

**CHAPTER IV**  
**THROUGH LOOKING GLASSES:**  
**SELF'S CONCEPTION OF ITS SELFHOODS**

Contemporary understanding of reality in the postmodern scenario relegates the real as just one among the multiple modes of perception. Reality is thus seen as hyperreality where the real “real” never exists. Hyperreality, like any other term dealing with human condition, has its share of varied definitions. Umberto Eco’s understanding of the term invokes “those culturally specific situations in which the copy comes first” while Jean Baudrillard regards it as “the more general contemporary condition in which both representation and reality have been displaced by simulacra (defined as copies without originals)” (Perry 1). Viewed in the light of this condition, the unitary concept of the self turns into a chimera. The Renaissance concept of the unified self as an autonomous agent with control over its perceptions, volitions and operations gets shattered into splintered representations (simulations) of selfhood with the true self being conspicuously absent. Frederick Jameson describes this situation as a waning of affect or feeling, linked to the alleged loss of a separate and unique identity or self” (Woods 36). The presentations (simulations) of the self, in this context, are the only selves that are and ever will be. Each self is thus a compendium of its presentations and nothing other than that.

Mamet and Stoppard are writers to whom critics attribute postmodern sensibilities. This chapter attempts to see how Stoppard and Mamet present selves as lonely in a milieu of splintered selfhood and abolished subject hood. Two theories contributed by the cognitive revolution in psycho-sociology are also used in this chapter to analyze the presentation of lonely selves. Hazel Markus’ notion of “self-schemata” refers to “cognitive generalizations about the self, derived from past experience, that organize and guide the processing of self-

related information contained in the individual's social experiences" (Markus 124). Thus, the past experiences of a self will help a self in labeling itself as having a particular trait as its self-schema. The self-schemata:

represent patterns of behaviour that have been observed repeatedly, to point where a frame work is generated ...[and]... implies that information about the self in some area has been categorized or organized and that the result of this organization is a discernible pattern which may be used as a basis for future judgments, decisions, inferences, or predictions about the self. (Markus 124)

Markus formulates four conditions to determine whether a person has a developed self-schema. Accordingly:

if a person has a developed self-schema, he should be readily able to process information about the self in the given domain (e.g. Make judgments or decisions) with relative ease, (b) retrieve behavioural evidence from the domain, (c) predict his own future behaviour in the domain, and, (d) resist counter schematic information about himself. (Markus 124)

The present chapter will attempt to see how far the characters of Stoppard and Mamet exhibit a self-schemata for loneliness based on these four conditions.

Another sociological theory which has helped the understanding of a self's conception of its loneliness is inspired by E. Tory Higgins who categorized the basic domains of the self into three, namely:

(a) the *actual* self, which is your representation of the attributes that someone (yourself or another) believes you actually possess, (b) the *ideal* self, which is your representation of the attributes that someone (yourself or another) would like you, ideally, to possess (i.e., representation of someone's hopes,

aspirations, or wishes for you); and (c) the *ought* self, which is your representation of the attributes that someone (yourself or another) believes you should or ought to possess (i.e., a representation of someone's sense of your duty, obligations, or responsibilities) (Rogers, Kulper, and Kirker 152).

This chapter also inquires whether the “lonely self” occurs in the “ideal” and “ought to” concepts of the selves in the plays.

Like most of Stoppard's plays, *Invention* (1999) too sets out to create much thematic confusion and structural ambiguity among critics, reviewers and anyone who happens to see or read it. Stoppard has stepped onto untrodden ground here, as Housman's “invented” love, (which is what the play deals with) is his homosexual infatuation for Moses Jackson, his fellow student at Oxford. The pathos evolves from the fact that Moses was a heterosexual unable to return Housman's passion.

The thematic confusion the play generates can be traced from its pivotal figure, Housman himself. The choice of the comparatively un-dramatic life of Housman over that of his flamboyant contemporary Oscar Wilde, is itself, confusing. No wonder, Michael Feingold calls Housman as Stoppard's “nominal subject.” Feingold even goes to the extent of commenting that “reviewers have complained that the play's actual hero is Housman's antithesis, Oscar Wilde, ... but even Wilde pales beside the figures most adoringly dwelt on, Catullus and Propertius,” the classical poets whom Housman lovingly quotes throughout the play.

This issue has also caused quite a lengthy exchange between Stoppard and Daniel Mendelsohn in *The New York Review of Books* provoking Stoppard to write “I disagree that Wilde is ‘the real hero’ of the play.” At the same time he agrees that “Wilde is in the play as a foil to Housman.” In a later interview, he makes his stance all the more clear. “Wilde,” he

says, “is very important to me, to the play, because my central thesis, in a way, is that Housman, who died revered and honored, had somehow failed in his life. His emotional life was a disaster. Wilde crashed and died in disgrace. But in fact he had lived the successful life because he had lived it true to himself” (Raymond).

The emotional isolation of Housman is obvious from his life-long involvement in an unrequited love affair. His infatuation with Jackson prevented him from having a deep attachment with anyone else, though he had friends and professional contacts and because the whole affair was his personal secret, he hardly suffered any social isolation unlike Wilde. Thus Stoppard’s reservations are justified. The plays of Stoppard examined so far advocates courage against social isolation. Housman is shown in the play as having failed to assume this courage. Though this assumption of courage would have been needless in his case as his was an unrequited love, still, this failure makes him to have “somehow failed in his life” (Raymond).

Housman is presented as a lonely self at the outset of the play. The play opens with a dream-vision of Housman’s post-death experience on the banks of the classical river Styx, a setting most appropriate to Housman, the classical scholar. Charon, the mythical boatman is about to take the dead Housman (called AEH in the play) across Styx. He looks through Housman, as he seems to wait for someone else too. Housman’s attributes, a poet and a critic, has misled him in expecting two persons instead of one. Housman placidly corrects him, “I think that must be me” (2). The bifurcated self is so internalized by him that he takes it to be granted that others might misunderstand him as two personalities than one unified self. And once the formalities of introduction are over, AEH is shown as embarking upon a monologue. It does not deal with the poignant moments of his life, nor on the intimate relations he had in his life time, but on his years at Oxford. The talk continues so long and

dreary provoking Charon to chide: “could you keep quiet for a bit?” Housman is shown to be quite insensitive to take insult of it and he replies matter-of-factly, “yes, I expect so. My life was marked by long silences” (3).

Soon, the cause for the split in AEH’s self is illustrated in an emotive vision of the object of his private passion. “I had only to stretch out my hand!” (5), AEH longingly muses as a boat passes by carrying within it his younger self (called Housman in the play), and the companions of his youth, Pollard and Jackson. Presently, the scene changes to Oxford, where Housman is seen with Pollard and Jackson. Pollard tells Jackson about the invention of love poem by the Roman poet, Catullus (13). The scene is relevant as it indicates Jackson’s strong hetero- sexual leanings and his affairs with women, thus revealing Housman’s passion to be doomed at the outset.

The play, thus presents Housman as a self doomed to emotional isolation. The intimate companionship he cherished will remain as something that is perennially unachievable. But Jackson’s rejection alone need not have made him emotionally isolated as lack of attachment figures (and not lack intimate companions) is what which can cause emotional isolation. According to Weiss, “only when feeling under threat – vulnerable, insecure, anxious – ... that the individual will feel the need for an attachment figure’s reassuring presence” (10). Jackson’s rejection, along with the realization of an impending social isolation should his sexual predilection be made public, places Housman in such a condition.

Social attitudes regarding homosexuality are revealed through snippets of contemporary scenes in the play. The Oxford don Jowett, Pater and Ruskin are shown discussing homosexuality as “buggery” (17). Sharper indictments against such “sexual aberrations” (42), as A.E.H himself is seen to call it, are to be found later in the play, in the

conversation of the journalists, Labouchere, Harris and Stead, where it is called “a contemporary evil” which is punishable with “two years with or without hard labour” (61). These stances, taken by his contemporaries against his sexual predilection, are seen to solidify in the trial and judgment of Oscar Wilde. That Housman’s need for self suppression might have been accentuated by Wilde’s predicament too is illustrated in the play by making AEH quote from his *A Shropshire Lad* the lines,

Oh who is that young sinner with the handcuffs on his wrists?

