of the conflict either brings in a union between the self and the others or an irreparable division between the two. In other words, at the resolution of a play, a self either becomes less lonely or lonelier than before. The attitude of the world of the play towards being lonely is being made clear by this.

Theatrical representation of passions on stage may be one of the ways in which society releases its suppressed emotions. Theatre, though the most communal of all arts, is also, as John Lahr remarked in his introduction to *Paris Review Interviews*, the “last bastion of individual expression” (ix). The lonely self, naturally finds its expression in such an environment.

Throughout history, the Romantic and the not-so-romantic temperaments co-existed with their distinct representations and judgments on the lonely self. Romanticism, above all, “emphasized individuality” (Behrendt 63). This idealization of the individual by the romantic temperament elevated the lonely self, and consequently, its presentation is remarkably free of stigma in the romantic milieu. Theodore Zeldin, in his work *An Intimate History of Humanity*, traces the history of loneliness through various ages. According to him, “the romantics claimed that each individual combines human attributes in a unique way and that one should aim at expressing one’s uniqueness in one’s manner of living.... Such opinions expanded the dreams of the Renaissance by demanding that one should like a person because he is different” (66).

This romantic perspective of difference further emphasizes “the idea of the hero who

toils alone and in obscurity while creating works of genius” (Jerrigan 17). A lonely self, for a romantic, then, need not always be a cause for shame or a reason for feeling extreme vulnerability. But along with this romantic notion exists its opposite, the fear of loneliness. As Zeldin remarks, “the fear of loneliness has been... as much an obstacle to a full life as persecution, discrimination or poverty” (59). This polarity of perspective regarding the lonely self prevails in other fields of humanities as well.

Generally, psychological studies on loneliness tend to regard it negatively. For Robert Weiss, loneliness is a “distress” (10). Perlman and Joshi calls loneliness “a concealed stigma” stating that in American society, “the isolate is ... generally undesirable” (65). Sociologists considered the lonely self from varied perspectives. Loneliness was seen as a social and political problem by many. Suzanne Gordon, in her work, *Lonely in America*, indubitably laments a sad American predicament: “in the great rush for freedom we have lost the ability to be free together” (16). At the same time the necessity to resist “herd identity” which rests on the sense of an unquestionable belonging to the crowd” (62), and to stand alone for one’s principles were emphasized by sociological thinkers like Eric Fromm.

Western theatre has from its inception dealt with the theme of loneliness, the various attitudes towards it, and its effects. Aeschylus’s Prometheus or Sophocles’s Oedipus are, more than anything else, absolutely lonely as they are presented as utterly alone while facing their ultimate fates. Renaissance Europe produced its own lonely figures in Goethe’s Faust and Shakespeare’s Lear. If Henrik Ibsen explored the loneliness and alienation of the social reformer, August Strindberg, Eugene O’Neill and Tennessee Williams delved deep into the psychological depths of their lonely characters. The Absurd theatre, on the other hand, condemned the whole of humanity as doomed to an “exile...without remedy” and attempted to project the consequent unavoidable loneliness through rootless and purposeless

characters (Camus 13). The playwrights who immediately preceded Mamet and Stoppard like Arnold Wesker or Harold Pinter in UK and Arthur Miller or Edward Albee in USA too dealt with characters hopelessly caught up in loneliness. Starting their careers closely after the hey-day of the Absurdist, Stoppard and Mamet emerge as inheritors to a long tradition in presenting lonely selves.

Tom Stoppard started his career as a journalist at the *Western Daily Press* in 1954 and by 1962 he became the drama critic of *Scene*, a London magazine. It was his second play, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (1966) that made him successful as a playwright. The other famous plays of Stoppard include *Jumpers* (1972), *Travesties* (1974), *Hapgood* (1988), *The Real Thing* (1982), *Invention of Love* (1997), *The Coast of Utopia* (2002) etc. Stoppard is known for his “Stoppardian” comedies where the term “Stoppardian” stands for “an innovatively structured theatrical extravaganza filled with a plethora of jokes and puns, conflicting arguments, intellectual inquiry, elaborate allusions, and cerebral wit” (Fleming 4).

British theatrical scenario, at the time when Stoppard began his theatrical career was under the heavy influence of John Osborne, especially because of his play, *Look Back in Anger*. Most of Stoppard’s contemporary playwrights leaned towards leftist ideals. As David Edgar wrote in *Times Literary Supplement*:

most of the new playwrights of the 1970s came to the theatre at a time when there was a consensus between play-makers and their audiences that British society was rotten at the root, and that it was the proper business of the theatre to anatomize its rottenness and point the way to radical change. (969)

Stoppard, on the other hand, denied that his plays contained any political bias. He claimed that he was “not impressed by art because it’s political” and that he believed “in art being

good art or bad art, not relevant art or irrelevant art” (Hudson, Itzin, and Trussler 67). In his 1983 work on Stoppard, Harold Watts remarks, “the cumulative effect of Stoppard’s theatre is that there simply are no ‘better’ ideas. One and all they commit us to imbecility” (268). But by the late seventies, Stoppard got directly involved in political activism against the communist governments of Eastern Europe. Plays like *Professional Foul*, *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* and the recent play, *Rock and Roll* reveal his anti dictatorial stand and love for Western democratic ideals as exemplified by the British. His love for his country of adoption, where he moved in with his mother and brother at the young age of eight, shedding his surname Straussler to assume the name of his English stepfather Stoppard, is evident in many of his plays and has elicited Kenneth Tynan’s comment that he was “*plus anglais que les anglais*” [more English than the English] (46). *Rock and Roll* solidifies this love for the country of his adoption in the character of Jan, who asserts, “I love England. I would like to live forever in my last English schoolboy summer” (26). Stoppard acknowledges in the introduction to the published version of the play that Jan’s “love for England and of English ways...and his nostalgia for his last summer and winter as an English schoolboy are mine” (ix).

