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Pragmatic Action, Imaginative Action, Annihilating Action

**The Quest for Self-realization
in
Three Major Dramatic Phases of the West
(Elizabethan Renaissance, European Nineteenth Century,
and the Theatre of the Absurd)**

A Thesis Submitted

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for
The Award of the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

From the

University of Wollongong

By:

Bahee Hadaegh

Faculty of Arts
University of Wollongong

2009

DECLARATION

I, Bahee Hadaegh, declare that this thesis, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Arts, department of English Language, University of Wollongong, Australia, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. This document has not been submitted for a qualification at any other academic institution.

Bahee Hadaegh

Date:

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Abstract

This thesis argues that the quest for self-fulfillment is the recurrent motif of the three major dramatic eras of Western tragedy. This theme is a continuous but transforming tradition in which tragic heroes endeavor to approximate a more complete degree of self-realization respectively through outward action, inner imagination and an inaction that is also a reflective struggle to find meaning. Discussions of tragic theatre in the West have generally concentrated on a degenerative process of Western tragedy in terms of progressively atrophied dramatic action and gradual manifestation of passivity, nostalgia and nihilism. This thesis aims to show that, although the major course of transformation is from action to inaction, under the light of the continuous motif of the quest and the degree of success by which the characters approximate the wished-for self-fulfillment, Western tragedy is a regression in order to progress.

To demonstrate a connection across Western theatrical history, I look in turn at the three major dramatic eras of the Renaissance, the nineteenth century, and twentieth-century existentialist/ absurdist stages. The regressive progress of Western tragedy from the Renaissance active quest to the imaginative quest of the nineteenth-century dramatic characters is demonstrated through Nietzsche's understanding of Dionysian phenomenal-self forgetfulness, inwardness, suffering and rebirth. Such a progressive course is also evident when the seemingly negative inaction of the Absurd dramatic characters is viewed through the author's own cultural background, considering the very basic mystic concepts of self-annihilation and self-realization.

Introduction

The individual should be consecrated to something suprapersonal -
that is what tragedy demands. (Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner* 4)

This thesis aims to trace the motif of self-realization through three major dramatic eras of the West. To demonstrate this thematic connection, the thesis looks in turn at major works from Elizabethan Renaissance tragedy, nineteenth-century European play, and twentieth-century absurd theatre. As part of this continuous but transforming tradition, the thesis distinguishes three distinct emphases on action, imagination and inaction as characteristics of the three modes of tragedy and aspects of the continuing quest. Evaluating the process of transformation, the thesis finally argues that the passage from active to inactive quest is a positive one pointing to a level of success in which the characters approach a tentative calmness via a kind of mystical path.

The study tries to fill a significant critical gap in the discussion of three major dramatic eras of the West. Throughout the critical scholarship, the motif of the quest for self-realization is only discussed within evaluations of one specific work or one particular group of tragic play. Critical scholarship on the theme of self-realization lacks an inclusive consideration of tragic play as a whole. The thesis uniquely demonstrates the progressive course of tragic play based on such a continuous tradition. Such a unique consideration brings about a positive evaluation of tragic theatre to counter a generally negative view tracing a path of degeneration where the characters' inaction emanates from the desire to escape self-realization rather than an approach towards attaining a higher self. While critical overviews of Western tragedy like that of Esslin have tended to see Theatre of the Absurd as a separate development and to avoid ideas of continuous

development over the whole field, the present thesis also shows absurd play as a continuation in the developmental process of Western tragedy regarding the notion of the quest for self-realization.

Elizabethan Renaissance tragedy, European nineteenth-century play, and the Theater of the Absurd are the focal points of the thesis as they are three major dramatic eras of the West. The Restoration period is not part of the argument since the heroic tragedy of this time is a very specific genre which concentrates on surface social behaviours and carries a special kind of motif, namely the conflict of love and social/political commitments. This particular genre inclines more towards epic rather than tragedy. Plays of this period are more tragic-comedies and the characters are more epic types rather than symbolic tragic figures. Reflecting the basic conventions of epic, these characters are involved in adventurous heroic actions and cannot be considered as part of the regressive course of the quest where the tragic characters consciously keep aloof from action and progressively approach a mystical inward path. In a similar vein, Neo-classic satire, which only targets human follies and the impropriety of human reason, is obviously not included in the present analytical study which only surveys the developmental course of the three major dramatic eras of Western tragedy.

The Romantic closet drama is also excluded from the study as it is more dramatic poem rather than play. It was mainly designed to be read by a solitary reader rather than to be performed on the stage. Featuring little action, the Romantic closet dramas are rich in words and reflect what the characters think rather than how they act. Considering this and referring to the focal point of the argument, which is the progressive regression of the characters from action to

inaction, tragic characters of the Romantic closet drama cannot representatively demonstrate the progressive course of Western tragedy.

The British nineteenth century was better served by its poets and novelists, lacking a serious body of dramatic work. Accordingly, I have chosen to focus on European works that had significant influence on English style and the twentieth-century dramatic style. On the other hand, the new play of the European nineteenth century is analyzed in the present study as it is the forerunner of twentieth-century play and is truly the second Renaissance in Western theatrical history. English twentieth-century plays owe their central motif and style to European nineteenth-century plays whose realism, social naturalism, and psychoanalysis advocated by dramatic figures like Ibsen and Chekhov lead to the symbolic, expressionist and existentialist plays of the twentieth century. The influence of Ibsen makes itself felt in English plays through translations of William Archer and the enthusiasm of Bernard Shaw. "Ibsen's great contribution, as Shaw saw it, had been twofold: the presentation on the stage of life as it is really lived in contemporary society and the introduction of the discussion into drama" (Daiches 1105). Twentieth-century British plays, and more specifically the Theatre of the Absurd, incorporate both of these features.

Ibsen's influence on English plays is also visible in its "abandoning totally black villains and substituting a human being" (Downer 304). The emphasis on psychological study of the characters and the motif of superman which is manifest in Shavian heroines are indebted to Ibsen's characters, especially his women (305). In a similar vein, the immense service which Ibsen renders to the absurd plays of the twentieth century through Shaw can be seen in the "detailed psychological stage directions" which endow the actor with meaning for the

audience (Daiches 1107). In a parallel way, “Ibsen’s long and detailed stage directions, in which not only the actions of his characters but their states of mind, emotions, tones of voice, and intentions are fully described as though in a novel” anticipates the actionless naturalism, symbolic stage settings, the use of flashbacks, or even bare stages represented in the absurd drama (1107-9). As a philosophic link, Ibsen relates the notions of Nietzsche and Wagner to the British stage through Shaw, who combines the offices of critic, humorist and visionary (Knight 342). In a parallel way, Chekhov relates the idea of vision plays and images from Strindberg’s dramatic technique to the later existentialist stages of the British new theatre of the dream, often termed the Theatre of the Absurd (Bradbrook 143).

Esslin obviously considers the European new movement as the source of the Theatre of the Absurd focusing on the psychological subjectivism and Expressionist dream plays of Strindberg. He thus asserts that “the three parts of *To Damascus*, *A Dream Play*, and *The Ghost Sonata* are masterly transcriptions of dreams and obsessions, and direct sources of the Theatre of the Absurd” (253). Nicoll also posits that Strindberg’s and Chekhov’s new dramatic styles mean more for the English stage than Molière and Racine for the Restoration playwrights. He adds that the later plays which seek to pursue a more imaginative and poetic objective all owe to works of Ibsen and his followers (254). Along with the focal point of Chekhov’s dramatic style, which is on ordinary lives and is thus contrasted with its presence in English modern plays, his thematic influence, as Raby observes, is obviously seen in British absurd plays like those of Beckett and Pinter (48). He even sees parallels between Chekhov and absurd plays where the

characters' "personality is created" through "pauses, sudden silence, snatches of half-heard dialogues and crossed conversational lines" (52).

The study ends the discussion of dramatic eras with the Theatre of the Absurd as it is the third major phase of Western drama and the root of contemporary plays. Even the ostensibly realistic contemporary plays still incorporate the short dialogue and sound techniques of the Theatre of the Absurd. Many contemporary playwrights exactly reflect the specific language techniques used by the absurd dramatists. Major contemporary playwrights such as Ayckbourn, Leighs, Frayn, Bleasdale, and Potter, are all the heirs to the absurd dramatists in focusing on little action, mundane characters, the settings indistinguishable from reality, elements of fantasy, and the seemingly meaningless fragments of reality.

Considering both the thematic connection and the stylistic influence that the above-mentioned three major dramatic eras reveal, the thesis selectively studies the continuous tradition of the quest for self-realization in Renaissance Elizabethan tragedies, European nineteenth-century plays, and the Theatre of the Absurd. Moreover, the study shows that this tradition is transforming and directed toward a positive regression. The developing course is finally demonstrated to point to a level of success in which the tragic characters manifest a degree of spiritual relief in the way of the quest for self-realization.

Literature review

The theme of the quest for self-realization can be recognized as a continuous tradition in Western thought. As early as ancient times, Plato's "maieutic psychagogy" reveals the necessity of excavating a hidden potentiality within humans. He believes in a mystical experience through which one should

assist oneself in the delivery of a new being (*Theaetetus* 151). Aristotle's idea about "*eudaimonia*", or flourishing, focuses on perfection or fulfilment as the ultimate goal of human beings (*Ethics* 14, 1219). The idea recurs in the Italian Renaissance in Ficino's Neo-Platonic philosophy which focuses on the ontological notion of being and human dignity (*Platonic Theology* 221). Fashioning the self, which is one of the key motives in Ficino's work, becomes one of the dominant motifs of Renaissance Humanism. In a similar vein, reflecting this idea, Greenblatt interprets self-fashioning as creating identity (3). Knight also observes that "the Renaissance ideal, the idea of Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano*," specifically reflects "the magnanimous or fully developed man" (46). Erasmus' philosophy of human perfection, which in Burckhardt's words refers back to Petrarch's writing, is another manifestation of the Renaissance motif of the quest for the wished-for self (78).

Along with the increasing disbelief in the notion of rationalism and organization during the final years of the eighteenth century, the fallen man once more seeks for self-realization and liberating the authentic self (Foakes 106). Such a view then sets the base for the later Romantic Movement which considers self-realization as its central motif. In Burgum's words, the quest for the authentic self is the main core of Romanticism and Byron truly reflects such an aspiration (480). In a similar vein, according to Gerard, the underlying source of inspiration which later on affects nineteenth-century thought is the desire for attaining "self-perfection" (264). The nineteenth-century concept of superman then comes to reflect the spiritual idea of attaining self-perfection manifest in the Romantic Movement. The realization of Hegel's spirit presupposes a humanistic value to human beings that he calls "superhuman" (57). Nineteenth-century philosophy of

selfhood then seeks for a “totality whereby man might regain contact with his deepest personal and communal selfhood” (Knight 280). The idea is manifest in the individual's strife for a perfected self-integration advocated by Nietzsche's Zarathustra (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 58).

Following on from the Romantic search for authentic selfhood in the nineteenth century, is the idea of the quest for the authentic being once more rekindled in modern time. Heidegger's particular type of Being or “Dasein” is the prerequisite of the authentic being which individuals feel necessarily to reach. In Heidegger's words, “Dasein has, in the first instance, fallen away [abgefallen] from itself as an authentic potentiality for Being in its self, and has fallen into the world” and has a positive capability to return to its authentic origin (*Being and Time* 121). The recurrent tradition of the quest for self-realization reappears in the twentieth-century idea of Jung's “individuation” which describes the individual's instinctive search for a whole self. Closely related to Nietzsche's Dionysian notion of the whole self, Jung's idea of the “Self” reveals the individual's need for perfection manifest through images of “Mandala” or “ring” which represent the idea of wholeness (*Nietzsche's Zarathustra* I, 191). Even in the absurd world of the modern era, which is, as Esslin describes it, “deprived of meaning and accepted integrating principle,” Zarathustra's message of the individual's search for lost integrity is still present (290). Although Esslin does not explicitly mention the idea of the quest for self-realization, what he names as “integrity” might seem to convey the notion of the authentic self. In line with the meaninglessness of the modern time, the manifestation of the poignancy of the human situation in Existentialism is also paradoxically followed by a negative inversion of the quest

through which the individual “can assert his identity nowhere more exclusively than in the hour of defeat” (Bradbrook 155).