And what he has been after that they groan and shake their fists?

And wherefore is he wearing such a conscience-stricken air?

Oh they’re taking him to prison for the colour of his hair. (82)

Housman’s social isolation would have been a certainty had his dark secret be publicly revealed. The burden of social stigma brought about by such a revelation is clearly delineated through the play’s structure. His emotional isolation thus is shown as a result of his hesitance to reveal his real self even to those closest to him. Stoppard calls the play as “a play about love, not about homosexual love” (Raymond); yet, the failure of normal love can be shared with others without any fear of stigma. This was not easy in Housman’s case. Further it is not only seen as a social stigma, but also a personal failure on Housman’s part. Goffman, in his discussion on stigma, comments on the attitude of a stigmatized self to his own stigma. According to him, the stigmatized individual also tends to “hold the same beliefs about identity” as the “normals” (Goffman, *Stigma* 7). Consequently, Housman himself sees his sexual preference as a “sexual aberration” (42). Thus Housman is presented in the play as experiencing a situation of emotional isolation where he feels “under threat – vulnerable, insecure, anxious” and lacking “an attachment figure’s reassuring presence” (Weiss 10). In interviews Stoppard quotes a line from Housman’s

diary. Stoppard says:

I got a book of his letters and found this illustration of a page from his diary in which there is a very brief sentence about the man he loved. At one point Moses went off to India to teach, and [the entry read] something like, “His boat reaches Bombay at 8:40 this morning.” It didn’t even mention his name. One felt there was such emotional suppression. I found the identity of this man suddenly extremely dramatic and moving. (Raymond; Zizka).

In the play, when Wilde asks A.E.H. ironically in a fictional meeting between the two, “you did *have* friends,” A.E.H. replies, “I had colleagues” (94). Thus the play portrays a Housman whose emotional isolation is complete. He is shown as having no intimate companions, no worthwhile friendships, and not even any stable connection with his family. In real life Housman is said to have been always close with his sister Katherine. But the play reveals no such intimacy. When Kate refers to her sons, “The boys are here,” Housman seems confused. “Do I know them?” he asks, to be reminded by Kate that they are his nephews (89).

The self-schema of Housman concerning homosexuality is intimately linked with his choice and acceptance of being a lonely self. The play traces Housman’s reminiscences through his youthful days at Oxford, his first meeting with Jackson and his love for the classics. At Oxford, Housman is hardly seen as lonely. Coming from a large family of seven children, he makes quick friendships with Pollard and Jackson. They appear to have a close companionship and youthful enjoyments, like when they are seen going to picnic together in a boat. But the boat journey, according to Housman, changed his life. He realized he was hopelessly in love with Jackson. “After that day, everything else seemed futile and ridiculous: the ridiculous idea that one’s life was poised on the reading course...” (77), he

tells Jackson while revealing to him his true feelings. This realization of his sexual predilection need not have made Housman socially isolated, but an acknowledgement by another of this character trait of his is another story. In her essay on “Self-Concept Change and Self-presentation,” Dianne M. Tice argues that:

Identical behaviours are internalized much more strongly when observed by others than when private or secret. The looking glass self may function as a magnifying glass during self-perception, so that what one sees in oneself while others are present has an extra powerful impact on the self-concept.

(215)

Housman’s moment of having his self-concept acknowledged by another is shown in the play as when he reveals to Jackson his true feelings. Called “the best scene in the play” (Kellaway), the scene reveals Housman’s choice of a self for his future. Till then, it was Housman’s private sorrow and not a completed self-schema or a solidified self-concept. He could have been content with a self inflicted social exile and a continued companionship with Jackson. But Jackson’s question whether he was “sweet on” him changes everything (74). Then he stands before the “magnifying glass” of social acknowledgement, receiving “an extra powerful impact on the self-concept” (Tice 215). In vain he laments, “oh, if only you hadn’t said anything! We could have carried on the same!” (77). Jackson acts like a loyal pal and promises to keep it a secret though he can do nothing about that. “It’s rotten luck but it’ll be our secret” (78), he assures Housman. And, it is this assurance of secrecy which dooms Housman to be the possessor of half a self, and that too a lonely one.

Housman associates his love for Jackson with that of a classical story of male bonding, that between Theseus and Pirithous. The story ends with Theseus having to leave Pirithous in Hades. But in the case of Housman, Theseus and Pirithous were not two selves,



but aspects of his own self. Jackson as a lover has no semblance with Jackson as a real person. Housman's love seems to be more his creation than a real experience. Wilde acknowledges this aspect of love when, in the end of the play, he pronounces Bosie, his lover, as his "creation...[his]...poem" (95).

The structural ambiguity of the play gets answered here, taking hint from the play's title itself. In one of the earlier scenes of the play the invention of "the love poem" is mentioned and by the end of the play (13), the invention of love itself is mentioned. "But before Plato could describe love," Wilde tells AEH, "the loved one had to be invented" (95). The play reveals itself as a play about the invention of love, and the invention of a self that is made lonely as the love remains unrequited. The twice quoted simile of Socrates that love is like "the piece of ice in the fist you cannot hold or let go" again affirms the voluntary submission to the power of love (43, 95). It also indicates the self's isolation as it has to concentrate on the one piece of ice to the exclusion of all else. But for Housman this does not happen. His love, or rather, his unrequited love, forces him to immerse himself more completely into his scholarship. The learning of ancient texts becomes for him "a congenial intimacy with the author" (who is dead) (38), and compensates any congenial intimacy with real living people. It is all the more appropriate that he should do so, as he calls Jackson "half [his] life" (77). Like Theseus leaving Pirithous in Hades, Housman had to leave half of himself in the world of the dead, unknown, unseen by others. His loneliness is thus, a half loneliness, even when worldly success is bestowed on him. This inability to assert his lonely self renders his life incomplete and makes him tarry even at the banks of Styx to reenact his life's half-lived moments.

A.E.H.'s meeting his younger self in the play can be seen as a coming to terms with his sundered self. Unable to have a "congenial intimacy" with another (38), the lonely self is

forced to return to himself, to the self before it invented an ideal “other” from itself. Only then could the sundered self be acknowledged as a truly lonely, separate and distinct entity deserving a crossing of the Styx.

The role of Wilde in the play, in this context, appears as a complement to Housman. If Housman was forced to endure emotional isolation to protect his self from social isolation, Wilde’s plight demanded the opposite. His thriving to gain emotional intimacy cost him his social acceptance. Housman thus stands, in the Stoppardian oeuvre, as the typical tragic hero of Stoppard’s comedies like Riley in *Enter a Free Man* and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in *R & G*. He is presented as a self who gives up selfhood to escape from social isolation. The difference in Housman’s case from these others is that his choices are much more limited. His life is doomed to be “marked by long silences” (3, 95), and equally silent (in the sense of being non-communicative) homilies. His lectures are endured by bored students (48), and hardly tolerated by others like Charon who chides him to keep quiet. The pathos of his life being as it is, Housman seems to take all this for granted and never seem to expect miracles like Riley (the original title of *Enter a Free Man* being *A Walk on Water*), or Ros and Guil. “Walking on water,” he says, “is not among my party tricks” (101). And it is this realization which makes him greater than the other characters and elevates him to the level of a tragic hero than a comic one. And, maybe it is because of this trait in Housman that Stoppard remarks, “I called him earlier some sort of a failure. I personally find him heroic. I’m afraid I even like his arrogance at the end...” (Zizka).

In the play, he is never shown as waiting for the bright day of the future to come. It is always a complacent acceptance of the present. He is seen quoting from Horace, “I take no pleasure in woman or boy, nor the trusting hope of love returned...” (49). Still, sadness remains the dominant emotion as “the unaccustomed tear” happens to trickle down his

cheek (49). In spite of the sadness Housman does make his choice and has willingly, (though sadly) paid its cost. Thus he concludes his reference to Wilde near the end of the play with the words that Wilde's plight "goes to show" that he knows what he was doing. "I know what I'm doing even when I don't know I'm doing it" (101), he says. Still, within the play's logic, Wilde's choice comes out as more preferable but, not to the extent of diminishing Housman's role in the play. A quiet life too has its rewards, its validity and its celebratory vitality. It too can have an existence in what Houseman refers to as the "Golden Age." And even when the waters at his feet are "indifferent," Housman considers it "lucky" to find himself "standing on this empty shore" of life as contrasted to the fatal passion of Wilde which made his stay here on earth too short (102).