The American playwright, director, and screenwriter David Alan Mamet is a writer “noted for his often desperate working-class characters and for his distinctive, colloquial, and frequently profane dialogue” (“David Mamet”). He is described as a writer “whose dramatic style reflects the inarticulateness and violence in alienated members of the lower-middle class” (Gordon, M). Mamet was born in 1947, ten years after Stoppard’s birth. His dramatic career too, in its early stages, shows traces of the Absurdist influences. His early plays show similarities with Edward Albee and Eugene O’Neill. Yet, there are marked dissimilarities too. Writing about the young Mamet’s moral convictions, C.W.E. Bigsby

remarks:

Mamet began his career in the 1970s. His work contains fewer direct encomiums to moral principles presumed to operate in a not too direct past, fewer direct injunctions to human contact and the necessity to engage the real... such convictions are, however implied in the very stress on the fact of loss and in the need for companionship felt by characters who cannot articulate it for fear of the vulnerability which this will suggest. They are implied too, perhaps, in the harmonies which Mamet generates from the stuttering and apparently unrelated monologues of his characters. (*Beyond Broadway* 253)

These characteristics could be seen in his succeeding plays like *American Buffalo*, *SP*, *Water Engine*, *Glengarry*, and *Speed the Plow*.

Born to educated Jewish middleclass parents in Chicago, Mamet's childhood was significantly affected by his parents' divorce. His Jewish background too had a deep-rooted influence on him, though his earlier plays made no obvious revelation concerning it. According to Mamet, if the first generation Jews, like his grandparents, only cared about surviving in a new country, America, his parents' generation was more concerned about assimilating themselves to the mainstream American culture. "My parent's generation was in a rabid pursuit, first, of education, and then, of success, greatly assimilationist" (*Some Freaks* 8). Mamet, as a youth, continued with this assimilation, but gradually he began to realize a need for roots. At present he is an active member of the Jewish community, having joined a Jewish synagogue and accepted a rabbi as his spiritual teacher.

Mamet's political preferences are in sharp contrast with that of Stoppard. In the beginning, many critics associated him as dealing with the working class and the lower

middleclass in his plays. He himself enhanced this public image by emphasizing details from his bio-data which shows him as having work experience in a restaurant, in a boat, in a bus, in a real estate business etc. Actually, these were merely short stints at making money during his student and post-student days before his extensive theatrical and academic career. His statement that he was strongly influenced by the writings of Thorstein Veblen too supported the image of a pro-working class, pro-left playwright. But like Stoppard, he too strongly denied inculcating his political ideas into his plays. “My plays are not political. They’re dramatic. I don’t believe that the theatre is a good venue for political argument” (Kane, *Mamet in Conversation* 125).

For Stoppard and Mamet, disparities are more evident than similarities. Politically, Stoppard slants towards liberal ideals and Mamet too was seen by many as someone who prioritized liberal ideals, at least in his early plays. But lately, in his non-fiction writing, especially in his 2008 March essay in *Village Voice*, “Why I am No Longer a Brain-Dead Liberal,” Mamet avows to having discarded his politically liberal views. Stoppard has a taste for intellectual eclecticism and his plays toy with any accessible sensational theory from any discipline that he can get hold of. Mamet on the other hand, is emotive and poetic and works at building a tone and a mood in his plays. And, because of his intimacies with varieties of opposing ideas, Stoppard is more concerned about the unreality of the real and the equal validity and invalidity of any rational standpoint. So he brings characters who are narrators detailing disparate stories regarding same incidents as in plays like *Travesties*, *Arcadia*, *Where are They Now*.

Stoppard’s biographer, Ira Nadel, makes a connection between his “distrust of history – his belief that it is always incomplete” with the realization (21), in his middle age, about an unknown aspect of his identity, that he was a Jew. David Mamet, on the other hand, was

born and brought up by Jewish parents and was fully aware of his Jewish identity. Though, in his earlier plays he never shows his affinities with Jewish experience, later he takes a more serious interest in his religion. His plays reveal the more general experiences of American life and, attempt to show the reality behind American dream, success and experience. His characters, consequently, reside in the seamy arenas of underworld activity (*American Buffalo*), corrupt businesses (*Glengarry*), ruthless chases after success (*Speed the Plow*) and thwarted attempts at intimacy or communion which pervades every perverse communication as in *SP*. Except for the theme of loneliness, which may be a commonly expressed condition in theatre, these two playwrights reveal very few similarities in their plays. Stoppard has even remarked in his interview with Shusha Guppy that Mamet “is another great enthusiasm of mine and... who has almost nothing in common with me” (296).

Apart from the theme of loneliness, the basic point of convergence for these two contemporary playwrights may be their popularity both among the academicians and general public. Both of them came after the heyday of the Absurdist tradition in theatre, and, though bearing the marks of its unavoidable influence, shook off its shackles, especially in their later plays. One of the reasons for their immense popularity could be that, like most plays of the Absurdist tradition, their plays are extremely funny and deal with “a central mood” that was “one of aimlessness” (Bigsby, *Beyond Broadway*, 253). Another reason could be their dexterity in the usage of language. Mamet’s language, popularly called “Mametspeak,” with “its tendency towards fractured dialogue and polysyllabic pretension” (Braun 117), has gained serious scholarly attention just like Stoppard’s language. Both, but are entirely different in essence. If Stoppard indulged in intellectual tomfoolery and dexterous word play, Mamet employed a specially captured dialect of American street

rhythm.