As centrally interested in action, drama might seem to be necessarily interested in quest motifs. Drama shows individual quest on stage, but its staging also produces an effect of quests in the audience. According to Worthen, drama can not only depict a quest on the stage; it can also lead the audience to its own sense of completeness (100).

The earliest critical view about the motif of the quest for self-realization in drama is as old as criticism on the nature of drama itself. The main point on which commentators agree is that drama developed from worship of the supernatural (Clarke 15). The desire for some kind of relationship with God or the gods as source of transcendence and higher entities sets the appropriate base to consider the motif of the quest for a higher level of self-realization in drama as early as the time of Greek tragedy. Questioning theatre’s purpose, Brook refers to the perennial appeal of drama by saying it satisfies a greater reality deeper than the superficial everyday reality (*Empty Space* 40). It would be more accurate though if Brook included the individual’s self in addition to life. In ‘*Drama and Religious Experience*’, Block argues that from a religious point of view, a sense of self-recognition is the outcome of drama. He refers to such a realization as a great insight. He thus asserts: “The insight and revelations that we derive from dramatic experience . . . are capable of providing greater self-knowledge and elicit a sense of the numinous” (67). He even refers to what Gadamer and Althusser believe about the dramatic experience in transforming the superficial self to an elevated self. Block then states that:

In this line both Gadamer and Althusser find drama as a model of aesthetic experience and a personal call, a challenge for the reader or participant in the experience to undergo a transformative, but also a ‘self-authenticating’ experience even as such a challenge may, paradoxically lead to self-transcendence. (68)

In like manner, the American playwright Maxwell Anderson calls theatre “a religious institution dedicated to the exaltation of the spirit of man” (32). In his elaborate study on drama, Block generally analyzes the function of drama as creating some sort of self-integration.

While drama is generally able to bring about self-realization due to its interchanging and communicative experience or the aesthetic nature which acts as a personal call, tragedy’s specific structure is to elevate, rectify and psychologically heal the wounded emotions and the disturbed minds through enacting the hero’s progression from divided selves into a wished-for coherent self. According to Mansour: “Drama, especially, from ancient times contains an inexhaustible treasury of underlying themes relating to man’s constant and urgent need to ascent his identity, or rather, to provide an acceptable answer to his question who am I” (85). The idea has a firm ground in the origin of Greek tragedy where the praise of Dionysus represents the aspiration of the dancers/characters for self-liberation and rebirth. Greek tragedy reflects the central motif of achieving human development toward a higher form and greatness. In Jaspers’ view, Aristotle’s catharsis which explains the attainment of purification after tragic experience also emanates from the idea of liberating the

self in facing the tragic (14). Regarding the nature of tragedy where the tragic hero faces suffering and all the trivial matters suddenly vanish, it “pushes the individual to the outer limits of existence” (Brown 2). He believes that in facing suffering or the end of life, the person recognizes the ultimate values about himself and the world as s/he disregards trivialities. Following this view, Fergusson also adapts Burke’s idea about tragic suffering and believes that the individual gains insight about himself as a goal even through the suffering may culminate in death (103).

Ancient critical analysis of tragedy presented by Aristotle reviewing Aeschylus’s and Sophocles’ tragedies, demonstrates the relationship between tragic suffering and human dignity. The quest for realizing the truth of the self has been the focal point of *Oedipus* where the physical and spiritual sufferings of the hero lead him to the attainment of a greater self. Prometheus, in a similar vein, endeavours to gain self-liberation and development. Evaluating the history of Western tragedy, Peel describes Greek tragic characters like Ajax, Heracles, Antigone, Oedipus, Electra and others in the light of their passionate endeavour to “cleave to a high idea of themselves” (37).

In Sophocles’ masterpiece, Oedipus attains his greatness at the time of his tragic suffering when he consciously stabs out his eyes and suffers from the pain. In so doing, Oedipus severs himself from outside world and exchanges eyesight for mindsight. Like Teiresias who has a great insight despite his blindness, Oedipus gains an inward self-recognition and becomes a greater self. Oedipus finally demonstrates that even when life is absurd because of our inability to control fate, humanity is not. The hero’s courage in self-made suffering and self-mutilation finally transports him to a greater self. Taking Oedipus as the great

symbol of tragedy, it has been asserted that “through incredible suffering” the tragic hero can find his/her integrated self (Konzett 4). In this context, Oedipus’s pain and conscious self-destruction are responsible for his self-growth and positive gain.

After Greek tragedy, morality plays at the end of the fourteenth century reveal a modified manifestation of the motif of the quest for self-realization in the shape of a journey towards self-perfection. As a base for Renaissance drama, the quest of the characters for perfection in these plays foreshadows the major concern of Renaissance tragic heroes for realizing a higher self. *The Castle of Perseverance* reflects a human’s internal conflict that is based on his/her free will in the journey towards perfection (Abjadian 57).

Marlowe’s plays in Elizabethan Renaissance are also considered moralities “by an immoralist of genius” who shows heroic figures with no substance but the blazing desire for a superhuman glory (Rossiter 170). “The glorious villains” of Renaissance Elizabethan stage thus reflect the combination of diabolical tyrant of Seneca fused with the Machiavellian idea of the human thirst for self-grandeur (173). The medieval allegory of the wheel of Fortune which also informs to the Renaissance idea of the rise to great heights, demonstrates the playwrights’ “humanization of the superman” in Downer’s belief (75). Such an idea indicates the ongoing notion of the quest for a greater self in Renaissance play.

Defining a second kind of tragedy as a succession to Greek tragedy in the Elizabethan era, Kaufmann ascribes the struggling of Elizabethan tragic heroes to their desire to “gain mastery over self” (37). In Shakespeare’s tragedy, as in Greek tragedy, “mortal actions are encompassed by forces which transcend man” (Brown 3). This idea can be considered as the characters’ internal conflict to reach

a greater self. Evaluating Shakespeare as the great influential figure of British play, Wilson Knight refers to the “moments of supernal insight” in Shakespeare’s great tragedies. Implying the idea of the quest for a higher self, he continues to refer to the notion of superman either in an idealistic or universal shape in Shakespeare’s major tragedies (79-80). Williams sees Renaissance characters’ soliloquy as the expression of the self or “the impression of interiority” (51). He continues to refer to soliloquy as the unconscious overflow of inner self.

The humanist trend of the early modern era focuses more on the idea of self-dissolution aiming to the rebirth of the self in Renaissance tragedy. Closely related to this humanist criticism, a quasi-religious trend justifies the suffering of the tragic characters and delineates the notion of self-affirmation or self-union. Cheney states: “The emphasis of Marlowe’s plays is on the internal anxieties involved in the struggling towards successful self-integration in the project of achieving manliness or personal cohesiveness” (24). So we can see all Elizabethan tragic heroes like Macbeth, Lear, and others engaged in internal conflict manifest in their continuous switching of different pragmatic means as they move towards a common end. Evaluating Shakespeare’s great tragedies, Han Kang-Sok, for instance, refers to the idea of “self-actualization” where “the worldly thing itself” leads the heroes to a “calm epistemological foundation of the true self” (298). However, practically, Renaissance tragedies demonstrate that tragic self-recognition happens when the characters break their relations with worldly things. Such a notion is presented by Bradbrook where he sees this only in Hamlet and Lear: “A certain depth of insight can be reached only when the surface view of things is broken up and ruined” (102).

The general revival of play at the end of the nineteenth century with its

theatrical mouthpiece for the great liberal movements has a big share in demonstrating the motif of self-quest. Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* with its focus on the revival of Dionysian principle, once more interweaves the motif of the quest for self-realization with tragedy. As "the Dionysian principle corresponds to the deepest 'I' or selfhood" (Knight 6), it can be recognized how emphatically nineteenth-century tragic play manifests the tradition of the quest for self-realization as a recurrent motif.

In Nietzsche's view, tragic suffering of the hero opens the way both for himself and the audience back to 'primal unity' or the 'true existence' (*The Birth of Tragedy* 12). He considers such an experience as the "mystery doctrine of tragedy" which leads to the recognition of a great being (14). Nietzsche refers to the original tragic hero, Dionysus, who communicates the spirit of losing individuality and becomes a great being. Nietzsche's approach to tragedy reveals an epistemologically mystical view where tragic suffering and Dionysian notion of self-loss lead to the final approximation to a higher self on the part of tragic heroes. In Nietzsche's [epistemological] concept of tragedy, the hero's resting on an underlying substratum of suffering successfully leads to the epiphanic moment of self-recognition where s/he joins primal unity, infinity and the divine. This kind of suffering is assertive on the side of the tragic heroes and affirmative on the side of tragedy itself. The more tragic characters freely submit to Dionysian spirit, the more they are able to approximate a higher self. On the other hand, the more rigidly they are resistant to Dionysian spirit, the more dangerously they are liable to violent rupture. In this regard, it can be claimed that the final catastrophic death of the tragic characters is not naturally a failure. It is only catastrophic failure when the characters are less involved in the tragic spirit of Dionysian suffering in

their life. In other words, as Mandel argues, “the paradox is that the less tragic a man’s life has been, the more tragic is the fact of death” (65).

In *Twilight of the Idols* Nietzsche refers to tragic, Dionysian and noble morality as the affirmative agents of self-exploration which emanate from “the eternal joy of becoming” (5). He asserts that:

Affirmation of life even in its strangest and sternest problems, the will to life rejoicing in its own inexhaustibility through the *sacrifice* of its highest types that is what I called Dionysian, that is what I recognised as the bridge to the psychology of the *tragic* poet..., to realize in oneself the eternal joy of becoming that joy [lust] which also encompasses joy in *destruction*, the birth of tragedy was my first revaluation of all values. (8)

The relation of self supremacy and tragedy is also indicated in Trigg’s study, *Schopenhauer and the Sublime Pleasure of Tragedy*. The author comments that “we have seen how tragedy leads consciousness away from life to an alleged ‘better consciousness’, a will-less world. One might object though, as indeed Nietzsche does, that tragedy leads not to negation, but to affirmation” (176). The ‘better consciousness’ which Trigg refers to as the outcome of the will-less world offered by tragedy is the higher level of self-recognition which the thesis also refers to as the higher self. Evaluating the notion of self-realization, Holt refers to this concept in a similar vein and holds that higher self means to convey the whole, integrated self opposed to the fragmented, superficial personality. It is the evolved and fully developed personality where the soul is fully fulfilled and the

superficial self ascends to higher self (27). The notion conveys what Porter defines as the “secret of selfhood” or “authenticity” which is different from the superficial self (6). It is a self that is higher than the superficial self of the ego and is sometimes called the ‘True Self’, ‘Observing Self’, or the ‘Witness’ (6).

If Greek and Elizabethan tragedy grow from a soil of self-realization in Knight’s belief, as the forefather of modern play, Ibsen reflects Nietzsche’s and Aeschylus’s idea concerning the search for a higher self manifest in the notion of superman. Ibsen’s cosmic plays represent his obsession with “teaching of wholeness or integration, complete being, the necessity to be” (Knight 283). Romantic interiority which is accompanied by incapability of action is the major critique of modern criticism describing the inward attempts of Ibsen’s and Chekhov’s tragic heroes. Within this context, the modern concept of self-quest is manifest in the characters’ shrinking and internalizing of the self. Therefore, “the self is itself correspondingly reduced and demeaned, an obstacle to self-assertion” (Hoffman 43). Such a reduction or inaction, as Reid believes, makes “the transcendent realm a welcome escape from life” (616).

In sharp opposition to the views posited above, there are other criticisms which consider this kind of internalization as the characters’ incapability of solving the problem of the phenomenal self. The inwardness of the characters is evaluated as a negative frailty in Lyons’ idea when he ascribes this to “the anxiety rooted from the inability to solve the paradox of the phenomenal self and to transcend the awareness of the self through the visionary world” (32). He also adds that the reason why the early modern tragic characters are so passive is the fear of shattering the imaginary world and coming back to the world of reality: “They insist to remain in the imaginative world for the fear of the fact that this

temporary phenomenon is going to be shattered soon” (32). But considering the positive function of imagination which in Bradbrook’s words is “popularly known as wish-fulfilment . . . a means of conjoining the buried selves to any and every action” (24), it can be recognized that modern characters’ inward attempts truly verify their conscious approach towards attaining the authentic self.