A self not only presents itself differently before different audiences, but also gains different selfhoods according to varying audience responses. A lonely self thus, is not just presented or disguised before an audience, but is also created by that audience. *Boston Marriage* (1999) tells the story of "two women of fashion," as Mamet introduces them in his character list, and their domestic help, at the turn of the twentieth century. These women survive emotionally and materially by the creation and presentation of their lonely selves according to the demands of their audience.

The play, though a deviation from Mamet's usual depictions of exclusively male worlds, is typically Mametian in its thematic concerns and technical artistry. Its classical structure, linguistic expertise, thematic preoccupations with interpersonal relations, and extreme cravings for intimacy and the predominance it gives to a personal community, are all essentially Mametian. Usually, in Mamet's plays, the personal community of a character amounts to the people with whom he or she is attached at the beginning of the play. Mamet's characters are usually socially isolated beings whose communities generally

involve the limited number of people with whom they interact in the play. *Boston Marriage* is no exception.

The title *Boston Marriage* indicates the relationship shared by the two characters in the play. The term is of Edwardian origin referring to a relationship between two females of upper or upper-middle class who lived together without overt male support. This relationship did not always involve physical intimacy. In the play, Mamet presents a relationship between two women that implies a physical liaison. As the play opens, Claire enters Anna's house after an absence of some time and expresses surprise over the change in interior decoration. Anna responds that it was all for Claire's sake. During Claire's absence, Anna found a rich male protector, who bestows her with a monthly allowance. He has also given her his family heirloom, an emerald necklace, which she wears. Anna claims that having come into funds her "FIRST THOUGHT" was for Claire. Claire had, according to Anna, "once expressed a preference for chintz" (14). So, even though she abhors chintz, she has redecorated the house in it "to please" Claire (14). But Claire has come with troubling news for Anna. She is "in Love" with a young woman (9). Unlike Mamet's male characters like Bernie in *SP* or Don in *American Buffalo* who put on fake masks of macho prowess before their attachment figures, Anna, as a woman, puts on her mask of external vulnerability. The vulnerability of her projected lonely self is her manipulative weapon of seduction. She accuses Claire of making her lonely. "Oh how lonely you make me feel" (15), she laments.

The transference of the responsibility of one's feelings to another frees a self from the burden of its own feelings and consequently of its actions based on those feelings. Anna accepts the self-schema of loneliness but shifts the responsibility for its creation on to Claire, thus freeing herself from the moral implications of her subsequent actions. The

presentation of one's self as lonely is the manipulative technique employed by Bernie in *SP* too. Both attempts at seduction seem to fail at the outset. But Bernie's manipulation was aimed at a complete stranger, an "other", while Anna wields its blunt power over a long time companion. And, in Mamet's world, loyalty and long time companionship count a lot. In his plays, there is a bonding that accommodates a give and take and compromise among companions. These are qualities which Mamet associates with males, as he writes in *Some Freaks*, "Compromise is a male idea" (23). Yet, perhaps, in the backstage world of female bonding presented in *Boston Marriage* there is a possibility of the same rules of male business being applied. Thus, even if the presentation of the lonely self as a manipulative tool of seduction fails, it may yet function as an interactive tool to gain companionship.

Anna's "keening" hardly changes the direction of Claire's passion as her arrival to Anna's house is with a specific purpose (31). She wants a private place to meet her "girl", and she requests Anna to oblige her by providing such a space in Anna's home. After some initial protests Anna agrees with one condition – that she be granted a voyeuristic pleasure from the union. She wants to play the "stage manager" (35), receive Claire's inamorata, and then be allowed to look at the couple "through a hole in the wall" (36). Anna's moral compunctions, if there were any, hardly matter in such a circumstance. Having assumed a lonely self as her self-schema, she demands compensation from the one who made her lonely. If she cannot share an intimacy with Claire, then she wants a share of Claire's intimacy with another.

In Mamet's world, intimacy and the need for intimacy usually have tragic consequences. The failure of Danny- Deborah relationship in *SP* is the result of their intimate union as opposed to Danny-Bernie relationship, which keeps a fine balance between intimacy and a social belonging to a large community. For Mamet's characters, the

luxury of having an intimate relationship with another, and, the comfort of experiencing a sense of complete belongingness to the larger power-wielding social organizations, are both shown as inaccessible. What is accessible to them, on the other hand, is a compromise of these two, that is, a private, personal community of limited members. Danny-Bernie relationship satisfies the need for such a community. Mamet's ideal world of a balanced relationship seems to be that of *DV*, where two selves provide a personal community for each other without craving for intimacy or encroaching onto the other's intimate boundaries. So too, in *Oleanna*, John's doom is precipitated by his offering personal coaching to Carol, by his patting her on her back, and, by his revelation of his personal problems to her. *Boston Marriage* too is no exception. Thus, Anna's demand, though acquiesced by Claire in her desperation, is bound to fail in Mametian worlds.

Claire, too, hardly hesitates to present her self as lonely. But unlike Anna, her presentation is not intended as a seduction, but only as a ploy for prompting sympathy from a long-time companion and hence may succeed. "I am alone, in the midst of my own folly, of my need and vice. I stand naked before you, in my panting and unclean depravity, and beg your aid. Help me" (36), she entreats Anna. Her apparent approach towards intimacy, when she says, "I stand naked before you," is neutralized by her intended uninterestedness in Anna and her material requirement of a "place" from her (26).

Both Anna's and Claire's plans to gain bliss fail due to an unseen coincidence. The girl whom Claire loves happens to be the daughter of Anna's protector. Anna according to her agreement with Claire, goes to receive the girl to her house. As she was still wearing the necklace presented to her by her lover, the girl notices it and recognizes it as her mother's. This ruins both Claire's romance and Anna's financial prospects. They are in for what Anna terms as a "reversal" (56, 101). Anna's response to the situation reveals her true feelings.

She sums up her state of affairs to her maid: "I have lost my income, and I've alienated the affection of my one true love" (45). Her love for Claire is her consuming passion and Claire's companionship is what she cares for more than even financial security. When Claire returns she is so relieved. "Oh, Thank God you are returned" (46), she tells Claire. Claire can hardly understand the cause for Anna's acting "so blithe" (48). Anna replies, "What do I care for the loss of a jewel?" (49). What she cares for is only for Claire's companionship. But Claire's intention in returning to Anna's house this time was only to check whether her young friend had left her any message there.

It is Anna's maid who comes to their rescue. She had been the object of banter of her mistress throughout the play. Yet she seems to bear no resentment. She quotes her old grandmother's platitude, "Life is Froth and Life is Bubble. Two things stand like stone. Kindness in another's trouble. Courage in one's own" (69). Taking inspiration from this, they plan to masquerade themselves as fortune tellers to explain away the whole thing to the girl and her father. But the plan fails miserably as Anna's Protector's wife proves herself to be more powerful than expected (like Lingk's wife in *Glengarry*). She effects a quick "decamping" of the whole family (92). The Protector is made to take legal action against Anna through an attorney. The attorney's letter requires Anna to immediately return the necklace, "which had somehow found its accidental way into" Anna's possession (93).

Anna realizes her situation to be precarious. Her financial security is gone, but what she cares more for is Claire's companionship. But, as she feared at the beginning of Act II, she had "alienated" Claire by making her lose her young lover (45, 46). Claire wants to leave Anna. She makes it appear as though she was leaving out of regret for having spoiled Anna's financial prospects. "You always were too good for me," she tells Anna. She acknowledges that she has spoiled Anna's "establishment and traduced" her "affections."

And so it was better for them both “to part” (101). Anna’s response to the situation can be seen as a direct consequence of her choice of self-schemas. She has acknowledged loneliness to be one of her traits (15), though she attributes Claire to be its cause. Subsequently, she accepts deception to be another of her traits. She deceives her Protector by affecting love to him while what she wanted was only financial assistance. “Well, what have I done but deceive him? My Protector loves me...,” she tells Claire (79).