The fact that both these writers of our age are revered for their legendary output and commercial and critical successes makes it surprising that no extensive comparative studies on them have taken place so far. Scholars all over the world have worked on the various aspects of their writings individually and in comparison with other writers and dramatists. *Cambridge Companion to Contemporary Writers* has brought out valued editions on the works of each of these writers. Many prominent scholars who wrote on Stoppard also studied Mamet. Ira Nadel who wrote Stoppard's biography in 2002 has also brought about a biographical work on Mamet in 2008.

As regards the theme of loneliness, as mentioned earlier, several critics like Bigsby commented on the need for companionship (especially male companionship) explicitly expressed in the works of Mamet. In the case of Stoppard, critics and scholars were more preoccupied with his craft, techniques, intellectual meanderings, comic dialogue etc. to give attention to the presentation of loneliness. At the same time, theatrical posters of his plays and performance reviews indicated the expression of loneliness implicit in them. Altogether, loneliness in the works of these writers seem to be an assumed and accepted theme though not yet gaining serious scholarly consideration.

The plays of Mamet and Stoppard portray characters who are caught up in the dilemma of not having a desirable and trusting audience. In *Beyond Broadway*, Bigsby states that Mamet's characters "are role-players deprived of an audience" (253). The yearning for an "audience" and an interaction in Mamet's plays has been acknowledged by other critics as well. Michael Hinden writes in his "Intimate Voices" that Mamet's characters "care less about sexual context and still less about business (the topics that preoccupy them) than they do about loneliness and their failure to construct a satisfying context for emotional

security” (34). David and Janice Saur, while reviewing the works of Mamet scholars, substantiate this aspect in Mamet’s themes by quoting critics like Bigsby, Dennis Carrol, and Hinden (Saur and Saur 229).

This condition of being audience-less can be seen in the works of Stoppard as well. In his play, *R&G*, the character named “Player” says, “We are actors...we pledged our identities, secure in the conventions of our trade; that someone would be watching. And then, gradually, no one was. We were caught, high and dry” (46). These words and what he says later in the play, “We’re tragedians, you see. We follow directions – there is no choice involved” (58), are assimilated and echoed by Rosencrantz towards the end of the play, when, he states “All right! We don’t question, we don’t doubt. We perform” (78). Earlier in the play, Ros had countered the Player to state that they are “gentlemen” and not “fellow artists” of the Player (16). But this final acknowledgement of their role as “tragedians” may even imply that Earlier in the play, Ros had countered the Player to state that they are “gentlemen” and not “fellow artists” of the Player (16). But this final acknowledgement of their role as “tragedians” may even imply that everyone in the world of the play, whether a professional “player” or not, is an “actor.” The lonely self, in Stoppard’s plays does hold an important place as acknowledged by critics like Katherine Kelly who states that “the basic opposition between the lone outsider and the group in power prefigures many of Stoppard’s plays beginning with *Enter a Free Man...*” (*Craft of Comedy* 12). Kelly further remarks that “Stoppard’s taste and sympathies have always been independent adventurous artist – Both in England and abroad” (*Craft of Comedy* 13).

At the outset, it is imperative that a clarification and distinction is given to certain terms like “actor,” “audience,” “self” and “presentation” in the title and body of this thesis. This thesis is thematic in orientation and these terms in the context of this thesis have no

connection with performance theory and the stage-related aspects of theatre. Rather, the meaning and usage of these terms correspond to the sense in which they are used by thinkers like Erving Goffman. Bert N. Adams and R.A. Sydnie in their *Sociological Theory* introduce Goffman as having “used the theatrical metaphor of performance to illustrate how human beings present themselves in their various social roles in face to face interactions with others” (511). According to Goffman, a human being is an “actor” or a “performer” playing various roles in real life. The observers or the others who interact with him are the “audience.” They are “asked to believe that the character they see actually possesses the attributes he appears to possess, that the task he performs will have the consequences implicitly claimed for it, and that, in general, matters are what they appear to be” (PS 17). Thus, in the context of this thesis, the term “actor” means a character, who performs, in the world of a play, varied roles according to the characteristics of his character as demanded by the thematic insurgency of that particular play.

The term “self” is referred here to that “self” that is “presented” by the “actor” through his performance before any “audience.” The “audience,” in this context, refers to the other characters in the play with whom the “actor” interacts. An ideal “audience” will believe that the “actor” actually possesses what he appears to/acts to possess. When such an ideal “audience” is missing for an “actor” he may become “lonely.” In a play, an actor reveals his lonely self through his self presentation.

Another term which this thesis uses frequently is “community.” It is basically used to mean “society” here (“Community,” def. 2). It can mean “a group of people living together in one place” (def. 1), or a “group of people with one common religion, race or profession” (def. 3), or “those holding attitudes or interests in common” (def. 4). The term is mainly used in the third chapter of this thesis while exploring the loneliness of social isolation

experienced by the characters. In this context, a new phrase, “personal community” has been found to be more appropriate for Mametian characters for denoting the community in which they seem to sustain.

The term “lonely” indicates that one is “sad because one has no friends or company” (“Lonely,” def. 1). It is this meaning of loneliness that is prioritized in this thesis. The term “loneliness” mentioned in this thesis could be differentiated with certain similar terms. The loneliness that is mentioned here does not include the spiritual contentment in solitude said to be enjoyed by artists, sages and creative people. Also, the loneliness dealt with in the plays of Stoppard and Mamet does not result from a geographical or physical aloneness. Mostly, the characters within these plays are lonely amidst others. Certain terms like “isolation” and “estrangement” are used synonymously with “loneliness.” Yet these terms suggest an external agency causing isolation or estrangement, while loneliness is more suggestive of a subjective feeling of sadness.