Evaluating the dissatisfaction of modern characters with physical reality, Nor’s study positively analyzes the inward journey of modern theatre as a form of the quest for self-knowledge. Modern play, as he believes, undertakes the metaphorical journey or the pilgrimage of that grand route into the self. It is probing, excavating, and descending into the psyche or into the dark regions of the self to gather knowledge of the real Being (45). Generalizing Nor’s idea though, it can be recognized that the three major dramatic phases of the West reveals the journey of the characters towards manifesting a higher level of self-recognition. In a more detailed analysis, Northam selectively evaluates three plays among three major eras of Western theatre and demonstrates that “the characters endlessly try to restore a sense of fullness . . .” (197). Unfortunately, his analysis is only restricted to three plays following a similar motif.

Nineteenth-century criticism demonstrates a widespread psychoanalytic consideration of the era’s tragic characters in the shape of silent journeying souls looking for self-perfection through dissolution of the ego. In the beginning of the twentieth century, major critical trends start to display a semi-mystic evaluation of the modern tragic heroes’ descent into the interior of the self through vision and fantasy in order to transcend the self. Lucas explicitly evinces the existence of this inward approach in Chekhov’s plays: “The evocation of a visionary realm in which the longing of the self may be satisfied occurs in all four of the plays” (37).

The mystic critical trend is manifest in Durbach's evaluation of Ibsen's plays and the characters' "desire for spiritual transformation, for resurrection from the sleep of death into a state of Edenic perfection" (16).

The motif of spiritual transformation reappears in a new wave of semi-mystic evaluation of the absurd plays focusing on spiritual rebirth. It is again Durbach who investigates the influence of Ibsen on Beckett in the light of the concept of self rebirth as a recreating process possible only through death (398). In line with such a mystical trend, Gilman links Chekhov to Beckettian absurd dramatists from the point of view of the characters' eventful immobility, or movement which is toward a still centre connoting the spiritual peace (217). The dream-like atmosphere of the absurd plays acts as a means towards fulfilling the quest for the inner buried self which, according to Esslin, projects "the characters' inner visions" (82).

Closely related to this movement, Christian Existentialism considers the self-renunciation of the absurd characters as an attempt towards approximating a divine existence. In this context, Cohn justifies Beckettian non-existence as a spiritual peace: "to in- exist is divine" (156). In a more explicit interpretation, Coe explicitly equates the aspiration of Beckett's characters for death to approximating quintessential self (109). Although such views target Beckett's trilogy, the idea is also applicable to Beckett's other plays. A similar interpretation can be found among critical views on Pinter's particular plays where the characters' specific actions symbolize the attainment of "some higher form of existence," to quote Kenneth's words (117). The idea of reaching a greater self is mentioned directly here; however, the evaluation is only restricted to Pinter's *The Homecoming*.

Despite some criticisms, like that of Cahn (2), which consider the self-alienating behaviour of Pinter's characters negatively and relate them to a sense of 'comic uncertainty' about self-realization, a semi-mystic critical trend also throws light to a positive interpretation of the mysterious atmosphere of Pinter's plays. Although Burkman's worthy but inadequate argument does not refer to any conscious reductive process towards final extinction of existence in Pinter's dramatic characters, it generally sees the extinction of existence in Pinter's plays as the sudden recognition of the hidden self (131). In a similar vein, silence and self-regulation are considered as a kind of self-reductive means by Grimes which earns the characters' being in some of Pinter's plays, but he sees this kind of approach from a political point of view, regarding silence as obedience of the individuals to high authorities, not as an inward approach in the quest for self-realization. There are other critical views, like that of Hee, that consider the search for identity as a dark but life-affirming issue in Pinter's dramatic characters where the quest emanates from their narcissistic experience. However, the conscious self-atrophying attempts of Pinter's characters make it possible to consider such an issue as continuous self-renunciation rather than egotistic experience. Similar to my view about positive self-atrophying attempts of Pinter's characters towards attaining a greater self, Prentice argues that "madness which runs throughout Pinter's works, originates from a need to initiate the ego in order to give meaning to life" (32). However, her argument does not directly evaluate madness as a means of quest for self-realization.

These kinds of negative self-assertion then give rise to the ongoing mystic-philosophical trends like Eckhartian, Taoist, Buddhist, and Indian philosophic readings which emphasize the motif of annihilation and rebirth in Absurd plays.

Along with such trends, these theological mystical views such as we find in Hollis, Almond, and Gosh, see a negative self-construction beneath the absurd void of Beckett's or Pinter's characters where emptying the self leads to a larger non-self, an experience towards fullness. Within this context, the reductive struggles of Beckettian absurd characters aim to attain the "stripped essential" or the pure essence (Bree 75).

Significance of the Study

Following this background, the original contribution of the thesis lies in the inclusive consideration of the progressive course of Western tragedy across its three major dramatic eras based on the recurrent motif of the quest for self-realization. The survey of critical trends demonstrates that the idea of the quest for self-realization has not been studied as a continuous tradition. Rather, it is confined to separate discussion of each of the major dramatic phases or to specific tragic heroes. The present study specifically demonstrates the developing course of Western tragedy based on the balance of action, imagination, and inaction, all being productive factors in that particular quest. The thesis then argues that in the developing process of Western tragedy the characters' regressive pattern of the quest from action to inaction does not end in any catastrophic failure and the shift of emphasis from pragmatism to annihilation reveals relative success in a comprehensive level of self-realization. This kind of development is presented from within Western tradition, adapting the Dionysian spirit of the quest to evaluate modern play manifesting the motif of readiness to face the tragic. The particular contribution of this study is that it views the particular approach of the late modern tragic characters through the lens of the author's own cultural

background, bringing some evidence from Persian mystic (Sufi) poetry which reflects the concept of self-annihilation and self-realization.

The study reveals that as tragic characters readily get involved in the substratum of suffering from modern times, they increasingly manifest a more comprehensive degree of self-realization. After evaluating *Hamlet* as the pole of transition introducing the readiness for tragic spirit of loss and suffering, the thesis focuses on the modern nature of tragedy from Ibsen onward, where the characters increasingly demonstrate conscious involvement in an ongoing process of suffering. While the suffering of Elizabethan tragic heroes is only for a short time in contrast to the life-long existential struggle of later characters, the thesis demonstrates the conscious exposure of modern tragic characters to Dionysian spirit of suffering. In other words, it can be recognized that while Aristotle considers the extremism of the tragic hero as the cause of the characters' downfall, adapting Nietzsche's idea, modern tragic heroes' extreme involvement in an ongoing process of self-renunciation is the sole basis for their existence. It is through this approach that they consciously place themselves in the ongoing process of loss and suffering to gain a greater self. Referring back to the discussion of spiritual suffering earlier, it is made clear that modern tragedy goes to "provide for the largeness, the emancipation of the spirit, the swing towards greatness, amplitude, which helps make man's suffering meaningful and worthwhile . . ." (Michel 213).

The idea is equally applicable to the Theatre of the Absurd where the characters' suffering emanates from knowing the desperate plight of humans in the indifferent void. Being consecrated by the suffering which is the result of this knowledge, absurd dramatic characters can also be considered to be great tragic

characters who, like Oedipus, are brought near to a sense of self-recognition. While the spirit of tragedy lies in the calamity that leads to the characters' recognition, as in old tragedies, the ongoing agony and the long ordeal of the absurd dramatic characters makes the Theatre of the Absurd a modified shape of old tragedy. However, there are critical points, like that of Gunther Anders, which emphasize that there can no longer be a possibility of a collision with the world, and therefore, no possibility for the existence of tragedy. "Concerned with the realities of the human condition, the relatively few fundamental problems of life and death, isolation and communication," the Theatre of the Absurd, as Esslin believes, "represents a return to the original, religious function of the theatre -- the confrontation of man with the spheres of myth and religious reality" (292). In regard to the notion of confrontation, Esslin finally sees the tragic dimension of the Theatre of the Absurd when he adds that: "Like ancient tragedy and the medieval mystery plays and baroque allegories, the Theatre of the Absurd is intent on making its audience aware of man's precarious and mysterious position in the universe" (292). It is in line with such awareness that Bradbrook also calls Sisyphus a tragic hero: "Sisyphus, hero of the Absurd, is tragic because he recognizes his plight" (159).

Indeed, regarding the indifference of the cosmos to human's destiny, which, as Frye believes, is manifest in Greek tragedy, the idea of tragic is equally applicable for the absurd theatre. The Theatre of the Absurd is only different from ancient Greek tragedy in that in Greek tragedy "the ultimate realities concerned were generally known and universally accepted metaphysical systems, while the Theatre of the Absurd expresses the absence of any such generally accepted cosmic system of values" (Esslin 293). It is in the light of experiencing the

nothingness at the basis of the universe that Absurd dramatic characters get involved in a continuing process of suffering compared to the suffering which only occurs after the characters' choice in Greek tragedy.

Although absurd play falls short in offering noble characters necessary to true tragedy, I believe that tragedy still exists even in the absurd life. Despite Krutch's idea asserting the inward greatness of Greek or Shakespeare's tragic characters in contrast to the meanness of modern characters in an absurd world (233), the enduring suffering of the characters in the Theatre of the Absurd has made it possible to consider them noble and venerable tragic characters. In other words, their nobility is tested by their long suffering. Like Greek tragedy, dramatists of the Absurd continue to demonstrate how the individuals react when confronted with the human situation. Echoing Greek tragic characters, characters of the Absurd also choose and suffer after making their choice, but their choice is ironically not to choose, that is the only option left for them in the indifferent world. Ironically, this negative assertion is reminiscent of the mystic facing up to despair in an ongoing substratum of suffering which brings a sense of exhilaration and self-liberation. Bradbrook even calls the long process of suffering a happy experience as it puts the characters on the way of seeking greatness: "The struggle itself towards the height is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy" (159). Considering the indifferent universe as a positive element, Camus' Sisyphus refers to its crucial role in restoring human greatness: ". . . Man will find again the wine of absurdity and the bread of indifference, which nourished his greatness" (qtd. in Kaufman 314).

Opposing George Steiner's argument in *The Death of Tragedy* which focuses on the removal of the grounds for tragedy in modern time, I take sides

with Nietzsche's idea, contrastively believing in the birth of tragedy where the characters cling to what freedom they have in rebelling against the absurd finitude of modern life through a mystical self-annihilation leading to a comprehensive degree of self-realization. Indeed, modern major playwrights like Ibsen, Chekhov, Beckett or Pinter have created great tragedies emulating Greek tragic visions, rekindling the greatness of the individuals against the pettiness of the most ignoble, debased absurd life. The refusal to accept bitter reality, which according to Mansour appears as a symbol of blindness in the modern characters like those of Pinter, especially Rose in *The Room*, reflects the character's free choice against the first cause of tragedy or fate. Such a freedom then verifies that "man's condition still seeks tragedy, and the original form -- that defined in terms of Oedipus -- is still a valid and reliable criticism in bringing about the tragic effect necessary in a stage of performance" (Mansour 93).

Finally, I agree with Miller's idea about modern tragedy where he states, "the tragic feeling is evoked in us when we are in the presence of a character, who is ready to lay down his life, if need be, to secure one thing -- his sense of personal dignity" (6). Although Miller is right in mentioning that modern characters use the indestructible will to achieve his dignity, it would be more appropriate to consider their will-lessness and continuous spirit of loss as the features which make them great tragic heroes.

The study lines up more alongside Knight's critical view where the evaluations are given relevance to traditional dramatic conflicts of Greek tragedy, namely Apollonian and Dionysian aspects of tragic characters while pointing them ahead to the modern story of tragedy presented by Nietzsche. However, the study differs from that of Knight in focusing on three major phases of Western

play rather than the whole picture. It uniquely adds to Knight's and the above-mentioned collective views in analyzing the plays considering the traditional motif of the quest for self-realization which reveals a variable spectrum of action and inaction as productive approaches of the quest. The study also resembles Mansour's analytical criticism whose main concern is to answer the question concerning the possibility of tragedy existing in modern time. The present thesis, though, demonstrates this idea as a secondary appeal to the main subject which is the continuous tradition of the quest for self-realization. Moreover, it is a more inclusive evaluation which includes the three major dramatic eras of the West, unlike Mansour's comparative study, which only compares one of the ancient Greek tragedies and one from the Theatre of the Absurd. In this regard, the thesis uniquely demonstrates the progressive course of Western tragic play towards a Dionysian principle, a progressive course from reality to imagination, from reason to feeling, from action to inaction, and finally from deterministic fate to freedom.