According to Baumeister, having a self schema for some trait makes one “act more like an expert on that trait” (120). Anna continues to act like an expert in deception to get what she wants. Further, it is seen that “the schematic person makes more subtle distinctions about others on that trait, attends more to details, spots relevant information more quickly, and integrates relevant information more effectively” (Baumeister 120). Anna identifies in Claire her self-same capacity for deception. She also spots the relevant information that Claire’s deceptive penitentiary speech has had its inspiration in the maid’s Auld Gran’s advice. Claire was putting forth the act of being one who is “kind in another’s [Anna’s] trouble” and having “courage” in her own, by going on her own way separate from Anna. The desperation at loneliness energizes Anna’s presence of mind and she plays with the same ploy which Claire uses. She tells Claire that her necklace is missing, implicating the maid’s involvement as she has disappeared. She readies herself to go to jail and Claire, for all her lofty speeches, cannot now abandon Anna to be the lone sufferer for something she has caused. She offers to go along with Anna. Though at the end of the play, the maid’s arrival informs Claire that the necklace was in the house itself, by then, the excuse to leave has weakened, and Claire decides to stay, maybe realizing fully well Anna’s ploy from her own self schema. Anyway, old friends are together again in the end to end the play as a happy comedy. The lonely self/selves regain their personal communities, neither too



intimate, nor too distant and all the strangers are either gone, or reclaimed by their respective communities (as the wife/mother reclaiming husband/daughter).

The character of the maid too aids in this reclaiming of personal community. The maid is an outsider, whose name and nationality are matters of continuous uncertainty for Anna. She is called “Bridey” (8, 41), “Mary,” “Peggy” (9), “Molly” (82, 83), “Nora” (84), and is even referred to as “slavey” (82), in spite of her numerous attempts to correct that her name is Catherine. She is also attributed to be Irish and taunted for the same when she is actually Scottish. Her relevance in the play’s world is that she remains the outsider who is inside, and thus she acts as a conduit between the external world and the two ladies. Further, even though she herself is marginalized in the home of her mistress, she is someone with contacts with the outer world. And as such, she gives the semblance of community to the other two characters who are “outside of society, on the fringe” (Donahue).

While Anna and Claire try to alleviate their loneliness by gaining the objects of their desire, the maid appears to have no such obsessions. She, rather, pours out her self to others, though no one seems to listen. Of the three, she appears to have the most pertinent reason to be lonely. She is from a faraway place separate from her family, and where she is, no one seems to give her any companionship. The cook, who might have been some company to her, is gone, and she is abandoned by her lover. Her mistress is hardly ever kind to her and taunts her by attributing alien identities upon her. Still, the maid persists without ever even uttering a single word about feeling lonely. The utmost she expresses of her feelings is that she is so home sick that she would “fuck the ragman just to hear a friendly word” (46). Her self is not lonely because it craves for an intimate union with another, but because of its separation from its community, her home. Thus she is not lonely, but only homesick. And her greatest sorrow when her best friend “ravaged and abandoned” her (102), is that she

“can’t go home” (67).

Even though a hapless victim of her mistress’ showering vitriol, Catherine is an important character in the play’s world. Besides being the main source of humor and diversion, it is her words which bring about the play’s resolution. Though on her own in Anna’s household, Catherine, always carries her community around her. Her conversation is so full of her home, her people, their philosophy of life and her “auld” grandmother who “lived a long life” and died at the age of “forty” (68). It is her grandmother’s wisdom which comes to the aid of Anna and Claire, at first in their foiled masquerade as fortune tellers, and later, in helping Anna to devise a proper ploy to regain the lost companionship, her personal community in Claire. Anna hurls at her taunts directed against the Irish with “unerring political incorrectness” (Clay). But Catherine is actually Scottish and this mistaken identity along with its isolating hilarity, reveals the jealousies of Anna’s lonely self against anyone who possesses a community of her own, whether it be Irish or Scottish.

Catherine thus stands as the play’s ideal self, as she is the one who seems to effortlessly possess a community of her own as well as an intimate relationship with her boyfriend. She, like Anna’s Protector’s wife, is someone who belongs to the external world from which Mamet’s lonely characters, who inhabit society’s fringes, are excluded.

Named after Sir Philip Sidney’s 16<sup>th</sup> century utopia, *Arcadia* relates the happenings in an aristocratic estate within two time periods; the early nineteenth and the late twentieth century. Dubbed as a masterpiece by reviewers and critics, it has been called “Stoppard's richest, most ravishing comedy to date” (Canby). The varied thematic concerns of the play include the nature of truth, the desirability of the romantic temperament over the classical and vice versa, Fermat’s Last Theorem, thermodynamics, end of the world, chaos theory and sex.

The juxtaposing of time periods within which the play is located, i.e. the onset of the Romantic Age at the beginning of the nineteenth century and the twentieth century postmodern *fin de siècle*, calls for attention towards the significance of the romantic and classical temperaments and perspectives within the play. Each self's cognition of itself leading to the formation of its self-schema too will be influenced by these dominant temperaments. The self's idealized version of itself towards which it tends to aspire and its moralized version of what it ought to be too are dictated by its bias towards either one of these dominant temperaments.

The play opens in a private classroom of a large country house in the early nineteenth century. The house is situated on Sidley Park, a vast land spreading "five hundred acres including forty of lake" (85), and belongs to the Coverly family. Septimus, a twenty two year old Cambridge graduate, is teaching thirteen year old Thomasina Coverly, the daughter of the family. Thomasina has heard a gossip that Mrs. Chater, a guest of the family, was spied to be in carnal embrace in the gazebo. She wants to know the meaning of "carnal embrace". Septimus is, (as revealed later in the play though unknown at present to Thomasina), Mrs. Chater's partner in that specific occasion. Instead of giving his ward a direct answer, he indulges in word-play, explaining away carnal embrace as the "practice of throwing one's arms around a side of beef" (2). The by then established Newtonian world of cause and effect seems to have given him the confidence to explain away every action in objective and scientific language. Yet, his actions tend towards a chaos of sexual conglomerations, immersed in an "attraction that Newton left out" (97). Hannah, the best-selling author who, almost two centuries later, comes to research on Sidley Park, calls him "a scientist...as much as anything" (32). As such, the Septimus who appears in the play is a glib user of words and an optimist capable of visualizing collective human life as a forward

march when what one lets fall “will be picked up by those behind” (50).

In the large aristocratic setting of the Coverly house, his position might have been as someone, to borrow Hannah’s words, “not quite a guest but rather more than a steward” (32). If ever he was lonely, he never voices it nor does it seem likely that he even acknowledges it to himself. Septimus’ self-schema, thus, appears “aschematic” (in the sense that he has “not formed an opinion of himself” on the dimension of loneliness (Baumeister 120). His self appears to be the product of the enlightenment theories based on the forward march of human progress. A part of the cognitive spirit of the Newtonian universe, his ideal self appears to be a self which functions as a cog helping in the collective forward march. This ideal is to be differentiated from that of Riesman, Glazer, and Denney’s tradition-directed self or even that of the other-directed self as explicated in *Lonely Crowd*. Unlike the tradition-directed, unthinking acquiescence of convention, the Newtonian self is bent on understanding the cause and effect of all that it encounters. And, unlike the other-directed conformity with one’s peers, the enlightenment self was called upon to ask questions and seek the answers without depending on the network of other-related information.

Septimus’ ideal self, thus seems to follow the inner-directed self’s dictum of self sufficiency. Loneliness as such, is not something that should be given undue importance in an inner-directed self’s self schema. It can, as mentioned in the earlier chapters, be, at times even an ideal. And, at times of emergency, it constitutes part of the ought-to-self of the inner-directed identity. That is, it becomes part of the self’s responsibility to itself and its society to make lonely pursuits for common benefit. So, the only loneliness which a self is allowed to express is the loneliness which, in any way, might affect his society.

Thus, at the end of the play, after having masticated Thomasina’s theory of heat death, Septimus dares to express his grim view of the end of the world, when complete

knowledge is attained: “when we have found all the mysteries and lost all the meaning, we will be alone, on an empty shore” (121). Thomasina’s cool retort, “then we will dance” (126), though immediately acquiesced, does not integrate into his understanding. The audience, informed by the late twentieth century researchers in the play, knows that Septimus ended his days as an eccentric hermit seeking a way to save the universe from the final heat death in Sidley Park’s romantically landscaped artificial hermitage.