Another term used synonymously with loneliness is “alienation.” This has become a grossly commodious term with a long history accommodating varieties of meanings in disciplines ranging from Marxism, mass society studies, marginalization studies and post colonial studies to existentialism and psychoanalysis. Though loneliness as an experience is, as Hojat and Crandall remarked in their preface to *Loneliness: Theory, Research and Application*, “as old as mankind” (vi), the theories of Enlightenment and the post-industrial condition of urbanization, mass societies and mechanizations were instrumental in accentuating it to a gross social problem. The Enlightenment thinkers like Hegel glorified loneliness as a feeling of alienation. Hegel dealt with alienation of the self as a “necessary step towards the self’s realization of itself” (Scruton 207). Karl Marx broke away from Hegel’s conception of alienation and put forth his own alienation theory. According to

Marx:

human beings under capitalism suffer from four forms of alienation: they are alienated from their work, their product, humanity or human species-being; and other people...because the worker does not own or control either the means of production or the product, they are externalized...since meaningful labour is what makes us human we have been alienated from the essence of our humanness. Finally, the otherness or externality of labour also results in an estrangement from other people because we do not labour with them but competed against them. (114)

Marx's theory of the worker's alienation under the capitalistic society is one of the three or four major theoretical strands under which intellectual and literary circles discuss loneliness. Another major theoretical assumption upon which loneliness in literature is based is Existentialism. A mid-twentieth century philosophical and literary movement, Existentialism "focused on the uniqueness of each human individual as distinguished from abstract universal human qualities" ("Existentialism" 296). Thinkers like Albert Camus, who proclaimed the essential alienation of the human individual in a hostile universe (6), inspired numerous creative and critical thinkers of the time. The literary genre of Absurd drama and its criticism can be traced as an outcome of such inspiration.

If Marxism and existentialism dealt with alienation as a pervasive human condition resulting either from human social set up or human reality, the psycho-analytic criticism under the influence of Freud and his successors looked into the issue of alienation as loneliness experienced by individuals in their day-to-day life. The psychoanalytic tool for analyzing human self was also used in literary criticism while analyzing characters. Thus Marxist, existentialist, and psycho-analytic theories formed the major bases of any literary

discussion concerning the theme of loneliness in the twentieth century. In the mid-twentieth century, thinkers like Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, Baudrillard brought forth original understandings concerning the conceptions of “individual,” “self,” “society” and “identity.” These naturally revolutionized the perceptions of alienation and loneliness. Theories on gender, marginalization, post colonialism, etc. in the latter half of the twentieth century, too, have re-fabricated the concept of identity and have defined experiences of alienation accordingly.

By the end of the twentieth century the term “alienation” inculcated within itself innumerable definitions and even contrasting assumptions underlying these definitions. Two such assumptions are “the normative and the subjective.” Alienation was treated “as a normative concept” by:

those who held most closely to the Marxian tradition (for example, Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm, Georges Friedmann, and Henri Lefebvre), as an instrument for criticizing the established state of affairs in the light of some standard based on human nature, “natural law,” or moral principle.
(“Alienation”)

Alternatively, alienation is treated as a subjective concept, a “social-psychological fact” and it is seen through the viewpoint of one who undergoes it as “an experience of powerlessness” (“Alienation”). Loneliness can be identified with the meanings of alienation emerging from the subjective assumption. It can be described as an experience of powerlessness – as a social- psychological fact of powerlessness and a sense of estrangement. In this thesis, “alienation” is mainly used in connection with the subjective experience of loneliness.

The post World War Western society addressed the problem of loneliness in quite a

number of ways. Loneliness was the theme and subject of many literary works of the age. This itself is an indication that certain societal changes specific to the age might have collaborated to its increased incidence in western societies. Or, alternatively, certain societal changes might have facilitated the overt perception of loneliness as an experience. The authors who dealt with the theme of loneliness at that time were well aware of this. Gordon remarked in *Lonely in America*,

It's obvious that loneliness is a human emotion common to all people in all eras. But at certain points in history, because of specific social changes, what were inevitable moments in life become, sometimes overnight, life-styles for millions of people. Mass loneliness is not just a problem that can be coped with by the particular individuals involved; it is an indication that things are drastically amiss on a societal level. (21)

Numerous books dealing with loneliness as a social problem were published, especially in the U.S. during the sixties and the seventies when Stoppard and Mamet started writing their plays. *The Lonely Crowd* (1961) by Riesman, Glazer and Denney, *Pursuit of Loneliness: American Culture and the Breaking Point* (1970) by Philip Slater, *Lonely in America* (1976) by Suzanne Gordon, *Loneliness: The Experience of Emotional and Social Isolation* (1973) by Robert Weiss and the works of Eric Fromm are some of the popular works which seriously dealt with the experience of isolation and loneliness. But then in the field of literary criticism, though creative writing was overpopulated with lonely characters, very few systematic, thematic studies have taken place on the condition, experience and expression of loneliness other than from the standpoints of Marxist, Psychoanalytic, Existential or Marginalization theories. In the realm of the theatre, Winifred L. Dusenbury's 1960 work *The Theme of Loneliness in Modern American Plays* was one of the early works

which had made a comprehensive survey of loneliness as a theme in American drama.