Reviewing the pattern of the quest for self-realization in three major dramatic eras of the West, the thesis finally demonstrates that although tragedy naturally includes transcendence, it is the level of tragic readiness which actually foreshadows the degree of success in attaining self-recognition. In other words, it is the characters' welcoming of the tragic suffering or "the knowledge of the tragic" (Jaspers 15) that leads to a comprehensive level of self-recognition. Indeed, there is a direct relationship between the conscious submission of the tragic characters to the tragic and the degree of obtaining self-transcendence. Analyzing Goethe's *Faust*, Myers demonstrates that in the first part of the story when Faust is seeking his own selfish good and has placed his soul in a Machiavellian pragmatic manner within the grasp of Mephistopheles, he is finally

separated from Margaret who symbolizes self-transcendence: “While Man’s desires and aspirations stir, / He cannot choose but err”. On the other hand, the true tragic self-recognition occurs when Faust is brought to the good of self-sacrifice” and is united with Margaret in heaven: “Whoe’er aspires unweariedly / Is not beyond redeeming” (qtd. in Myers 51).

Therefore, the true tragic sense of self-realization occurs when the tragic hero consciously submits himself/herself to the ongoing burden of tragic loss. This idea, which in Weisinger’s belief comes from the main core of Milton’s paradox of fortunate fall in *Paradise Lost*, emphasizes that “to be truly man, one must be capable of choice, and more, must be capable of bearing the burden of that choice” (107). While many tragic men suffer and finally attain self-realization, true sense of tragic self-awareness lies on the characters’ ability to tolerate the ongoing process of loss that is a kind of spiritual experience. The true realization of the self lies on the nature of suffering and the tragic man’s “intense preoccupation with his own suffering” (Sewall 124). Sewall thus argues:

Although [tragic man] may come to acquiesce in [suffering] partly and learn from it, his characteristic mood is resentment and dogged endurance. He has not the stoic’s patience, although this may be part of what he learns. . . It is true that, from Greek tragedy to tragedy written in the Christian era (Shakespeare and beyond) emphasis shifts from the universe to the soul, from the cosmic to the psychological. But Prometheus had an inner life; . . . Oedipus suffered

spiritually as he grew to understand the dark
ambiguities in his own nature. (125)

While Shakespeare's *Hamlet* or *Timon of Athens* demonstrate glimpses of the hero's preoccupation with steady suffering,¹ as a kind of spiritual enduring assurance or "Nirvana-like apprehension" leading the hero to "become pretty nearly superman" (Knight 79), modern dramatic characters increasingly reveal an inclination towards experiencing a life-long process of self-loss which ends in a complete Nirvana-like selflessness proceeding towards a sense of self-integration.

The thesis thus demonstrates that the three major dramatic eras of tragic play reveal different degrees of success in manifesting a comprehensive level of self-realization based on the nature of suffering the tragic characters undertake. Within this context, the thesis argues that the shift of emphasis from practical self-assertion of Renaissance tragic characters to self-annihilating approach of Absurd dramatic characters results in the increasingly successful approach of the quest for a comprehensive level of self-realization.

Structure of Thesis

The following chapters analyze three different manifestations of the quest ranging from pragmatic action, imagination, and inaction in three major dramatic eras of Western tragedy. Based on the specific manifestation of each dramatic era, the chapters then demonstrate the degree of success to which the characters approximate the higher level of self-recognition. In the light of such measurement,

1- "My long sickness / Of health and living now begins to mend, / And nothing brings me all things" (*Timon* v. i.)

the thesis reveals a progressive process of Western tragedy towards such a continuous tradition.

The thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapters one, three and five provide introductory historical and cultural background to each period and are followed by analytical chapters. These background chapters briefly review the dominant philosophical understandings about the notion of the quest for self-realization and the particular approach each specific era manifests to attain the object of the quest.

The first chapter of the thesis traces the origin of the philosophic notion of the quest for self-realization thematically and historically, and then evaluates its place in the Renaissance era. It reviews the dominant understandings of the Renaissance era which focus on the idea of self-supremacy and integrity based on the way the Renaissance scholars interpreted the philosophic ideas of ultimate goodness and perfection belonging to the ancient Classic time, specifically those of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. The chapter then demonstrates how the active contemplation of Aristotelian philosophy of human perfection takes precedence over the other philosophies regarding the general radical pragmatic secularization of the time focusing on action, reason, cunningness, cleverness, and Machiavellian prudence. Within this context, the first chapter briefly demonstrates the dominant manifestation of Renaissance philosophy of self-recognition in art and literature.

The second chapter, which is an analytical evaluation, selectively chooses *Tamburlaine the Great*, *The Jew of Malta*, and *Doctor Faustus* among Marlowe's tragedies. *Macbeth*, *Othello*, and *King Lear* are selected as representative of Shakespeare's tragedies. Adapting a Sophoclean/Aristotelian model in that it

considers the heroes' particular action and its outcome as the centre of attention, chapter two reveals that the tragic flaws of Marlowe's and Shakespeare's heroes generally emanate from their over-involvement in excessive action and the Machiavellian pragmatic struggle as primary means of fulfilling themselves. Although their tragedies do not follow a similar style, the characters of Marlowe's and Shakespeare's tragedies reveal obvious examples of this kind of extremism. Despite all these differences, this part of the study demonstrates that both Marlowe's and Shakespeare's tragic characters reveal similar practical attempts in rising towards the peak of the fortune's wheel which lead them to a tragic fall.

The practical ambitious attempts of these characters similarly emanate from their inward desire for a higher level of self-recognition. The chapter illustrates various practical goals to which the characters aspire, like the acquisition of power, wealth, and knowledge in order to reach a greater self. The chapter finally chooses *Hamlet* as a transition to introduce the shift of emphasis from rational outward active quest to a kind of inwardness which is similar to Nietzsche's Dionysian hero. While self-realization only occurs at the time of tragic fall for most of Elizabethan tragic heroes, the final part of this chapter argues that Hamlet has extended the constructive influence of the moment of self-recognition throughout his quest following an ongoing process of Dionysian spirit of self-loss and tragic readiness. It is concluded that Hamlet's self-forgetfulness reflected in his fake madness transitionally anticipates later developments manifest in the imaginative quests of the nineteenth-century European dramatic heroes of Ibsen and Chekhov.

Finally, demonstrating the catastrophic fall of the questing heroes due to their over-involvement in an outward, rational active quest, this chapter reveals

the ineffective nature of the active, rational approach adopted by the characters. This chapter demonstrates that the climactic active rise of the character's quest is followed by a dramatic fall and the pragmatic, utilitarian approach of the quest is understood to be doomed to failure. The significant point of the second chapter then lies in the fact that the representative masterpieces of the era demonstrate a recurrent motif which is the quest for self-realization through self-destructive "pragmatic action."

Chapter three reviews how the notion of the quest for self-realization still continues as a desire for wholeness and exaltation in the nineteenth century. The chapter traces the notion of the quest for self-realization reflected in the values of *Bildung* in German Romanticism, Kantian Idealism, and the French Revolution, demanding absolute freedom and a complete discarding of the outside world. The chapter also refers to the emergence of a psychological understanding about self-liberation which generally holds the substitution of the ego for a super self. Most importantly, the study attempts to refer to the philosophic understandings of the nineteenth century like those of Nietzsche, Hegel, and Kierkegaard manifest in the specific expressions like 'oversoul', 'humans' dignified existence', or 'true selfhood'. Under the light of such philosophies, this part of the study reveals how the pragmatic, rational, active quest for self-recognition consciously leans towards a Dionysian inwardness, imagination and dream. The third chapter refers to the European nineteenth-century new dramatic movement founded by Ibsen and Chekhov as representatives of human struggles to get rid of the false social self. It briefly explains the way the characters of such plays prepare an appropriate ground for the future absurd non-active, inward search for the wished-for self-realization.

The fourth chapter of the thesis provides a detailed, analytical study of selected plays by Ibsen and Chekhov to introduce a new pattern of the quest that I call 'imaginative action'. Chekhov's *The Seagull*, *The Cherry Orchard*, and *The Three Sisters* are the best manifestations of the inward, imaginative quest for self-realization. *Hedda Gabler*, *The Master Builder*, and *When We Dead Awaken* are also analyzed as Ibsen's manifest representations of Dionysian self-loss in seeking a true existence. There are also cross references to other plays of Ibsen and Chekhov parallel to their major dramatic works. Reflecting the Romantic spirituality of the nineteenth century and the idea of tragic readiness advocated by Nietzsche, this chapter demonstrates that Hamlet's spirit of self-loss is rekindled in Chekhov's and Ibsen's dramatic characters focusing on an inward pattern of the quest for self-realization. Although Ibsen and Chekhov offer two different styles of naturalism and realism, this part of the study reveals that the overall pattern of the quest for self-realization remains basically the same in their Romantic tragedies where the characters similarly cling to an inward, imaginative approach first offered by Dionysian Hamlet. The chapter introduces various manifestations of the quest in shapes of self-forgetfulness, dream therapy, self-dissolution, intoxication, departure or silence, which help the heroes give birth to a greater self. The transitory stay of the characters in the world of fantasy is shown to provide hope and bring about a temporary relief from the fragmented self imposed on them by social reality. The imaginative melancholy of Chekhov's and Ibsen's characters even leads such characters to welcome a rejoicing death which is reminiscent of Nietzsche's Dionysian notion of death and rebirth.

Chapter five follows the discussion of the quest for self-realization in modern time. The chapter explains the focal point of twentieth-century thought on

spiritual inclinations in the way of the quest following modern philosophical understandings. This part of the study then reviews the twentieth-century theories which focally adhere to transforming the inauthentic ego to the spiritual world. Hegel's idea of "spirit", Heidegger's "Dasein" or particular being, and Jung's notion of the "Self" are therefore explained, showing the idea of self-realization.

The paradoxical notion of fallenness and ascent in Heidegger's theory is then demonstrated to echo Nietzsche's paradoxical idea of Dionysian loss and gain. In a similar vein, Jung's idea of the "Self" is seen to echo Nietzsche's "Übermensch" which focally emphasizes the whole self. Revealing Nietzsche's influence on twentieth-century thought, the fifth chapter focuses on the transforming power of the unconscious and imaginative actualization in an intrapsychic pattern where the individual's ego is transcended through complete expelling of desire. What Hegel, Heidegger, and Jung emphasize in their theories is seen to focus on separation of the individuals from the material world and creating an abyss or a nirvana-like stage which is different from the existentialist concept of the void advocated by the existentialism of the time. Chapter five finally relates the quasi-mystic aspects of these ideas to the Theatre of the Absurd as one of the manifestations of the search for self-realization.

Chapter six provides a detailed analysis of the plays of the two major representatives of the absurd theatre based on the motif of the quest for self-realization. The analytic, comparative study of the final chapter selectively focuses on three masterpieces of Beckett's plays namely *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame*, and *Happy Days*. It will also analyze the three major plays of Pinter, namely *The Room*, *The Caretaker* and *The Birthday Party* obviously reflecting an inactive approach to the quest which I call 'annihilating action'. Demonstrating

this self-annihilating approach, this chapter shows that each playwright incorporates a different style in performance as well as in the speech of his characters. Pinter is more realistic and tends to primarily use a pause between lines or throughout, while Beckett uses more repetition. Regardless of the contrastive points, both create characters who behave in a passive manner or as though they are detached from the action of their setting. The persistence to withdraw from the outside world and stay in the world of dream and inactive condition is the particular approach of both Beckett's and Pinter's characters in the quest for self-realization.

Analysis of the characters' inactive behaviour and the symbolic nature of the particular shape and language of the action will then give a positive interpretation of the seemingly negative, nihilistic quest. In other words, the final regressive inaction and self-renunciation of the absurd dramatic characters of Beckett and Pinter positively ends in approximating a tentative calmness on the part of the questers. The final chapter thus demonstrates that despite the absurdity of life, absurd dramatic characters act the only available action left to them: that is the courageous annihilation of the false self. Paradoxically, it is in response to the absurd life that tragedy emerges, but this is a Dionysian spirit of tragedy, a kind of suffering which, despite being tragic, is transcending. The final triumph of the quest for self-realization is achieved by violently breaking temporal and spatial bondages, and the cyclical movement of mechanical routine induces a negation reminiscent of the Dionysian notion of self-renunciation consistent with mystic teachings.