Septimus as the hermit can be seen through various perspectives. He can be seen as the typical representative of the romantic genius, the one who “hath drunk the milk of paradise, hath burning eyes and flying hair” as Samuel Taylor Coleridge defined his poet in “Kubla Khan” (230-31). He can also be seen as the lonely, misunderstood genius toiling alone to bring in immeasurable rewards to mankind. For Hannah, the late twentieth century garden historian of Sidley Park, but, Septimus was her “peg for the nervous breakdown of the romantic imagination” (33). He was, for her, “a symbol of the whole romantic sham,” – a “mind in chaos suspected of genius. In a setting of cheap thrills and false emotion” (36). But later, her discovery that Septimus and the hermit had the same birth date forces her to revise his symbolic value. Then, he becomes the “Age of Enlightenment banished into the romantic wilderness! The genius of Sidley Park living on in a hermit’s hut!” (88). Yet for all we know, it was not Septimus, but Thomasina who was the real genius of Sidley Park.

Stoppard here subverts the concept of lonely genius as projected by George Riley in *Enter a Free Man*. He reinstates his view on the necessary space for separate solitary individuality and at the same time contrasts it with that of a self which experiences loneliness. While Thomasina, the real genius, goes on with her life after having discovered certain crucial theorems in Science, Septimus, the mediocre scholar indulges his whole life in pursuit of a futile end. Also, only the mediocre worries about being lonely, even if it is a

worry concerning the loneliness of his race. Thus, Septimus is made to talk about being “alone, on an empty shore” (126), while Thomasina is more concerned about her waltz lesson. Septimus’ endeavor further seems to imply the futility and wastefulness of any lonely pursuit. Any amount of hard work or talent by an individual need not result in a salvation for mankind. Thomasina did “not know the mathematics” for explaining her discoveries (117), and Septimus did not have the time to complete the solution to his mathematical problem. These are endeavors requiring group efforts through time which spans generations of short-lived human lives. As Thomasina understood in the eighteenth century, individual lives are too precious to be wasted over such pursuits or over such meaningless lamentations.

We learn more about Septimus through Hannah’s research, which years later, opens a door through which the present informs the past while the past instructs the present. Hannah is the advocate of the classic age. She seeks for reason and evidence for her findings, and she is suspicious of sentimentality (37). She prefers the neo classical landscaping to the romantic. Hannah is also not someone easily disillusioned by the satisfying dream of a final resolution of all mysteries. According to her, “it’s wanting to know that makes us matter” (100).

Intellectually, Hannah presents her self as an autonomous one with capacities to think and analyze and live with uncertainties. But emotionally, we find her alone. Apparently she does deny any concern over her emotionally solitary state. She does not seem to believe in the institution of marriage as she considers it a futile bargain: “available sex against not being allowed to fart in bed” (84). Yet, it is by choice than by fate that she is alone. All the men in the play who come into contact with her seem to be curiously attracted to her. Valentine calls her “fiancée,” Bernard invites her to have sex with him and Gus romantically

adores her. This power of attraction which she possesses is not limited to the persons with whom she personally comes into contact. She is a best-selling author, having attracted masses by the charm of her written word. But she keeps aloof from any emotional involvement forcing Valentine to remark: “your classical reserve is only a mannerism; and neurotic” (99). Hannah manages from answering this remark by asking a utilitarian question: “do you want the room?” (99).

Hannah’s self-schema is that of a strong-willed logical personality with an ability to survive without attachment figures. But morally, she seems to sense that she ought to make greater efforts at connection and concern. When she is praised for not interfering in the affairs of others, she answers frankly, “I’ve always been given credit for my unconcern” (64). At the same time we find her to be kind and considerate towards others. Even when Bernard snubs her, she takes pains to make him realize that he might make a fool of himself and ruin his academic career if he published a discovery on false grounds. She chastises Bernard for being insensitive to Chloe. It seems appropriate that it is Gus, the silent boy, who helps her in the end, in her research as well as in breaking her emotional silence. The play works at sorting out the varied aspects of conflict between the classical and romantic temperaments. The classical advocacy of logic and reason is compared along with the romantic preference for “gut instinct,” as Bernard calls it. He defines it as the “part of you which doesn’t reason” (66). Though she is an advocate of classical temperament, Hannah too seems to confer a space for the romantic concept of “gut instinct.” When, based on scientific reasoning, Bernard points out that the pictures on Hannah’s book jacket are not Lord Byron’s and Caroline Lamb’s, she remarks, “but Bernard – I know it’s them” (83). Bernard is quick enough to probe whether it is through “gut instinct” that she knows it and she gives no answer other than a flat “he’s wrong” (83).

At the end of the play, Gus brings her Thomasina's drawing, titled, "Septimus Holding Plautus," which gives her an essential clue for proving her theory that Septimus was the hermit of Sidley Park. Then, Gus mutely asks her to dance with him and, Hannah, who according to herself, does not dance (45), consents. The language of logic gets interspersed with the language of "gut instinct," the language of muteness, and the language of dance to fulfill the play's message that we could dance when "we have found all the mysteries, and lost all the meaning," and are all alone (126). Dance becomes the counterpoint for being alone, being a symbol for the rhythm and harmony of multiple elements. It is what Thomasina advocates as a remedy for a degrading universe, which, according to her heat loss theory, is heading to its impending doom.

SEPTIMUS. When we have found all the mysteries and lost all the meaning,  
we will be alone, on an empty shore.

THOMASINA. Then we will dance. (126)

The evolving self of Thomasina is a pivotal point upon which the play's thematic structure is built. The play opens with her thirteen-year old self asking "what is carnal embrace" to Septimus. For Septimus, the union involved in "embracing" seems to be an issue both embarrassing to be described, and, at the same time, something that is beyond objective description. Septimus's answer creates a hilarious discrepancy between experience and its masqueraded logical translation into linguistic terms. Each one of Thomasina's scientific discoveries too belies the supreme power of reason of the Newtonian universe based on cause and effect transformations. Her iterative algorithm brings out unforeseen order out of chaos and her heat-death theory harbingers the end of the illusion regarding Enlightenment's evolutionary progress towards utopia.

Thomasina is presented at the opening of the play as a growing child fully confident



of her intellectual powers and at the same time curious about everything around her. She does not seem to bother about being a solitary child in a big country house (her brother being at Eton), or being a student in a single-student classroom with Septimus. She does not seem to yearn for companions of her age. Her aloneness never thrusts her into a state of loneliness, but rather gives her a space to connect herself with the universal realities. With an uncanny sense of practical wisdom she judges the adults around her and is comfortable with her space. In a hilarious moment of absolute misunderstanding, Thomasina tells Septimus, “it is plain that there are some things a girl is allowed to understand, and these include the whole of algebra, but there are others, such as embracing a side of beef, that must be kept from her until she is old enough to have a carcass of her own” (150). The reference to the side of the beef is related to Septimus’ earlier definition of “carnal embrace.”

Thomasina’s self-schema thus seems to be that of a girl who adjusts herself in her given social order. The last scene of the play shows her as a sixteen year old who has a crush on Byron, the most interesting male she has come into contact with. But when she learns that Byron is interested in women other than herself, the knowledge does not lead her to desolation, but rather, she immediately shifts her preference to Septimus, the next eligible young male available. She is happiest when she is learning something and at the end of the play, it is her waltz lesson which opens a new universe of joy in contrast to the scientifically prophesied heat-death of the universe. The audience’s realization that she is doomed to die in fire that very night adds to the poignancy of the heat death theory as well as to the power of the “dance”.

Dance here becomes the symbol not only of playfulness, but also of connection and harmony. Thomasina conveys that a self’s loneliness is hardly the matter if it has other

things to concern itself with. Companions may come and go, while the pursuit of knowledge, the “wanting to know,” as Hannah tells Valentine, is that which “makes us matter” (100). Septimus too appears to have held this view in his younger days, making him defy the power structures of his age as seen in his assertion to Augustus, Thomasina’s brother, “I do not rule here, my lord. I inspire by reverence for learning and exaltation of knowledge whereby man may approach God” (106). But the play, as a whole implies that “wanting to know” and having knowledge is not enough unless accompanied by the experience of knowledge in companionship with other human souls. Then the loneliness in an empty shore can be alleviated by the synthesizing harmony of dance.