Riesman, Glazer, and Denney, in their popular work, *The Lonely Crowd*, attempted to give an explanation for the increase in loneliness experiences by roughly dividing human societies into three – tradition-directed, inner-directed and other-directed. A tradition-directed person “hardly thinks of himself as an individual” (17). He is not “sufficiently separated psychologically” from his “family, or group” to think that he “might shape his own destiny in terms of personal, lifelong goals” (17). An inner-directed person, on the other hand, has to forge his own destiny, but he too is “less independent than he seems” as he has to obey an “inner piloting” which is “set going by his parents” early in life, and it will be further augmented by “signals later on from other authorities who resemble his parents” (24). For the inner-directed society, “loneliness and even persecution are not thought of as the worst of fates” (70).

According to Riesman, Glazer, and Denney the mid-twentieth century American society was neither tradition-directed or inner-directed. The age, according to them was in the process of shifting from being an inner-directed society to an other-directed society. And, to the other-directed people “their contemporaries are the source of direction for the individual – either those known to him or those with whom he is indirectly acquainted, through friends and through mass media.” The other-directed person, thus, has to be continually in close attention to others and this “mode of keeping in touch with others permits a close behavioral conformity” (21). For such an individual loneliness becomes something that is to be avoided at any costs. Riesman even gives examples of a number of popular fictional works of that time to illustrate this.

The modern Western culture which generates loneliness can be differentiated from other cultures in that it is more individualistic. Markus and Kitayama, in their work on

culture and self, condenses the study of many sociologists and observes that the “normative imperative” of many Western cultures is “to become independent from others and to discover and express one’s unique attributes” and there is a “faith in the inherent separateness of distinct persons” (342). This distinction can, many a time, lead to a more poignant sense of aloneness and loneliness. Roy F. Baumeister demarcates a “decisive difference” that “sets modern Western cultures apart collectivistic ones (both in early Western history and in modern Asia) is the instability of social relations” (9). If, for example:

a modern American surveys his close relationships, he may recognize that most of them will be gone in ten years and replaced by others. In contrast, in a collectivistic society, a person may feel confident that most or all of her relationships are likely to be still in place ten years from now (Baumeister 9).

Naturally, in such a social situation an individual is left to himself most of the time and has to consciously forge the relationships, if any, that he wants to continue, at least for some time. This necessity to create new, yet close and essential relationships throughout one’s life requisites the creation of, or at least, a presentation of a self that is acceptable (or, aspiring to be acceptable) to each of the new persons or group of persons with whom one comes into contact. This might be what Bernard Shaw meant in *Arms and the Man* when he made Sergius exclaim that he was surprised at himself flirting with Louka, the servant girl, after his proclamations on higher love with the heroine Raina. “What would the half dozen Serguises who keep popping in and out of this handsome figure of mine say if they caught us here?” (426).

The concept of self presentation received serious academic attention since the publication of Erving Goffman’s work in 1950, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* .

According to Goffman “when an individual appears in the presence of others, there will usually be some reason for him to mobilize his activity so that it will convey an impression to others which it is in his interests to convey” (4). Goffman employs the metaphor of theatrical performance to denote “all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants” (15). The motive of self presentation need not always be simply to make a good impression. Baumeister gives two primary motives for self presentation namely, one, “doing what the audience likes and prefers,” and the other “involving constructing one’s identity by publicly claiming desired attributes.” It was even seen that many times these two motives clashed against each other in individual performances and that people will even “do things that the audience will dislike or reject” if such action “will help the person claim a desired identity” (Baumeister 178).

The presentation of the “lonely self” should be seen in this context. Loneliness as such is not an emotion one would willingly reveal. It puts one outside the purview of one’s peers and exposes one’s vulnerability as an isolated being. As Gordon remarked, “to be alone is to be different, to be different is to be alone, and to be in the interior of this fatal circle is to be lonely. To be lonely is to have failed” (15). Perlman and Joshi reiterate this view by calling loneliness a “concealed stigma” (65). “In American society,” according to them, “being married, having friends, and other indications of sociability are typically considered signs of success. Being isolated and without friends is considered a sign of social failure. The isolate is seen as a deviant, as someone who is spoiled or generally undesirable” (65). In a success oriented society, failure is a tragedy one has to avoid at all costs. If loneliness causes failure, naturally, loneliness is to be shunned. It becomes a “stigma.”

A “stigma” according to Goffman is that which breaks the smooth flow of

interaction. A “stigma” can be anything from “abominations of the body” to “blemishes of individual character” usually inferred from records of “mental disorder, imprisonment, addiction, alcoholism, homosexuality, unemployment, suicidal attempts and radical political behaviour” (Goffman, *Stigma* 130). The stigmatized individual also tends to “hold the same beliefs about identity” as the “normals.” As a result the stigmatized individual perceives “that whatever others profess, they do not really ‘accept’ him and are not ready to make contact with him on “equal grounds” (7). Loneliness could also be the result of being stigmatized because a “person with a stigma” is many a time regarded as “not quite human” (5). Thus the lonely self is in a vicious circle where his “stigma” or “difference” may make him lonely, and his loneliness, may, in turn become another “stigma” against him. In the individualistic culture of modern West, this becomes a tight-rope walk.