Chapter 1

The Notion of the Quest for Self-realization in Renaissance Thought

This chapter reviews the idea of the quest for a higher level of self-realization in dominant philosophies of the English Renaissance. It reveals the influence of the ancient classics on Renaissance general understanding concerning the notion of self-realization.

Historically, the idea of consciousness of an inner higher self in Western thought originated in Greece with Socrates' belief in human inner goodness. In *Theaetetus*, he refers to the existence of a hidden potentiality within humans when he writes: "you are pregnant with something inside you" (151b). In this context, "Plato's Socrates in the dialogues, tries to bring out new beings from an individual's soul or bring into it, elements of a higher level of being" (Livergood 21). Based on this notion, Socrates leads his listeners to the point where they are able to see the eternal in the human personality. The main core of Stoicism, in a similar vein, is based on belief in a natural tendency towards the very perfect end. Accordingly, humans naturally tend towards perfection. Within this context, the culture of 'self-care' deals with the notion of self mastery to discover the existence of a valuable inner self in human beings (Hadot 86). He adds that the idea implies the duty of each individual to move toward attaining a level of self-awareness and achieve integrity beyond a human's superficial self.

Following Socrates, Plato was also concerned with human potential for godly perfection. Although Plato seldom refers to the term 'perfection', the notion of 'good' was central to his philosophy and entailed the pursuit of perfection as Tatarkiewicz believes (11). According to Plato's idea of perfection, even approximation to the idea of perfection makes the individual perfect. The way this higher man can be realized from within is revealed in Plato's *Phaedo* where he advocates leaving the physical body and living in the spiritual body. Plato's

‘maieutic psychagogy’ is a transcending experience which leads to delivering a new being from a person’s soul. For Plato, a person’s real identity resides in his Soul, whereas his body is merely a semblance or an image of who he is (*Laws* 959 B7). Moreover, Plato believes in an inner force of existential longing which gives the human being a restless soul, ever driven by an insistent inner force not only to have more but to be infinitely more. Within this context, Plato’s “Eros” is the force that directs the soul toward transcendence or the world of “Ideas”. He believes in a mystical experience through which one should assist oneself in the delivery of a new being (*Dialogues* 246 A4). In *Mystical Science of Maieutic Psychagogy* Livergood mentions that Plato is referring to a teaching concerning “dying before you die” (20) based on disregarding outward experience and rejecting corporeal desires. Such statements as this occurring throughout Plato’s dialogues, according to Livergood, should make it clear to us that the search for truth cannot take place in the ordinary bodily consciousness.

The shaping of the self is then the prerequisite for the overriding holism in Neo-Platonism. In this philosophy, close to the notion of self-shaping is the desire to move towards the ultimate goodness which is finally the ground for Plato’s love of perfection. Neo-Platonists also consider that self-dissolution is a means of getting near to the human essence. Plato’s idea of self-dissolution is expressed in his *Dialogues* (245) where Socrates conveys the idea of forming the Soul through rapture, which traditionally implies the loss of individual selfhood.

While Plato remains concerned with the world of spirit as the site for human perfection, Aristotle believes that humanity is perfectible through intellectual and moral activity. In *Ethics*, he indicates that each person has a natural obligation to achieve, become, and make something better concerning the

best that is within himself. The perfection or fulfilment is the end of the humans' end and Aristotle refers to it as "*eudaimonia*" or flourishing. He even considers this happiness as equal to perfection and excellence: "Happiness was said to be the best thing: so happiness is the activity of a good soul. Now as happiness was agreed to be something complete, and this holds with excellence, happiness must be activity of a complete life in accordance with complete virtue" (*Ethics* 14). According to Aristotle, every human being is ordered to seek after self-perfection and self-perfection is human moral development. Unlike Plato, Aristotle believes that those having a perfect soul find fulfilment through the active employment of intellect, which supports the outward, physical, rational and worldly means of the quest for the manifestation of the highest human potentials. According to Aristotle, human beings have a natural desire and capacity to pursue moral excellence, and to instantiate their ideals through action. To him, self-perfection means to fulfil the capacities that make a person fully human (*Ethics* 14).

The Latin term 'conditio hominis' of the early Italian Renaissance, which means 'creative man', reflects the influence of Aristotelian notion of creating a better human. Petrarch's notion of the dignity of man originates from Aristotelian ideas. Kristler argues that the great Italian Neo-Platonist, Ficino, also reflects Aristotelian metaphysics, especially when he uses certain important concepts such as 'essential', 'esse', and 'perfectio' (98). These terms echo in Aristotle's ontological notions of being, practicality and divine essence in humans. According to Panofsky, the importance of Renaissance era lies not only in the developing of the ideals of the individuals specifically, but on the development of humanity's ideals. He maintains that: "The great man of the Renaissance asserted his personality centripetally, so to speak: he swallowed up the world that

surrounded him until his whole environment had been absorbed by his own self” (21).

The impressive achievement of Aristotelian tradition as one of the three main philosophical movements of the Renaissance ends in a general rational practicality in different aspects. Even Aristotelian moral writings, as Schmitt notes, were made relevant to the practical concerns of the Italian Renaissance. As Schmitt asserts, “Platonism, Stoicism, Epicureanism, and other ancient philosophies all played their role. However, Aristotle still provided the overarching principle for philosophy and science” (27). So, Aristotelian active rationalism had a great impact on the general Renaissance approach of the quest for self-perfection. Aristotelian logical action was more influential than Platonic mystical inwardness which was believed to deliver the higher self from the depth of the soul.

Under the influence of Seneca and Cicero, Ficino expands the idea of human dignity and develops the Renaissance quest for the greatness of individual selfhood, as Renaissance critics like Burton and Kristler indicate. They also argue that, according to Boccaccio and Valla, this idea is the most important source of inspiration for European Renaissance thinkers. Burton also traces from ancient times down to the Renaissance the persistent dream of self-perfection. Machiavelli’s picture of a perfect ruler like Castiglione’s portrayal of a courtier shows the well-known Renaissance tendency towards self perfection.

The great Renaissance Platonic theorist, Ficino, reflects Plato’s idea of the concept of ‘Soul’ and its ascent to God. Ficino explicitly propounds the idea of the integrity of each nature to ‘Truth’ which he believes “is deservedly placed among the transcendentia, ... fills the whole sphere of Being, and originates in

God, fount of all truth as of all Being” (qtd. in Kristler 92). “The constitution of Ficino’s notion of the Platonic goal” is thus different from Aristotelian contemplation and deals with the mystic experience of the flight of the Soul to the third heaven (Allen 9). Based on this mystic notion, Allen even indicates that “Apollo and Dionysus are not so much external spiritual forces as in our selves, enrapturing, liberating, and forming the self in its proper image after its lapse into the constricting limitations of alien forms” (61). The idea thus indicates that the inclination of Renaissance human beings towards self-formation also derives from their own inward tendency for self-liberation rather than from external powers of cultural or spiritual nature.

The quest for self-improvement within Christian Neo-Platonism is figured as the return to the perfect origin of man. This becomes the leitmotif of Renaissance humanists reflecting Ficino’s Platonism. But outside of Platonism, the Renaissance idea of the return to origin assumed a worldly and historical character. For example, Machiavelli understood it as the instrument which human communities used to renew themselves and to recapture their primordial strength. The example of such an achievement is obviously reflected in *The Prince*. Such a transformation in understanding also occurs in the Renaissance shift of emphasis from ‘moral Aristotle’ to ‘physical Aristotle’, as worked out by the humanists like Matteo Palmieri in his work *Della vita civile*, and Bartolommeo de’ Sacchi in *De optimo cive*, which focused on physicality and practicality. The idea flowered in painting, architecture, and craftsmanship in many forms and refinements which demonstrated the increasing search for new techniques and for the knowledge which was indispensable for putting them into practice.

Humanists specifically focus on humans' capability and envisage this as a practice, not imagination. Schmitt points out that "figures such as Leonardo Bruni, Joannes Argyropulos, and Ermolao Barbaro made the Aristotelian moral writings relevant to the practical concerns of contemporary Italy" (13). Cassirer also traces back the Renaissance idea of outward action to the classic Aristotelian notion of human creativity. He shows that Petrarch and Manetti both emphasize human worldly achievement in keeping with the theology of the time (82).

The spirit of practicality obviously manifests itself in Machiavelli's prose style. Referring to Machiavelli's style of writing, Pasinetti states that "the implied tone of *I know, I have seen such things* myself adds a special immediacy to Machiavelli's prose. His view of the practical world may have been an especially startling one" (1704). He adds that in *The Prince*, Machiavelli is committed to his view of the human being not as a philosopher or a religious man but a practical man. Valla's idea of humans' perfect goodness manifest in *De voluptate* reflects the practical spirit of the Renaissance. In this book, Valla points to the idea of humans' ultimate goodness which is seen in pleasure (Trinkhaus 284). Considering this view, practical, external means of self-improvement, like riches, health, honour, and power, are also verified to be desirable because of their being sources of pleasure.

Valla's anti-scholastic idea also reflects his influence on the rise of practical, physical culture in Renaissance humanism. In *Repastinatio*, Valla explicitly shows his aversion to abstract entities of various kinds and praises action and practicality when he equates action with passion (111).² Revealing the practical side of the soul, he rejects the scholastic, Aristotelian notion. Discussing

2. For an excellent introduction to Valla's thought see Monfasani's article in *REP*, vol. 9. In this chapter I shall only cite what is most relevant to the idea of practicality.

the five exterior senses, he completely ignores the inner senses of the soul. His emphasis on practicality strengthens the Renaissance rational experimental culture, as Trinkaus concedes in “Valla’s Anti-Aristotelian Natural Philosophy” (301). In a similar vein, Zippel’s introduction to Valla reflects Valla’s position as “the first conscious anticipation in history of Bacon’s thought” (I, cxviii). Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo likewise cite Valla’s central idea about the practical science of natural experience.

In his definition of the soul, Valla emphasises the active function of the soul and asserts that “the soul can actively participate in the process of perception, rather than being merely a passive recipient of the outside world acting upon it” (qtd. in Nauta 379). In his Augustinian image of the soul, Valla emphasises the active part of the will as one of the components along with reason and memory. Regarding the mechanical spirit of Renaissance humanism, Nauta also adds that Valla’s “bold experiments prepared the way for the emergence of mechanical philosophy and science” (388). Not dissimilarly, the modern rational empiricism of Descartes reflected in *Meditations* is the result of Valla’s foundation of the new active rational/ experimental system of thought.