Mamet’s anxieties over the perils involved in the assertion and presentation of one’s lonely self is clearly delineated in his 1992 play, *Oleanna*. Set in the academic background of an American University, the play is named after a failed Norwegian utopia of settling in America. Significantly, the term “*Oleanna*”, is never mentioned within the text of the play, thus giving it an extra-textual symbolic value. Within the textual space, the determination of what the exact failed utopia is, is left to audience discretion.

The play comprises of three acts, each act revealing a confrontation between John, a professor in his forties and Carol, his twenty year old student, in John’s Office. In the first Act, Carol has come to John without an appointment as she is, apparently, desperate over her grade. She claims that she does not understand what John is teaching, and John consoles her, even though he is in the middle of certain pressing personal preoccupations. The second Act jolts the situation to a surprising twist as this time Carol has come to John at his request. She has complained to the Tenure Committee which has the power to decide on John’s promotion that he is “sexist” and “elitist” and had told her “a rambling, sexually explicit story” (47). John attempts to do a “straight” talk to “settle” the matter (57), but, is rejected.

In his desperate attempt to make her listen, John tries to physically prevent her abrupt leaving of the room. The Act ends as she shouts for help. The third Act reveals a tenser situation as Carol has made a complaint stating that John tried to rape her. Her “Group” has told his lawyer that they may “pursue criminal charges” (78). The play ends as John, enraged, beats her up with the words: “You think you can come in here with your political correctness and destroy my life?” (79).

The play, in its various performances, incited near-revolt responses from the audience. Audiences and critics found it difficult not to take sides with either John or Carol. The play, in almost all its performances released what Victoria Laurie called “almost toxic after-show vibes in a deeply divided audience.” While some saw the play as an indictment against political correctness and exaggerated rights for the marginalized because they loathed “what Carol represents” (Lahr, “Dogma Days” 351), others, Elaine Showalter among them, feel the play “targets a woman as an ugly representative of the group that challenges the white masculine ruling class” (16). This dichotomy of idealistic polarity made the play one of the most discussed one among academic and critical circles for a long time.

A probe into the presentation of the lonely self in the play reveals an identical pattern of behavior with the other Mametian plays. The fear of revealing one’s lonely self, the manipulating revelations of the experience of loneliness especially with the purpose of seduction, and the punishments meted out to those who dare to separate themselves from their group to gain intimacy elsewhere – are all evident here. The loneliness of the inner-directed is always viewed with suspicion in Mamet’s plays. A retreat to the tradition-directed community or the other-directed mass is seen as more advisable than any lonely pursuit. Thus, the success and failure of the characters, John and Carol, depend on the way

in which they present or submerge their lonely selves. The play opens with John and Carol alone with each other. Both have their background and community, vignettes of which come out through the play's dialogue.

John is, in the beginning of the play, in a more powerful position than Carol. This position of power is attributed not just to his professorial status, but also to the prominence and presence (albeit through phone) of his community. Meanwhile, Carol's community appears marginalized and insignificant as she confesses, "... I come from 'a different social...'" and "'a different economic...'" background (8). But, by the second Act, this diffident half-mentioned reference to an obsolete background gets solidified into a new community, "My Group" (54). This time, her community is not an assortment of half-mentioned "different social..." and "different economic..." unnamable nonentities, but a group about whom she confidently refers to as "the people I've been talking to..." (54). John, quick to put in a liberal and empathetic rejoinder, encourages her. "There's no shame in that. Everybody needs advisors. Everyone needs to expose themselves. To various points of view. It's not wrong. It's essential. Good Good..." (55).

Yet significantly, John's conception of a group seems absolutely varied from that of Carol's. For Carol, the "group" is not just a band of advisors to whom one can expose oneself. Such a space for presenting one's unique self to other unique selves in return for "various points of view" is hardly what Carol gained from the interactions with her group. As Thomas H. Goggans points out, "with the help of the Group," she becomes "assertive and confident" (39), to such an extent that she can proclaim: "I don't think that I need your help. I don't think I need anything you have" (49). For her, the group is singular in its support, and she has no ambition to stand apart from it. "Exposing" herself as a separate entity before the group is hardly her concern. She stands with the group and is full

heartedly its representative.

John, but, relates himself not just to one group, but to four varied communities. The first is the community of failures (as he has been “raised to think” of himself as “stupid” [15]) from whom he broke off when, according to him, he, worked his “way out of the need to fail” (22). The second is the academic community into which he had made a late arrival. It is a community which he had hated once, and is, as he acknowledges, a community with power. “I hated school, I hated teachers, I hated everyone who was in the position of a “boss...” Then,” late in life” he “got out from under” and joined the very process in which he had, once, seen “an exploitation” (22).

This personal history requires him to rehash the education system with which he chose to associate. Being unable to bring about such a restructuring and compelled by the necessity of his earlier experiences to distance himself from what he saw as an exploitative process, he presents himself as a “different” teacher. Within the confines of a college classroom, he provokes students by questioning the relevance of college education for all. Thus, he makes himself separate from the group to which he aspired to belong. “When I found I loved to teach I swore I would not become that cold, rigid automation of an instructor which I had encountered as a child” (43). Thus he breaks out from his chosen group of the powerful.

Yet he is desirous of the accompaniments of power possessed by that group – job, home, wife, family etc. No wonder, Carol easily associates him with that group. “I don’t care what you feel. Do you see? Do you SEE? You can’t do that anymore. You. Do. Not. Have. The. Power. Did you misuse it? Someone did. Are you part of that group. Yes, yes, You Are” (50). The Split sentence, “You, Do. Not. Have. The. Power,” itself suggests the split between John and the group of power. His disclaimer against conventional education

results only in separating himself from its power, but not from its responsibilities. The power with capital “P” is transferred to those with connection, and that too, a connection which is continuous, with a past and future attached to it. John himself seems to sense it as he says that the “essence of all human communication,” is, “I say something conventional, you respond” and that much “of what we do is conventional” (53). John tells Carol that he does not want “to fire you, I would like to tell you what I think, because. That is my job, conventional as it is...” (54). He does not know any better “revolutionary” manner to alternate for it. “And then, if you can show me some better form, then we can proceed from there” (54). Thus, John’s distinctiveness and separateness from the conventional education system is not a break from its ideology, but only from its conventional community of “cold, rigid automation” of instructors (43). And this gives him an essentially lonely self.

The community with which John associates himself and considers his own is the recently concocted community of his intimate companions, namely his family comprising of wife and his son. He intends to establish a new life with his family in a new house brought with the money to-be-derived from his about-to-get promotion. But, like in most of Mamet’s plays, in *Oleanna* too new relationships are bound to be fragile. Only a return to the background, the old companions, the old connection, can assuage one’s anxieties and insecurities. Even the opening scene reveals John’s life and fortune as volatile though he craves for stability at a level supposedly of higher merit than his present one. This elevation is to be brought about by the Tenure Committee who will decide on his promotion and the real estate agent who will get him his home. Thus these constitute his fourth community. Though these groups constitute a community of power and does not in any way give him any sense of inclusion, still they are the gateway to, and part of, John’s aspired future and this could be assigned as one of his communities.

Among these four communities, the first one is rejected by John. The second is disowned by him, though he still belongs to it. The fourth will disown him and appears indifferent to his fate throughout. The third, his family, is something which, more than a community, should stand for his intimate attachment figures. But John's telephone conversations which are the only links with his communities throughout the play, suggest otherwise. The phone symbolizes not just John's connection with his communities, the fragility of his relationships with them, but also his breach with them. Even John's first phone conversation which starts the play points at the lack of strong ties between John and his communities. His anxieties over land, tenure, and house are anxieties to find a place for himself in the upper middle class, non-stigmatic world. In the past he was a loner. He tells Carol that "We can only interpret the behavior of others through the scene we..." create (19). And, just a moment back, he had interpreted her feelings: "and you will think: Why was I born to be the laughing stock of a world in which everyone is better than I?" (19), thus revealing it to be part of his own experiences. Gradually he reveals it was his own experiences at school. "I hated school, I hated teachers. I hated everyone" (22). His present professional career, by his own statement, makes him a loner who has come "late to teaching" (22) and who wants to be different from the others.