The individual is “an independent, self-contained, autonomous entity” according to the Western view (Markus and Kitayama 340). Yet that need not always be the case. Many a time this emphasis on “difference” can become compulsive and painful as the plight of George Riley voiced by his wife Persephone to their daughter Linda in Stoppard’s early play *Enter a Free Man*: “There’s lots of people like your father – different. Some make more money because they are different. And some make none, because they’re different. The difference is the thing, not the money” (57). And, as Riesman, Glazer, and Denney argued, if the Western culture was “other-directed,” this “difference” becomes a stigma which has to be smoothed out or concealed. Riesman, Glazer, and Denney illustrates this by listing a number of fictional protagonists in the popular works of the time whose failures are caused by their “differences” and successes materialise because of their conformities with others. Thus according to this point of view, “difference” can be a cause for isolation in an other-directed society. In such a situation, “the independent independent, self-contained,

autonomous entity” of Markus and Kitayama can be isolated and lonely. The increased incidence of loneliness in the American society of the fifties may be accounted for due to this apparent paradox where the conceived self is “autonomous” while the ought-to concept of selfhood is other-directed. This conflict may also result in rendering loneliness as a stigma, for it is the obligation of the other-directed self to stay connected.

The stigmatization of loneliness can be one of the reasons why “lonely people seem to suffer in silence” (Perlman and Joshi 64). And, generally, loneliness as a stigma gets suppressed and is communicated mainly through indirect means than direct ones. Interactions with others demand many such suppressions from individual selves. Selves behave differently when they are alone and when they are with others. By the term “performance,” Goffman refers to “all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by the continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers” (22). Just as a theatrical performance has separate front and back stages, “performance” in life too varies in the front and the back of the “stage”, i.e. the space where “action” takes place. Front is “that part of the individual’s performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance” (22). The standard points of the “front” involves “setting” which includes “furniture, décor, physical layout, and other background items which supply the scenery and stage props for the spate of human action played out before, within, or upon it” (22).

The “other items of expressive equipment” which form the standard part of “front” is combined under the term “personal front” (24). This could be further divided into “appearance” and “manner.” “Appearance” is referred to “those stimuli which function at the time to tell us of the performer’s social statuses.” “Manner” refers to “those stimuli

which function all the time to warn us of the interaction role the performers will expect to play in the oncoming situation. Thus a haughty, aggressive manner may give the impression that the performer expects to be the one who will initiate the verbal interaction and direct its course” (24). Another significant aspect of the front is that it conveys information that is mostly abstract and general. These abstractions and generality will give the audience greater number of options to draw inferences from.

An individual, when he makes a dramatization of his life, needs to “divert an appreciable amount of his energy to do so” (32). These energies are expended mostly at the “backstage” which Goffman defines as “a place, relative to a given performance, when the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted as a matter of course” (112). It is where the performer “can relax; he can drop his front, forgo speaking his lines, and step out of character” (112). To illustrate this Goffman quotes Simone de Beauvoir: “with other women, a woman is behind the scenes; she is polishing her equipment, but not in battle;...she is lingering in dressing-gown and slippers in the wings before making her entrance on the stage” (Goffman, *PS* 113). Interestingly, David Mamet, the overt machismo of whose characters invited vituperative disparagement from many feminist critics, describes the situation when men are alone in similar terms. According to him when two or more heterosexual men are gathered together in the name of fun, they create a mystical body of masculinity, an environment where “one (man) is understood, where one (man) is not judged, where one (man) is not expected to perform” (sic) (*Some Freaks* 88).

If the “front” and “back” stages are well separated and the audience co-operate in the successful performance of a role the individual will be capable of an impression management. The individual himself may or may not believe his own act. Or it may be something in between. Goffman suggests two extremes: “an individual may be taken in by

his own act or be cynical about it. These extremes are something a little more than just the ends of a continuum” (*PS* 19).

Still, whether the performer believes in it or not, his interactions are “performances.” According to Goffman “ordinary social intercourse is itself put together as a scene is put together, by the exchange of dramatically inflated actions, counteractions, and terminating replies. Scripts even in the hands of unpracticed players can come to life because life itself is a dramatically enacted thing.” However Goffman acknowledges that “all the world is not, of course, a stage, but the crucial ways in which it isn’t, are not easy to specify” (*PS* 72).

The presentation of self varies according to the audience and the environment involved. This can form different social relationships. Goffman defines a “social relationship” as that which arises “when an individual or performer plays the same part to the same audience on different occasions” (*PS* 16). Performances and social relationships are interrelated. One may perform in one way when he is with his intimate circle, in another way when he is in the larger public sphere and in yet another way when he is alone. When a self presents itself before its intimate circle and fails to gain the desired “observers,” this failure will make it a lonely self, experiencing what Weiss terms as “loneliness of emotional isolation.” Weiss differentiates two forms of loneliness as “loneliness of emotional isolation” and “loneliness of social isolation.” The “loneliness of emotional isolation,” is in his words, a “separation distress without an object” (4). It is a feeling experienced when one feels an acute lack of an “attachment figure.” Weiss defines an attachment figure as someone who “is not necessarily an intimate or confidant, but rather a figure that is security providing because of a perceptual and emotional linkage to that figure” (11). On the other hand, the “loneliness of social isolation” has “more to do with vulnerability than with loss of something desired... it isn’t missing all the fun that leads to the loneliness of social

isolation; it's being on your own, without allies in a dangerous world." It has been found that "depression tends to be associated with the loneliness of emotional isolation and anxiety with the loneliness of social isolation" (Weiss 13). The anxiety resulting from the loneliness of social isolation corresponds to the experience of "stigma" endured by the stigmatized individual. Many of the characters in the plays of Stoppard and Mamet are seen to exhibit this sort of anxiety and could be termed "stigmatized" according to Goffman's definition of the term.

Self presentation, as mentioned earlier, may cater to the "likes and preferences" of the audience or may essay to construct an identity by "publicly claiming desired attributes" (Baumeister 178). A character may present his "lonely self" if he feels the audience may "like or prefer" or sympathize with such a self. Alternatively he may present his lonely self if he felt being lonely to be part of his desirable identity. The "lonely self" may also be revealed unintentionally through what Goffman terms "the expression that he gives off." This "involves a wide range of actions that others can treat as symptomatic of the actor, the expectation being that the action was performed for reasons other than the information conveyed in this way" (*PS* 2). The expression one "gives off" too can be intentional, as the individual may intentionally convey misinformation both directly and indirectly.