The relationship between the interior desire of the individual and his outward practical actions is manifest in Pico Della Mirandola’s *Oration on the Dignity of Man* which can be considered as the manifesto of the Italian Renaissance:

The nature of all other beings is limited and
constrained within the bounds of laws prescribed by
us. Thou, constrained by no limits, in accordance
with thine own free will, in whose hands we have

placed thee, shalt ordain for thyself the limits of thy nature. We have set thee at the world's center that thou mayest from thence more easily observe whatever is in the world. We have made thee neither of heaven nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, so that with freedom of choice and with honor, as though the maker and mother of thyself, thou mayest fashion thyself in whatever shape thou shalt prefer. Thou shalt have the power to degenerate into the lower forms of life, which art brutish. Thou shalt have the power, out of thy soul's judgement, to be reborn into the higher forms, which are divine. (3)

The humanist idea of willed self-perfection had to be aligned with Christian teachings as with Pico's *Moses and Timaeus*, the recovery of Augustine, and the mysticism of Joachim of Flora. Reflecting Aristotle's active soul, Cicero's *De Natura Deorum* and Augustine's *De Trinitate* also depict humans as emphatically active, operative, and directed towards reaching the ultimate good. Augustine's interpretation of *Genesis*, which reveals man's volition and the possibility of the soul's ascent through will, reflects Aristotle's idea about the active soul:

The first action does not even come into the intellect without the counsel and command of the will. The natural desire of knowing is not an attribute of the intellect but of the will. Although the soul may be nobler than exterior things, intellection is a

movement from them into the soul, whereas in what
is volition the movement is from the soul into
themselves. Nothing moves in the soul unless the
will appears. (3, 19:29)

In keeping with the mystical aspect of Plato, Renaissance Europe developed ideas of spiritual self-perfection through figures such as Joachim of Flora and Francis of Assisi. Mirandola also symbolically refers to the art of sculpture to explain the idea of constructing a higher self. In *Oration on the Dignity of Man* he refers to the idea of being the sculptor of one's own self and indicates that man is capable of autonomous self-determination to both good and evil. In it he gives an account of the creation according to the testimony of 'Moses and Timaeus' and puts into the mouth of God these words to man:

Confined within no bounds, you shall fix the limits
of your own nature according to the free choice in
whose power I have placed you. We have made you
neither mortal nor immortal, so that with freedom
and honour you should be your own sculptor and
maker, to fashion your form as you choose. You can
fall away into the lower natures which are the
animals. You can be reborn by the decision of your
soul into the higher natures which are divine. (3)

English and European humanists like Grocyn, Colet, More, and Erasmus all studied in Italy, and were directly affected by Mirandola's and Ficino's Platonism. More's *Utopia* specifically is about human potential aiming to reach a perfect self. Abjadian affirms that "unlike other utopias which are complete and

unchanged, More's *Utopia* reflects practicality and progressive development towards more possible completions. More believes that utopia is managed by basic rules of humanism" (420). More believes that the possibility of having a perfect society is absurd without perfect individuals. He implies the idea in his conclusion to Book II:

When Raphael had thus made an end of speaking, though many things occurred to me, both concerning the manners and laws of that people, that seemed very absurd, as well in their way of making war, as in their notions of religion and divine matters; together with several other particulars, but chiefly what seemed the foundation of all the rest, their living in common, without the use of money, by which all nobility, magnificence, splendor, and majesty, which, according to the common opinion, are the true ornaments of a nation, would be quite taken away. (455)

As an important disseminator of Renaissance Christian humanism, Erasmus also supports the notion of humans' perfectibility. Following Plato and Cicero, he believes that all kinds of knowledge and science should serve a higher purpose. Concerning the human soul, Erasmus believes that humans can provide a principle above the soul where it could be situated in the high traditional seat of the mystical states, the still region of non-sentient and supra-rational spiritual experience or the divine spark in human beings (*The Colloquies of Erasmus*). Erasmus's early dependence on the Platonist tradition is important because that

tradition contains both the belief in intrinsic human perfectibility and the belief in an autonomous power of self determination. Erasmus visited Italy and translated Valla's book *Of the True and False Good* where he shows how humans instinctively try to ascend. In this way he served as an important carrier of Renaissance humanism into Protestant and English humanism. Renaissance Protestantism envisages an unstable, recurrent process of individual striving towards perfection. As indicated by Erasmus, based on the doctrine of Original Sin and the need for divine grace, Protestant reformists saw Christians continually working towards self-completion as a token of salvation. Inherent sinfulness required constant self-analysis and self-correction on a trajectory of the soul towards salvation.

Renaissance literature in a parallel way demonstrates the active spirit of the quest for a higher level of self-recognition in individuals. As Porter points out "the desire for glory, fame and power leads the Renaissance heroes to grandiose displays of their inner selves and individuality" (53). Porter adds that the development of individual self leads to the human's different ranges of achievement and expresses the drive to power. He asserts that: "Human individuality is equated with the achievement of completeness and fame" (58). Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* is the manifestation of practice in the way of self-perfection. The hero is a knight who is practically following the six stages of self-completion. Spenser sets up a hierarchical pattern of the self and points to the existence of an inward higher self that resists temptations: "That is our Selfe, whom though we do not see/ Yet each doth in him selfe it well perceive to bee" (2.12.47). Spenser thus reveals the presence of a unique, sublime self that does not depend on the sense-existence through which the false self rules over us. To

capture the most beautiful, that is, the ‘ultimate reality’ or the ‘supra-being’ within each person, every human must cling to the utmost power in himself but also allow himself to be strengthened and aided by a super-human agent that takes power from the divine forces in which human life participates.

Wyatt’s poems, in a similar vein, demonstrate the constant affirmation of manly action in his stylistic roughness, directness and restlessness. His poems attempt to embody his power, which as Greenblatt believes, can be expressed in terms of the self quest and intense personality (83). He examines Wyatt’s love sonnets and finds that although love sonnets normally focus on the features of the beloved and her praise, most of Wyatt’s verses focus on his own self-evaluation. Wyatt’s ability to swear and speak more forcefully and persuasively than his mistress is the heart of his power. Abjadian asserts that Wyatt powerfully revolts against submission and reveals a practical self-centrality (34). Wyatt’s approach reflects the practicality of Renaissance humanism. “Farewell, Love, and All Thy Laws for Ever” is the most manifest example of Wyatt’s obsession with practical attempts towards self perfection.

Farewell, Love, and all thy laws forever,
Thy baited hooks shall tangle me no more;
Senec and Plato call me from thy lore,
To perfect wealth my wit for to endeavour. (464)

Wyatt derives his restlessness and will to self-improvement from his translations of Petrarch, but introduces more emphasis on manliness and valour. Such power links to something quite independent: a possession to be wrested from another, an object of intellectual interest, a consummate manifestation of human being.

Within this context, Renaissance playwrights also reflect the psychological drive to power in human beings. Christopher Marlowe is the best representative of Renaissance dramatists whose tragic characters signify the preoccupation with power and action. In “Laughter, Essay on the Meaning of the Comic,” Marlowe’s dramas are described as “longing machines” producing power, action, violence, and at last death (Bergson 3). Barabas, in *The Jew of Malta*, implies the potentiality of reaching a better self which he symbolizes as being born to “better chance” (I.172). Marlowe’s heroes struggle to invent themselves. They are the manifestation of what Coriolanus says: “As if a man were author of himself” (5.3.36-37). They are absolutely decisive in inventing a wished-for higher self as they feel dissatisfied with the low origins they belong to. They name themselves and accept the identities they themselves create. In *Dr. Faustus*, Marlowe demonstrates Faustus’ transgressing of the limited earthly boundaries when he considers being a God. His desire reveals Marlowe’s aspiration to self perfection which is manifest in his tragic characters: “Be thou on earth, as Jove is in the sky, / Lord and commander of these elements” (77-8).

Marlowe’s Tamburlaine symbolically reveals his desire for a higher level of self-realization when he refers to “the thirst of reign and sweetness of a crown” (II. vii. 23). The hero refers to the recurrent appetite for his lust of power. He claims that valour needs to be fed continuously. Marlowe’s characters, continuously act in order to manifest a higher being. Greenblatt describes such a creative renewal in the Renaissance this way: “Identity is the thing that should be reiterated if it is to endure” (3). The projection of outward actions which is manifest in Renaissance tragic characters reflects the desire for some wished for satisfactory being. “The self which feels not at home, paints, feigns, invents,

gossips, and alters its manner and passion as whim or necessity dictates”(Greene 200).

Shakespeare’s tragic characters in a parallel way demonstrate the inward thirst for self-elegance represented in the outward manifestation of power. Referring to Shakespeare’s art of self-fashioning in drama, Greenblatt asserts that: “Shakespeare remains the fashioner of narrative selves, having the capacity to foster psychic mobility in the service of power” (254). Shakespeare’s tragic characters attempt to gain a greater self through clinging to outside manifestations of power as objects for transcendence. In “The Care of the Self,” Foucault has a similar interpretation. He argues that by the usage of different means, which he calls “Techniques of the Self,” every individual “can affect by his own means and operations, on his bodies, on his soul, on his thought, and on his own conduct to transform and transcend himself, modify himself and reach to a certain degree of perfection and sublime, splendid divine power” (177). The external elements which I call “objects of transcendence” in Renaissance tragedies are the incarnation of the inward urge of tragic heroes to attain a higher self. In Shakespeare’s tragedies, the objects of transcendence vary from power, ambition, and wealth, to love through which the characters try to represent their potential wholeness.

Renaissance theatricality expresses Aristotle’s active rationalism and the Renaissance idea of active self assertion. The plays reflect the Protestant idea of the importance of bodily actions and tragedy in particular, reflects the idea of an ongoing quest to overcome imperfection. Plays enact a double ritual of embodied self and soul:

Because the human body is marked with the arms and badge of Christ, it is a vehicle for receiving the ordained sacraments, which allow the worshipper to have the fruition of the sight and face of God. The iconoclastic capacity of the body, its power to break the spell of idols, including not only its role in performing acts of worship inside the true church but also a whole range of bodily practices and functions. Protestant investment of the body acts as a legitimate channel of commerce between the material and divine spheres. Heroes impose human conceits on the bodies. (Waldron 1)

The active bodily movement on stage reflects the influence of the rituals on theatre, as Schechner points out. The fact that in rituals the emphasis is on bodily practices causes semi-permanent changes in the audience and connotes the idea that the body acts as a vehicle to help men reach the desired ideals. This is what Turner calls “Anthropology of Performance” (41). Renaissance love of theatre fits with Shapin’s idea about the need for continual making of the idea of the self. He affirms that to attain the longed-for identity, human beings should continually revise the self throughout practical affairs which lead automatically to the personal development deeply located within them. Evaluating various means of self fashioning, along with science and religion, Greenblatt also names practical action. Self-fashioning is then the appropriate term that describes the practical movement of Renaissance tragic heroes and reflects Greenblatt’s notion

of individual's practical attempts towards capturing a higher, better self in the Renaissance era.

The Renaissance emphasis on humanist self-fulfilment through action allowed for excesses of will and power that lost sight of, or set up conflicts with, Aristotelian models of moderation. Such excess is responsible for the catastrophic failure of Elizabethan tragic characters. Their tragedy consists in properly pushing towards ideal goals and thereby following codes of reason and prudence, whether they be Aristotelian, Machiavellian or Christian. Marlowe's stages crowded with the battlefields, and Shakespeare's conspiring heroes demonstrate the over-involvement of the characters with pragmatic actions in the quest for a higher self. In other words, the desire for grandeur and self perfection appears in the extreme involvement of the characters in materialism, action, and worldliness which ironically lead to tragic downfall.

Thus, the culture of self-mastery was developed and used within several different contexts in the Renaissance. This tradition even turned to a kind of duty on the part of each individual to achieve a level of integrity beyond the superficial self. Within this context, the notion of self-perfection which first appeared in the philosophies of the ancient classics and influenced Renaissance thought, manifested a worldly character and lost sight of its moral origin. The objects of transcendence, then, were excessive pragmatic means of will and power which ironically led the human beings to failure in the quest for a higher self.

Chapter two will show how Marlowe's and Shakespeare's tragic characters cling to self-aggrandizing means such as power, wealth, and knowledge through which they actively assert the wished-for higher self. It will, however, introduce Hamlet as the iconic Renaissance tragic hero who consciously discards

extreme active rationalism of Aristotelian philosophy and inclines toward the inner self-dissolving mode of the quest for higher self-realization manifest in Plato's idea of 'dying before death' posited earlier in this chapter. The outward, active rationalism of the tragic heroes will be demonstrated to cause their downfall, while Hamlet's inwardness and inaction will reveal catastrophic failure only in the outer, material aspect and demonstrates his inner attainment of the looked-for higher self represented in his majestic death.

Chapter 2

Pragmatic Action:

The Quest for Self-realization in Tragedies of Marlowe and Shakespeare

“I dare do all that may become a man;”
(*Macbeth* I.vii.49)

This chapter tries to demonstrate that Marlowe's and Shakespeare's heroes share similar features in representing the motif of the quest for self-realization. This part of the study selectively reviews those tragedies of Marlowe and Shakespeare that well demonstrate the extremes of practical action of the Aristotelian Renaissance in the quest for self-realization. It also deals with some eclectic evidence of the plays of minor importance to support the idea. The focal point is on Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and *Faustus* and there are minor references to *The Jew of Malta*. Shakespeare's *King Lear*, *Macbeth* and *Othello* are also evaluated for their presentation of the outward, active quest, while *Hamlet* is examined as showing a new, inward approach. Finally, this chapter demonstrates that the heroes' pragmatic attempts in the way of the quest for a higher self are doomed to failure. Among such tragic heroes, Hamlet is the only character whose conscious discarding of active rationalism allows him to get close to attaining his looked-for grandeur, anticipating the Nietzschean Dionysian model for the modern tragic hero.