He is a loner even in his domestic sphere where his relationship seems more utopian than real. In the first Act while explaining to Carol his general reference that "everyone has problems" (21), he acknowledges that he has problems with his wife (22), and Carol later manipulates this and adds it to her list of accusations against him in Act II. "He told me he had problems with his wife" (48). The phone conversations too do not give a picture of a very secure spousal relationship. He attempts to assuage the anxieties underlying the relationship by repeating the "I love you" cliché, "I love you, too. (Pause) I love you, too"

(2), on the phone, even while he has a student before him. His assertions of affection to his wife point more to the vulnerability of their mutual trust than otherwise. “I love you,” he tells his wife and repeats, “listen, listen, I said ‘I love you,’ it’s going to work out with the, because I feel that it is, I’ll be right down” (20). These repeated assertions of his affection amidst a tense and serious conversation regarding an important business deal itself suggests an insecurity concerning a reciprocal affection.

Later, when he has real problems at work he hardly opens up with his wife and solve the problem together. Rather he chooses for himself the role of the lonely head of a patriarchal family who shoulders his burdens on his own. “I can’t talk about it now” he tells his wife on phone and entreats her just to trust him (55). Later, even when the problems get worse, he does not confide in his wife but stays away from home in a hotel for days (76). Still, he keeps on to his utopia of a protected family which was soon to have a new home. He confides of his dream to Carol, “A home. A good Home. To raise my family” (44), and he believes that his behavior as the head of such a family is unassailable. And it is on this pride that Carol finally thrusts her weapon making him lose all his control. It is when Carol attempts to correct him on the way he addresses his wife that he finally loses all his patience and starts to physically attack her.

CAROL. ...your wife...?

JOHN. ...who it is no concern of yours. Get out. (To phone:) No, no, it’s going to be all right. I, I can’t talk now, Baby. (To CAROL) Get out of here.

CAROL. I’m going.

JOHN . Good

CAROL. (exiting):...and don’t call your wife “baby.”



JOHN. What?

CAROL. Don't call your wife baby. You heard what I said.

(CAROL starts to leave the room. JOHN grabs her and begins to beat her)

JOHN. You vicious little bitch. You think you can come in here with your political correctness and destroy my life?

(He knocks her to the floor). (79)

He loses his control as Carol has attacked him on his most vulnerable point – his utopian vision of himself as the security providing bread-winner of his family. The need for this vision, for him, does not emerge from an intimacy with his wife as an attachment figure. It is the result more of his realization of a family as the fundamental social unit. As an accomplished family man, his past social isolation is to have disappeared and he is supposed to have a community of his own. The destruction of this Utopian vision by Carol than anything else caused his final outrage.

If John's breach from the standard behavior of his group leads him to trouble, Carol appears to have gained power from her attachment with her group. By the end of the first Act, John verbalizes his conflicts with his group. He has problems with his wife, the tenure committee may or may not sign his promotion and there are some difficulties regarding the land deal. And even the surprise party for him to celebrate the tenure announcement is a "form of aggression" as it excludes him from the conspiring communion of his group (41).

Contrary to the four communities with which John can associate, Carol has only one community in two backgrounds. First is the background which she left behind to join college. But unlike John, this does not mean that she left her community somewhere on the way. Instead, she associates herself with them (the "people") all the more. "There are people out there," she tells John, "people who came here. To know something they didn't know.

Who came here. To be helped: To be helped. So someone will help them. To do something. To know something. To get, what do they say? ‘To get on in the world’. How can I do that if I don’t, if I fail?” (12). Later, in the second Act this “people out there” become distinctly identified as her “Group.” Carol says she came to John on her behalf and on the behalf of her group (51). The third Act elevates these representations to an obligation of responsibility.

CAROL. I have a responsibility. I...

JOHN . ... to...?

CAROL. To? This institution. To the students. To my group.

JOHN . ... Your “group.”...

CAROL. Because I speak, yes, not for myself. But for the group; for those who suffer what I suffer. (65).

Carol, thus, presents herself as someone who apparently shifts from inner-directedness to other-directedness.

The industrious inner-directed individual works up the social ladder in a lonely pursuit of success. Carol too, follows the pattern, coming to college from a different background to “get on in the world” (12). But when she faces isolation and incomprehension in the new environment, “I’m smiling in class. I’m smiling, the whole time. What are you talking about? What is everyone talking about? I don’t understand” (36), and, “Nobody tells me anything. And I *sit* there... in the corner. In the *back*” (14), she retreats to her group, inasmuch, a section of her group who inhabit her new environment. From then on all her actions are determined and supported by her group and its ideology. She says that even if she was “inclined to what, forgive? Forget? what ? overlook...” (65). John’s behavior, it would be wrong considering her responsibility to her group.

If Carol's responsibility is to her tangible "group", John's responsibility, as he himself wrote in his book, is towards some hazy abstraction, "the young." And, according to him, responsibility has little meaning or connection with real life, as he himself admits, "it's just a course, it's just a book, it's just a..." (12). It is also seen that he has lost all connection with real life. "I used to speak of 'real people', and wonder what the real people did. The real people. Who were they? They were the people other than myself." (16). But, "People," for him, are not those who are with him but, mostly, are those against him. They called him stupid and incompetent. And it was not something that happened in the past but "through my life. In my childhood, and, perhaps they stopped. But I heard them continue" (17). Even in the present his life depended on his struggle against the "people" like those in the tenure Committee. "Why, they had people voting on me I wouldn't employ to wax my car" (23). On the other hand for Carol, "the people" are the "people out there," and the "people who came here" (12), including herself.

*Oleanna*, like other Mamet plays, reveals characters who are punished, not because they suffer emotional isolation due to lack of intimate attachment figures. Intimacy is seen as utopian and when one aspires for it by deviating from, or abandoning one's community, it results in tragedy. A self schema related to social isolation thus, becomes pivotal to the thematic outcome of the play. Contrary to John, Carol knowingly reveals her social isolation in the first act as a present experience. She contrasts this isolation from other students in her college class by referring to her background from an underprivileged community and her similarity/identification with those other underprivileged students who are at present in the campus. Unlike John, who attempts to counter his social isolation by climbing the social ladder and trying to belong by acquiring the desired qualities for social inclusion, Carol counters her social isolation by retreating to her original community and attacking from

there. It is from this vantage point that she speaks to John after the first Act. Carol's success in bringing about John's gradual denigration can be accounted to this retreat to one's original community, which, as seen in Mamets' plays, is the ideal location for survival. However much enticing an intimacy with the "other" may appear, Mametian characters appear to fail in any attempt to make a reaching out. If they finally can reach back to their puny, personal community, and give up their need for external, "liberal" adventures, the play ends in comedy, like in *American Buffalo* or *Speed the Plow*. If they fail in such a retreat, as in *Glengarry* and *Oleanna*, the plays can end in tragedy.

In the world of *Oleanna*, thus, Carol too is not fated to taste success as she too has contravened the basic rules. In spite of her apparent successes, Carol too fails as she has disregarded the wishes of her community in coming to John. She tells John in Act II that she was asked not to come to him, "I shouldn't have come here. They told me..." (57). In the third Act, she has an agenda from her group which John has to comply with. But still, she speaks of an instruction from the court officers who told her not to go to John (60). The desire for intimacy, an "Oleanna"-like-Utopia, has resulted in the doom of John and Carol. The innumerable repetitions of the word "understand" suggests the need to understand and be understood, in short, the need to have attachment figures who will function as appropriate audience to the presentation of one's distinct and consequently, lonely, self. However, this need and desire for an intimate audience is a dream for an impossible Utopia. Each actor in the life drama within the play's structure inevitably fails to gain such an audience. Carol mocks John's attempts to be understood in the classroom. "You feel yourself empowered... you say so yourself. To strut . To posture. To 'perform'" (51).