Every age, in its own fashion, nurtures and suppresses individualization in the social context. While certain cultures overtly suppress individualization, others may overtly encourage it. The influence of culture in the individualization of self and the experience of loneliness have been commented upon in social psychology. While observing the cultural differences in child rearing, researchers have noted that "Japanese mothers teach their children to fear the pain of loneliness, whereas Westerners teach children how to be alone" (Markus and Kitayama 355). This is because, many Western societies hold an "independent

construal of the self,” as opposed to the “interdependent construal of the self” held by many non-Western cultures (Markus and Kitayama 342). Here there is no implication that a culture which overtly encourages individualization nurtures it. The suppression can be covert, yet extremely potent. As Eric Fromm remarks concerning 20th century American society, “there is no overt authority which intimidates us, but we are governed by the fear of the anonymous authority of conformity. We do not submit to anyone personally, we do not go through conflicts with authority, but we have also no convictions of our own, almost no individuality, almost no sense of self” (Fromm 102). Plays like Stoppard’s *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* and Mamet’s *Speed the Plow* show evidence of this inability to cling to any conviction of one’s own, and the dissipation of one’s sense of self in a world of mass rat race. On the other hand a culture which suppresses individualization, may, by its very nature, encourage the formation of very strong individualized beings as the characters in certain Stoppardian plays like *Every Good Boy Deserves Honour* and *Professional Foul* which have dictatorial countries as their background.

Thus the individualization of the human self in any society involves complex procedures. Commenting on modern disciplinary societies Foucault observes that “a key aspect of the disciplinary society” is the “reversal of the political axis of individualization” (193). According to him, in “feudal society, the more power and privilege a person possessed, the more the person was regarded as an individual” (193). In modern disciplinary regimes, however, “as power becomes more anonymous and more functional, those on whom it is exercised tend to be more strongly individualized” (193). For example, “the child is more individualized than the adult, the patient more than the healthy man, the madman and the delinquent more than the normal and non –delinquent,” and when one individualizes the “healthy, normal and law-abiding adult, it is always by asking him how much of the

child he has in him, what secret madness lies within him, what fundamental crime he had dreamt of committing” (193).

The anonymity of authority was one of the main concerns of the Absurd Theatre too. Pinter’s *The Birthday Party* has condensed into mythical dimensions the nightmarish individualizing and de-individualizing of a person by anonymous authority. Many characters in the plays of Stoppard and Mamet too carry the relic of this absurdist tradition. A fear of being individualized and a panic that this individualization may isolate and prevent them from merging into anonymity can be seen very clearly in many of their plays. Thus, loneliness can result from either not gaining an audience at all or from gaining a wrong audience who may attribute undesirable or unwanted meanings to the actor.

“Gaining an audience” is not an aspiration limited to theatrical purposes alone. For an “actor” an “audience” is a necessity for the existence of his identity. In *A-Z Sociology Handbook* Lawson, Tony, and Garrod defines the term “identity construction” as “the ways in which conceptions of the self are forged in relationships with others and with regard to existing notion of the self” (130). The identity of an “actor” in relation to his role is intertwined with the presence of an “audience” for his “acting.” Goffman explains “impression management” as that which “involves an audience that also has a stake in ensuring a successful performance” (Adam Sydie 512). An audience is a person or a group of persons whom a “performer wants to take for granted unless he is in a situation where a “stigma” determines the outcome of a communication. Goffman illustrates such situations in his works like *Asylum* and *Stigma*. The need for an “audience,” thus, becomes an important human need.

Nietzsche visualized humans as collective conspirators of artificial realities. For him “truths are illusions of which we have forgotten that they are illusions” and the “obligation

to be truthful which society imposes” is the “obligation to lie in accordance with firmly established convention, to lie en masse and in a style that is binding to all” (146). The collectively asserted and authorized human realities are authenticated through representations. The basic idea behind a representation is to suggest that a reality is lurking behind it. This idea is aptly put by Baudrillard when he says that “all of Western faith and good faith was engaged in this wager on representation : that a sign could refer to the depth of meaning, that a sign could exchange for meaning and that something could guarantee this exchange” (404). The “actor” of Goffman’s sociological theory too, projects as well as pre-supposes a character, “typically a fine one, whose spirit, strength, and other sterling qualities the performance was designed to evoke” (*PS* 17). But when the referential character behind the “actor” is also a fabrication the “acting” becomes not a representation but a simulation.

A “representation,” according to Baudrillard, “starts from the principle that the sign and the real are equivalent (even if this equivalence is utopian, it is a fundamental axiom) and conversely, “simulation” starts from the utopia of this principle of equivalence, from the radical negation of the sign as value” (404-405). Everything then becomes part of a “gigantic simulacrum: not unreal, but a simulacrum, never again exchanging for what is real, but exchanging in itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference” (404-405). Life becomes a play of realities, a play of simulations, and each simulation requiring its audience. As in the case with William Butler Yeats’ “the dancer” and “the dance” the “performance” and the “performer” become inseparable (1097). “Self” becomes replaced by “selves,” or rather simulations of selves, and the loneliness of the self becomes the loneliness of one or more of its simulations. That is, since the self is no more regarded as a stable and integrated whole, but is seen as a product of its various choices, its loneliness too, cannot be seen as an integrated emotion which pervades the whole selfhood,

but is viewed only as a temporal manifestation of one or more of its choices.

The play between multiple selves and their simulations was given a new dimension by the cognitive revolution of the 1970s and 1980s in psychology. With this revolution on the perspective of self, the self came to be regarded “as an important and autonomous player that both actively intervenes in the processing of information and is itself a knowledge structure resulting from information processing” (Baumeister 119). One of the main functions of the self,” according to “cognitive revolution” is “to help the individual process personal data” (Rogers, Kuiper, and Kirker 140). Then, the Nietzschean self will absorb reality as demanded by the “firmly established convention” of lying en masse (Nietzsche 146), which he comes into contact with. The reality thus absorbed will be, as Baudrillard called it, a weightless system, “a gigantic simulacrum” (404).

This ambivalence among multiple simulated realities is an inescapable attitude for creativity in the contemporary age. Stoppard is a playwright who has made multiple realities the motivating principle of many of his plays. The absolute contradictions in the narration of a single incident by different narrators is his favorite technique as could be seen in his earlier radio plays like *Where Are They Now* to more recent full-length plays like *Arcadia* and *Invention of Love*. David Mamet too creates characters who play with realities. Comparing Mamet’s *American Buffalo* and Edward Albee’s *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* C.W.E. Bigsby writes that Mamet’s “characters also inhabit a world of unreality. They, too, retain the vocabulary of a world which has slipped away from them. In both plays simple human need is a central fact concealed behind the desperate rhetoric of an American dream deflected from the spiritual into the material world and hence drained of its transcendental power” (*Beyond Broadway* 262).

The actively intervening “autonomous player” thus will be much less autonomous

than previously conceived. Riesman, Glazer, and Denney's society of autonomous individuals came to be seen as controversial in the subsequent decades as the term "autonomous" regarding selfhood is itself seen as problematic. If the concepts of simulacra and hyperreality challenged the reality of an autonomous self, relational psychoanalysts like Miller challenged it as opposed to the idea of relational selfhood and many now think that the individuated self may be thought of as "an illusion" (Kerl and Duffy).

The findings emerging from cognitive psychology itself create fissures in the traditional, rigid, autonomous selfhood. Hazel Markus has found the self to present itself through self schemas. Self-schemata, as defined by Markus is, "the cognitive generalizations about the self which organize, summarize, and explain behavior along a particular dimension" (135). They "organize information, but one can have multiple, even conflicting schemas about the self, and in that respect self-schemas represent an important advance over the notion of a single, global unitary self-concept" (Baumeister 120). A self is not just what it presents before others but what it ideally wants to be. These idealistic notions and ethical considerations too play a large role in the construction and presentation of a self. The distinction made by E. Tory Higgins regarding the three basic domains of the self as the actual self, the ideal self and the ought-to-self too can serve as guiding points in learning about a self's attitudes on loneliness.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore attitudes towards the lonely self in the context of Stoppardian and Mametian plays. The presentation of the "lonely self", that is, the self which lacks those observers who believe in the attributes presented by it, is studied here. The points of inquiry will be whether, why, how, and to whom one presents one's lonely self.

The second chapter concentrates on how a self performs before his intimate

companions. Whether the self suffers from a loneliness of emotional isolation or that of social isolation too is analyzed here. Two plays each of Mamet and Stoppard are selected for the purpose. Stoppard's *Enter A Free Man* and Mamet's *Duck Variations* are chosen as they are the most representative earlier plays of the playwrights regarding the lonely self. . These plays are seen to state and anticipate the political stand point of the respective dramatists over a self presented as lonely. The other two plays too, are written comparatively early in the careers of the playwrights, and are selected as they both deal with male-female relationship in its most intimate context. Stoppard's *The Real Thing* and Mamet's *Sexual Perversity in Chicago* are plays which brought their respective playwrights fame as well as critical acclaim. All these four plays portray individuals interacting with those who are in intimate relationship with them and a study of these plays is expected to reveal certain typical attitudes concerning the presentation of their lonely selves.

The third chapter deals with selves performing within a society. Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* deal with characters presenting themselves in the chaos-ridden court of Elsinore giving newer versions and world-views for Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Mamet's *Speed-the-Plow* ponders deep into the power struggles within one of the most powerful world in contemporary social order, the world of the Hollywood moguls. *Rock and Roll* by Stoppard is a more recent play, dealing with Marxism and capitalism, dictatorship and liberal democracy. *Glengarry Glen Ross* of Mamet deals with the extreme side of that liberalism in its cut-throat economy in a real-estate office. The four plays chosen for this chapter are thus, plays revealing the relationship between a self and its society.

The fourth chapter attempts to explore the self schema on loneliness in two plays of Mamet and Stoppard each. The point of inquiry here is, like that in the previous chapters, whether the characters willingly choose their lonely selves, and, if they do whether the

world of the play reward or punish them for the choice. Stoppard's *Invention of Love* and Mamet's *Boston Marriage* deal with lonely selves within homosexual relationships. *Arcadia* of Stoppard and *Oleanna* of Mamet, though set in extremely disparate backgrounds, explore the conflicts involved in the choice of a lonely self and its resolution.

After analyzing the lonely self with its intimate others in the second chapter, in the public sphere in the third chapter, and, as an emerging out of self-schemas in the fourth, the general picture that comes forth through this study will be discussed. A comparison between the narrative worlds of Stoppard and Mamet regarding the acceptability of the "lonely self" and its presentation will be outlined in the concluding chapter. Thus, this study hopes to provide a greater understanding on Stoppard and Mamet and on the presentation of the "lonely self" in the world of contemporary mainstream Western theatre.