If Carol refuses to function as audience to John's performance John is, on the other hand, oblivious to Carol's need for intimacy. Or, if he is not insensible of it, then, may be he

hopes that she will be satisfied by the crumbs of personal friendship he magnanimously throws at her.

But that is not to be so. Carol's coming to John appears to have sprung from her desire to gain intimacy with him than anything else. Her seemingly innocuous questions and obstinate insistence that she does not understand his teaching seem to be too implausible to come from a student who has through a highly competitive admission process gained entrance into an American University. Even her entry into John's office room without a previous appointment is actually, an intrusion into his privacy, his intimate space. Her first question to John as the play opens is "what is a 'term of art'" (2), which is a reference to John's private phone conversation. What she wants is not, as one could well believe, enlightenment through a personal coaching. According to Mamet, "all of us are trying all the time to create the best setting and the best expression we can, not to communicate our wishes to each other, but to achieve our wishes *from* each other" (Savran 137). What Carol wants is an entry into John's private, intimate world and it is the denial of it which embitters her. Throughout the play, she asks for simpler explanations for John's words. She does not seem to ask these out of mere ignorance.

JOHN. I said that our predilection for it...

CAROL. Predilection...

JOHN. ... You know what that means.

CAROL. Does it mean "liking"? (31)

If these questions in the first Act serve as ploys which attempt to break into the jargon-fortified intimate realms of John's personality, in the second Act, they explode John's private right to use his language. Carol is furious that John does not subjugate his language to hers.

JOHN. ... I'm always looking for a *paradigm* for...

CAROL. I don't know what a paradigm is.

JOHN. It's a model.

CAROL. Then why can't you use that word? (Pause). (45)

For by now, she has experienced John's overt rejection of her intimate self and is determined to avenge that rejection. It is the thwarted intimacy at the end of the first Act, which provokes her to retort to external means to gain sincere and emotional intimacy than a false and indifferent response from him. In the second Act, she tells him, "you think I am a frightened, repressed, confused, I don't know, abandoned young thing of some doubtful sexuality, who wants, power and revenge. (Pause). Don't you? (Pause)" (68). And when he acquiesces, she feels that "that is the first moment which you've treated me with respect. For you told me the truth" (68). This need to know what he thinks about her culminates in the third Act, where she interferes with his phone conversation to his wife. Though her statement, "...and don't call your wife "baby" can be a comment based on her ideology of political correctness, still, Mamet's oeuvre denies us such a simplistic interpolation.

The term "baby" with which John addresses his wife appears to be a product of his masculine anxieties. It emanates from his "ought to" self functioning as the head of a family within a patriarchal system. The head in such a family is the adult who is supposed to shield the other less-than-adult members of the household from external attacks and, even from any knowledge of external evil. Incited by this responsibility, he keeps himself from confiding his difficulties from his wife. Even when the situation turns for the worse, his words to his wife are not those of an adult sharing resources with his partner to get out of a difficulty which they have to face jointly. Instead, he hides from her and stays in a hotel room and tries to comfort her over the phone that "it's going to be all right" (79). However

that be, what incites Carol is not just the lack of political correctness he exhibits in his personal conversation, but rather his exclusion of her from that conversation. When the phone rings she asks him whether it is his wife and he replies "... who it's of no concern of yours." And his telling his wife that he "can't talk now, Baby" (79), implies that he sees Carol's presence as a hindrance to his open expression.

The ideology of machismo demands jealousy from the feminine and Carol can very easily be dubbed as possessing such a jealousy. She has dared to present herself as lonely in the first Act and acted against the wishes of her supporters by coming alone to John in both the subsequent Acts craving for intimacy and emotional attachment. John shows a simultaneous sensitivity and indifference to this need, telling her that he is "not your father" (9), in the very first scene itself, thus trying to convey to her that he is not interested in serving as any sort of an attachment figure for her. Naturally, John's exclusion of her from his intimate space leads to her snigger, "don't call your wife "baby" (79), inviting his physical assault and the more violent emotional assault with a 'truth' which she has forced him to manufacture and utter. "... Rape you...? Are you kidding me ...? [...]. I wouldn't touch you with a ten foot pole" (79). She thus forces him to utter a statement which he might not have said or even thought of earlier. John's words fits into her conception of herself, as her self-schema, and she recedes back to the lonely, submissive self of the first Act. "Yes: That's right. (she looks away from him and lowers her head. To herself) ... Yes. That's right..." (80). The play ends appropriately there, as a "dual tragedy" (Walker 161), a tragedy of "two people with legitimate affection for each other" as Mamet claims (Norman and Rezek 125), and had dared to take a further step from that "affection" to an intimacy.

Mamet depicts intensely lonely selves in the two plays analyzed in this chapter, *Oleanna* and *Boston Marriage*. Though the two plays deal with widely varied backgrounds,

the basic stance of both concerning the lonely self and its presentation show striking similarity. John and Carol in *Oleanna* and Anna and Claire in *Boston Marriage* present their lonely selves openly at one instance or other. The nature of their lonely selves, the way they present them, and the resolution of the complications created by their lonely selves appear to form a recognizable pattern.

Anna and Claire are lonely individuals living on the margins of a Victorian upper class society. Both are homosexuals and their living together can be seen as the simulation of a marriage. But their relationship is on the verge of breaking point. In spite of the sensational thematic content, Mamet's plot deals neither with the problems faced by homosexuals in society, nor does it attempt a delineation of the difficulties faced within a same-sex marriage. Rather, the play deals with problems faced by individuals which can crop up in any marriage. The desperate struggle of a lonely self to keep its long-time companion has been Mamet's theme from his early plays onward, and it gets repeated here. The complications arise when the desperate striving self attempts to cross boundaries of intimacy. The resolution is brought about when selves forgo avarice for intimacy and settle themselves with their original companions and keep their former social units intact. They take steps to transcend their self-schemas on loneliness and decide to live with others, thus rendering the play a happy-ending a comedy.

*Oleanna's* "politically correct" academic world of teacher-student interaction too, disintegrates due to approaches towards intimacy. John and Carol's success in personal interactions are determined by the amount of connection they have with the social units to which they were attached before and at the beginning of the play. The play is, unlike *Boston Marriage*, rendered a tragedy because both John and Carol break away from their communities basic rules, thus making them vulnerable, lonely selves.



Stoppard, on the other hand, presents a world inhabited by selves who take loneliness in their stride. They live with their lonely selves, presenting them without inhibitions, and are not overtly anxious for social acceptance. They seem to take responsibility for their success and failure, and, their “ideal” and ought-to-self concepts never include the clause of having to belong to a community at all cost.

The poet A. E. Houseman in *Invention* is a typical loner, who, in spite of social and intellectual success lives through a long life as a lonely self. The whole play is structured as his dream-vision interspersed with flashes of scenes from his life. Neither he, nor Oscar Wilde, who appears in the play as his complement and foil, feels the obligation to belong to a community. Society, if ever it concerns them, is seen as the vast framework set out to oppress their individualities. They have either to rebel against it and perish in the effort as in the case of Wilde, or acquiesce with its norms to half-die and half-live like Houseman. Still the play asserts throughout the validity of Houseman’s life as even in his last speech Houseman talks about his luck to find himself “standing on this empty shore, with indifferent waters” at his feet (102).

The presentation of the vibrant and precocious self of Lady Thomasina brings out another option of how to deal with the problem of having a distinct and different self from those around her. She proves the interconnection of apparently dissimilar data both through her life and through the scientific and mathematical theories discovered by her. It also leads to the acknowledgement of the validity of each unique self. The presentation of a lonely self in such a context transpire to be redundant as every one is unique and consequently bound to feel lonely. Still every self is integral to the larger scheme of things to be. Even her tutor, Septimus hardly bothers to present his self as lonely, even though he spends his whole life as a lone hermit-researcher in Sidley Park’s hermitage.

Thus the world-views of Stoppardian and Mametian plays delineate two opposing attitudes in presenting lonely self. Mamet's characters in general project an ought-to-self which incites them to belong to their community. The ought-to-self of Stoppard's characters urge them to stand on their own and not to unduly worry about others, while, at the same time, work towards a co-operative co-existence. While the ideal self in Mamet projects an autonomous individual, the ideal self in Stoppard asks for an opening up and connectivity from a distinct individual realm.