The perseverance of the Elizabethan tragic heroes in seeking practical goals such as power, wealth, and knowledge echoes the inclination of the Renaissance individuals towards the active rationalism of Aristotelian philosophy in the way of the quest for self-perfection. Marlowe's and Shakespeare's tragic heroes represent the utilitarian-minded individuals of the Renaissance. The bombastic and boisterous performance of heroes such as Tamburlaine, Lear, and Macbeth reveals the dominant active approach through which the characters attempt to manifest a greater self and approximate perfection. The English

Reformation of the Renaissance generally produces a new kind of dramatic culture that involves disguise, impersonation and boisterous activity. The emphasis of the English Elizabethan theatre, as Styan indicates, is on elaborate “costumes and the actor’s person” which once more demonstrates the important role of physicality and action (100). He also adds that the vast, bare platform is meant to create the spatial freedom for movement and extreme elasticity of action.

Action, then, is a means through which Renaissance tragic characters try to create a greater image of the self. In *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance*, Worthen refers to the dominant idea of practicality and physical action specifically in Shakespeare’s performances and connects these to constructions of the self: “Acting evokes deep, even invisible commitments to the fictions of nature, origin, and identity” (98). Pragmatic action is thus the dominant culture of the Renaissance reflected directly or indirectly in Elizabethan tragedies. There are several cases, as Kaufmann asserts, “in which a character emphasizes his personal daring or resolution by setting it against impossibilities in the world of nature” (27). A few illustrations will reveal the general active culture of the time reflected in the plays: “. . . for my state/ Stands on me to defend, not to debate” (*King Lear* V. i. 68-9). In *Macbeth*, the spirit of practicality is revealed more severely when Macbeth notes:

MACBETH. . . . We but teach

Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return

To plague the inventor: this even-handed justice

Commends the ingredients of our poison’d chalice

To our own lips. (I.vii.8)

The “bloody instructions” here alludes to physical violence and in the idea of recursive retribution there is also the implication of a series of outward action. The heroes of the Renaissance tragedies, especially those of Elizabethan tragedies of Marlowe and Shakespeare like Tamburlaine, Faustus, Othello, Macbeth, and Lear cling to various pragmatic means like power, ambition, wealth, and knowledge through which they venture to attain a greater self. Barker believes that a mismatch between inner and outer states produces “discontinuous continuity” in the struggle for betterment in Marlowe’s characters. He explains that as characters are not satisfied enough in the positions they achieve, they repeatedly switch to other possibilities to gratify the inward urges (161). It can be recognized that action plays an important role in creating a greater image of the self not only in Marlowe’s tragedies but also in Shakespeare’s and other major Elizabethan tragedies.

In Marlowe’s tragedies, action is specifically “symbolic of the hero’s power and was rooted in his needs and the power of his self-image” (Cole 117). In the Renaissance, tragic heroes’ self-image rests in outward fame and material acquisition. Dawson asserts that the materialism of Renaissance culture focuses on body and practicality as carriers of meaning. Therefore, the theatrical performance of the Renaissance tragedies reveals the characters’ obsessive preoccupation with such a materialistic culture as a means to manifest the wished-for greater self. He then remarks that “the body is instrumental in delivering a sense of interiority, one that is constructed in and through the separation between inner and outer, self and body” (259). The idea indicates that outward action is a manifestation of an inner buried self which asks to be revealed. The existence of soliloquies in Renaissance tragedies and the rise in their frequency amongst

Shakespeare's heroes similarly verifies the characters' inward longings. As Williams points out, it is "the impression of interiority" (51). He goes on to define soliloquy as the unconscious overflow of inner self.

The insistence of Othello on his practical achievements as a powerful commander is, for instance, an active, assertive means to manifest his longed-for greater self. Othello's wished-for self-perfection is found in his practical duties envisaged in his power as a commander: "Not I, I must be found/ My parts, my title, and my perfect soul/ Shall manifest me rightly" (I. ii. 30-33). Iago — commonly seen as an archetypal villain — on the other hand, can be read as the ultimate example of Machiavellian self-fulfillment. However, his self-fulfillment is at the expense of everyone else. His over-involvement in Machiavellian pragmatism emanates from the inner desire for attaining a higher self-realization: "I am not what I am" (I.i.65). Marlowe's great emperor, Tamburlaine, in a similar vein, points to the presence of an inner spirit as the motivation for his outward attempts: "Wherein an incorporeal spirit moves / Which makes me valiant, proud, ambitious" (I.i.113). Faustus' negotiation with the devilish spirit to attain omnipotence can be seen as his thirst to attain a greater self and be a superman: "A sound magician is a demigod/ Here tire my brains to gain a deity!" (I.i.62-3). King Lear's assertion of power over his daughters, which is symbolically evident in asking his daughters how much they love him, also demonstrates his aspiration for self-realization. For King Lear, the answer would verify his supremacy and glut his thirst for recognizing the self he wishes to manifest: "who is it that can tell me who I am?" (I. iv. 229-30).

Renaissance tragic characters consider worldly achievements as a means to attain honour. Regarding the Aristotelian philosophy of "*eudaimonia*" or the

highest good of humans which is only attainable through rational practicality, Steane also evaluates honour as a means which springs from the fountain of virtue. Marlowe's most practical hero, Tamburlaine, ascribes his excessive active rationalism and worldly achievements to an inward aspiration. It is as Tamburlaine himself calls an "incorporeal spirit" which makes him "valiant, proud, ambitious" (IV.i.98).

For Tamburlaine, kingship is the outward manifestation of an inward call for self-fulfilment:

TAMBURLAINE. The thirst for reign and sweetness of a crown
That caus'd the eldest son of heavenly Ops
To thrust his doting father from his chair!
.....
Nature, that fram'd us of four elements
Warring within our breasts for regiment,
Doth teach us all to have aspiring minds:
Our souls, whose faculties can comprehend,
The wondrous architecture of the world,
And measure every wandering planet's course,
Still climbing after knowledge infinite,
And always moving as the restless
Will us to wear ourselves, and never rest, (II.vii.23)

Life is a constant battle and active struggle inside and outside. Worldly achievement thus gives the heroes a sense of self-grandeur they inwardly miss. In other words, they attain a higher level of self-realization through outward fame

which lets the heroes discover their buried potentials. In the following words Tamburlaine implies the relation between social fame and self-grandeur:

TAMBURLAINE. That if I should desire the Persian crown,
I could attain it with a wondrous ease:
And would not all our soldiers soon consent,
If we should aim at such a dignity. (II.v.21)

He explicitly mentions that he has turned to be a 'greater man' by reaching to the throne: "But now you see the letter and commands, / are countermanded by a greater man" (I. ii. 7). Tamburlaine's ferocity and hyperactivity actually emanates from his motivation which is to ascend his spirit and respond to his sublime internal need which according to Battenhouse can be inferred as the hero's constructive aspiration (14). The reflection of Marlowe's emphasis on elaborate activity and physicality in *Tamburlaine* is also manifest particularly in performing *Tamburlaine* at 'Rose Theatre' where Marlowe crowded the small platform with oriental emperors, kings and lords who relentlessly marched on to the stage. Similarly, in Henslowe's invention for the Lord Admiral's Men, as Styan asserts, Tamburlaine's colourful clothing includes a coat with copper lace and breeches of crimson velvet. He then adds that such a showy theatrical prop is a declaration of a new program for the theatre of that time (19). Emphasis on beauty, luxury, and sumptuous costume, emphatic usage of the richest colors, and even the repetition of words such as 'more', 'better', and 'major' delineate the inward aspiration for perfection and supremacy.

In his final advice to his sons, Tamburlaine indicates how his quest to transcend his phenomenal self is rooted in the physical emphasizing his physicality through symbolic reference to his flesh: "My flesh divided in your

precious shapes/ Shall still retain my spirit, though I die / And live in all your seeds immortally (V.iii.173-4). To attain a sense of self-perfection, Tamburlaine switches to various outward pragmatic means. Emperorship is Tamburlaine's particular worldly means of the quest which he clings to in order to glut the thirst for self-perfection. Brooke also justifies Tamburlaine's passionate desire to be a king as a symbolic attempt to show how he is running away from restriction trying to reach supremacy (4). Tamburlaine's sense of uncertainty exhibits his internal conflict, revealing his unrest and dissatisfaction. Regarding the sense of doubt he feels, Armstrong points out that:

Self doubt and the matter of self verification is mingled to remove the class differentiation; he is removing every time; the sense of doubt that he has about himself unconsciously, and consciously he is asserting his reality and all the frenzied activities is considered to be another attempt to see if he reaches to self-fulfillment or not. Since there is no connectedness to the past, his rootlessness makes him convince himself that he must have an ideal, outstanding, unique feature as the sword of God. He is detaching himself from class position and trying to verify his self. (76)

Tamburlaine even confesses his desire to rise beyond his inherited identity. Tamburlaine says: "I am a lord, for so my deeds shall prove; / And yet a shepherd by my parentage" (I.ii.7). In this regard, Armstrong states: "Tamburlaine represents the imperious type of imagination which renounces, reacts, and

destroys in order to re-order and create” (78). Tamburlaine’s obsession with attaining a higher self is even manifest in working words. Thus courtiers express it metaphorically: “Thy words are swords” (1.I.i.74). Theridamas also reveals a similar idea when he praises Tamburlaine’s sublime speech: “You see my lord what working words he hath” (1. II.iii.25). It may be the case that “the emphasis of Marlowe’s plays is on the internal anxieties” and that these drive the characters’ involvement in “the struggling towards successful self-integration in the project of achieving manliness or personal cohesiveness” (Cheney 24), but the struggle is very much represented as corporeal and manifest in physical acts.

In an article named “Destruction as the Cause of Creation” Spielrein argues that the stronger the desire for destruction, the stronger the wish is for creation as the two concepts are inseparable. She adds that such destruction means the losing or melting of one’s unsatisfied self incarnate in the killing of others to give birth to another self. In the light of this notion, Tamburlaine’s passion for kingship is twin to his excessive passion for shedding blood through which he gains a kind of self-grandeur:

TAMBURLAINE. All sights of power to grace my victory;
And such are objects fit for Tamburlaine,
Wherein, as in a mirror, may be seen,
His honor, that consists in shedding blood. (V.ii.413-16)

For Tamburlaine, power changes the ordinary human being to a supreme being. When he is on his deathbed complaining about his sickness, he implies that the lack of power brings him down from his Godly figure to the status of an ordinary man: “Shall sickness prove me now to be a man/ That have been termed the terror of the world” (V.iii.43-5). Somewhere else, he refers to the relationship

between practical attempts and his sublime self. Tamburlaine tries to keep his grandeur by practical means. His wished-for self is his reputation, so he has to act continually to confirm and increase his reputation:

TAMBURLAINE. But since I exercise a greater name,
The scourge of God and terror of the world,
I must apply myself to fit those terms,
In war, in blood, in death, in cruelty. (IV.ii.99)

According to Richards, Tamburlaine tries to forge his self out of all his destructive attempts at conquest (376). While Steane refers to the crown as the symbol for unification (69), it can be recognized that it gives Tamburlaine a sense of self-grandeur and a means for self-perfection. Steane's emphasis on Tamburlaine's rhetorical questions such as: "Shall I die, and this unconquered?" (V.iii.151-9) or "Shall we wish for ought?" verifies the crucial need of worldly achievements for the hero to attain a greater self before he dies.

Considering the idea of unification and the symbol of the crown, Donaldson also asserts that Tamburlaine is escaping the "oscillating fragmented self" and the crown reflects his aim to reach a unified, "coherent-self" (36). He links this notion to the lines where Marlowe refers to Tamburlaine's efforts as the "challenge of manhood" (37). Tamburlaine's aspiration for sublime self is reflected in his emphasis on considering himself as the earthly manifestation of God's power. He wants to show that he is not an ordinary man (self) but a superman, "Scourge and Wrath of God" (III.iii.30). In line with his preoccupation with a greater image of the self, Tamburlaine emphasizes the richest colors like coal-black (V. i.), purple tents, or "White, red, black, bloody purple showers"

(V.ii.) which add to his kingly power. Such a kingly authority is the best kind of self-realization the Elizabethan stage can conceive of.

In Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, the relationship between the hero's identity and the state is implied. Coriolanus reveals that his personal achievement in being the head of Corioli state is the source of his name and identity:

CORIOLANUS. ...Let the Volsces

Plough Rome and harrow Italy: I'll never

Be such a gosling to obey instinct, but stand,

As if a man were author of himself

And knew no other kin. (V.iii)

This way, Caius Martius attains a greater self through his triumphant battle with the revolutionarists of Volsci, which is a city from Corioli's dependent provinces. Following his great victory in winning the state of Corioli, Martius ascends to a greater self and is honoured with a new name as Coriolanus (Abjadian 357). It is actually the recurrent tradition of Elizabethan tragedy which is also similarly present in *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *Othello*.

Tamburlaine's aspiration for self-grandeur is manifest in symbols and images which convey the idea of power and ascent. Cole argues that, "metaphors of lion and fox justify the pragmatic logic of his virtuous end" (64). He also justifies all his inhumanities or savageries by referring to his "peasant ignorant" which he strives to transcend by expanding his kingdom. Cole even believes that this play shows Marlowe's admiration of human beings' conscious attempts to rise above their circumstances. Tamburlaine's preoccupation with self-ascent is manifest in his beautiful metaphor of the star hovering above his head:

TAMBURLAINE. Over my zenith hang a blazing star
That may endure till heaven be dissolv'd,
Fed with fresh supply of earthly dregs,
Threatening a death and famine to this land. (III. ii. 6-9)

In a more explicit image, Tamburlaine reveals his desire to ascend to a greater self through the symbol of flight: “two wings wherewith I use to fly / And soar above the common sort” (III.ii.12). Tamburlaine’s emphatic praise about Zenocrate’s unique beauty, in a similar vein, symbolizes the hero’s aspiration for perfection that exists behind all his volitions and achievements. This symbol also prevails in Marlowe’s other tragedies where a female figure is ultimately the target of the heroes’ attention. While Zenocrate symbolizes perfection as the final target of all Tamburlaine’s worldly achievements, Abigail is the true manifestation of Barabas’ treasure in *The Jew of Malta*. Helen of Troy, who is the symbol of perfect beauty, also signifies Faustus’ approximation to a sublime self.

Zenocrate is adored as the symbol of perfection and is located at the centre of Tamburlaine’s attention. It seems that reunification with the sublime heavenly beauty and perfection symbolized is what satisfies Tamburlaine. Such unity is symbolized in the beauty of Zenocrate and the idea is made clear in the final scene:

TAMBURLAINE. Thus shall my heart be still combined with thine
Until our bodies turn to elements:
And both our souls aspire celestial thrones. (II.i.235-7)

The fact that Tamburlaine is obsessively charmed by her signifies that he ultimately wishes for something else beyond his devilish military achievements. His inward aspiration is for the ultimate beauty that, according to Nasr, reflects

the notion of Supreme Being (133). Indeed, Tamburlaine finds beauty in rebellion and physical revolt and “takes material dimensions for ideal ones” (Houser 215). The praise of beauty is wonderfully emphasized by Tamburlaine and takes the shape of worship. It demonstrates the hero’s aspiration for transcendence for which worldly achievement is only a means:

TAMBURLAINE. Thus wherein, as a mirror, weperceive

The highest reaches of humane wit;

Every warrior that is rapt with loue,

Of fame, of valour, and of victory,

Most needs have beauty beat on his conceits. (V.i.51)

After the death of Zenocrate, Tamburlaine’s worldly attempts become more extreme as he desperately tries to find and recreate perfection elsewhere.

In the light of such heavenly worship, Steane even considers Tamburlaine’s adventures as religious actions (98). He asserts that Tamburlaine’s sincere praise of immortal beauty, the reverence of perfection, and the adoration of his soldiers reveal his creed. Tamburlaine claims that all of his achievements are valueless compared with the perfect achievement of her beauty:

TAMBURLAINE. Think you I weigh this treasure more than you?

Thy person is more worth to Tamburlaine

Not all the Gold in Indias wealthy arms

Shall buy the meanest soldier in my traine. (I.ii.8)

It is in this context that Steane discusses the secret of Tamburlaine’s final failure. He says: “he is God of war and beauty but I say since he is God of beauty he has selected of course wrongly to be the God of war to reach perfection” (113). In my view, worldly achievements have been changed to be his main target rather than

being only means to an end. Tamburlaine's reference to "celestial thrones" at the time of his death reveals the Platonic image of the wished-for transcendence he has tried to capture in his earthly kingdom. He invokes a "higher throne" and willingly accepts his death, wishing to find the ultimate self-grandeur there. Such a heavenly state is made clear this way:

TAMBURLAINE. But as his birth, life, health and majesty
Were strangely blessed and governed by heaven,
So honor, heaven, till heaven dissolved be,
His birth, his life, his health, and majesty (II.V.iii.24-27)

Cole also confirms that Tamburlaine's death is a way for him "to come to the true apotheosis of his being, the union with the source of power who gave him such a vitality" (95). Having failed, Tamburlaine finally maintains that the immortal world offers him the higher self rather than the earthly links. As he at first considers himself to be "a scourge of God" creating a higher image of his self above the normal creatures, he is about to immortalize his grandeur by "The power of heaven's eternal majesty" (V.iii.38). In this regard, both God and heaven symbolize the degree of transcendence Tamburlaine wished to attain.

The Jew of Malta, in a similar vein, enacts the hero's inward aspiration for a greater self: ". . . Barabas is born to better chance, / And fram'd of finer mould than common men" (I.i.172). In this tragedy, Barabas refers to the presence of authentic self within himself as the 'finer mould' which he tries to manifest through the pragmatic attainment of wealth. Being a deprecated Jew among the majority of Christians, he feels his authenticity is lost: "I am a Jew, and therefore am I lost" (IV.i.200). Barabas tries to regain his authentic self and a sense of self-

respect through wealth. In his practical quest, he clings to every pragmatic, Machiavellian tactic:

BARABAS. I learn'd in Florence how to kisse my hand
Heave up my shoulders when they call me dogge,
And ducke as low as any bare-foot Fryar. (II.iii-23-5)

Elsewhere, he justifies his Machiavellian deceitful means this way:

BARABAS. Why, is not this
A kingly kinde of trade to purchase Townes
By treachery, and sell 'em by deceit?
Now tell me worldlings, underneath the sunne,
If greater falsehood ever has bin done. (V.v.50-4)

As kings verify their majesty through invading towns by trickery, Barabas attempts to ratify his torn self through buying up property by cunning. It can be inferred that, in the opening scenes of *The Jew of Malta*, the precious stones for Barabas are equivalent to the crown for Tamburlaine, restoring the wished-for self-grandeur to these characters. He continuously endeavors to create new selves in order to approximate the wished-for higher identity. Transforming to different roles like the Turk's best friend, the Governor's industrious deliverer and other roles, demonstrate the Jew's passionate struggle not only to survive but also to find self-satisfaction. Barabas' various masks are considered to be as means of constructing identity (Thurn 160). Barabas even boldly confesses the frequency of fake masking as a pragmatic means to fulfil his quest: "I changed myself twice a day" (IV. iv). Kermode reviews Barabas' restless attempts and explains that he is trying to dispossess himself or rebuild his identity as the result of the falsely imposed identity that the society has created for him. He adds that: "Barabas

wants to create an original, de-legalized character, a being who must in the end, as he himself says, 'be all alone' [V.i.61]), reaffirming that he is a Jew: ('I am a Jew') [V.i.72]". Barabas is conscious of the presence of an authentic interior self and indicates his awareness through recurrent referring to first person pronouns like: "myself" (Kermode 218).

Evidence from the play verifies that his practices are not basically knavish. However, they are wrong tactics that he is guided to follow only to attain the wished-for higher self. His sense of honour is revealed when he does not accept the Governor's money. Elsewhere, at the time of his death, his inward greatness appears as backing his outward practical quest. He implies that the destructive practical actions are to serve the constructive end of noble determination. He says: "...in the fury of thy torments, strive/ To end thy life with resolution" (V. 223).

Barabas calls his daughter the source of happiness and spiritual satisfaction and equates her with the gold which is the object of his quest: "O girl! O gold! O beauty! O my bliss" (II.i.179). The fact that Abigail is the symbol of perfect beauty for Barabas and is the ultimate happiness of his soul demonstrates that unlike the materialistic approach of the Jew, the ultimate gratification is something beyond pragmatic money-making. Barabas' pragmatic quest for wealth is just a means for a greater end that is the manifestation of perfection. Thurn refers to Barabas' words that read: "here lives my soul's sole hope" (II .i. 29), and concludes that all the wealth and beauty "seem to collapse in the satisfaction of complete union with the object of desire and shows that his desire requires an endless series of satisfaction" (168). This idea connotes that without Abigail, wealth is unable to satisfy the Jew's inner desire and glut his thirst for self-fulfilment:

BARABAS. O my girl

My gold, my fortune, my felicity,

Strength to my soul, death to mine enemy!

Welcome the first beginner of my bliss!

O Abigail, Abigail, that I had thee here too!

Then my desires were fully satisfied. (I. i. 50-5)

In the last act, Barabas performs various roles to bring his daughter back home and recover his wounded soul. Finally, it is Abigail's absence that destroys the Jew more than his financial loss. In the beginning of the play, the Jew even reveals that hiding treasure is only for the sake of Abigail's comfort. Wealth then is only a means to help Barabas keep the precious, sublime self he has already possessed, symbolized in Abigail.

Frustrated by human limitation, Marlowe's *Faustus* reveals the hero's passionate longing for a sublime self as a result of the demand for his inward aspiration for supremacy and perfection: "O, this feeds my soul!" (II.iii.166). In other words, the sense of spiritual loss is the underlying base for his devilish quest to reach perfection. The recurrent motif of looking upward and the inward aspiration to leap from the earth into the sky also demonstrate his inward obsession with the-ascent of the self:

FAUSTUS. The gloomy shadow of the earth,

Longing to view Orion's drisling looke,

Leapes from the'antartike world unto the skie. (I.iii.1-3)

According to Brooke, the opening scene of *Faustus* shows the desire of humans to ascend. He adds that as Faustus' attitude is supernatural symbolized in the figure of a superman, Marlowe tries to present moral bent of human being to

obtain the genuine, divine nature of himself (113). Faustus' journey through the air to see the astronomical system in its entirety and at the end the supreme beauty in Helen, symbolize Faustus' preoccupation with the elevation of his self. Theology does not satisfy Faustus' thirst for perfection. "Magic is not in itself important but as a means through which Faustus' own peculiar potentiality for greatness may operate" (Brooke 114). This is why he chooses magic as a means to attain a higher self. Considering magic as the knowledge of infinity, Steane argues that knowledge plays an important role for the gratification of his ardor for the attainment of the imperial self. He adds that human mind is the nearest thing in creation to infinity (119). Within this context, transgressing the boundaries of knowledge, magic symbolizes Faustus' aspiration for infinity.

The "crazy boundlessness" that Steane refers to as the inseparable nature of Faustus' will, exhibits his instinctive passion to meet perfection or the world of infinity that according to Nasr is equal to the supreme being: "ultimate reality" is the very self, or the supreme good, the perfection which is inseparable from the absolute" (134). Faustus himself reveals his desire to manifest a supreme being when he refers to his passion to 'gain a deity': "Here tire my brains to gain a deity!" (I. i. 65). Faustus even confesses that without the ascending power of magic, he tragically falls down to the ordinary position of human being: "yet art thou still but Faustus and a man." (I. i. 51). What Mahood believes about Faustus' fighting with limitation supports the claim of inward desire of this character to search for a greater being. She remarks that, "He dismisses divinity since it could not offer the freedom needed to 'settle,' 'begin' and 'Be' " (21).

Faustus' aspiration for achieving a greater self is demonstrated in his desire for a supernatural omnipotence:

FAUSTUS. Emperors and kings

Are but obeyed in their several provinces.

Nor can they raise the wind or rend the clouds.

Why, Faustus hath thou not attained that end? (I.i.18)

Based on this notion, Hamlin believes that Faustus' inclination towards magic gives him an extraordinary power. He then argues: "Faustus wants to perform miracles, to do the wondrous, to transcend human frailty, fallibility, and uncertainty" (258). Similar to power or ambition, Faustus' thirst for magic can be considered as another manifestation of external active quest. Faustus himself asserts that: "A sound magician is a mighty god" (I.i.64). He also implies his future Godly grandeur as the result of his unlimited knowledge: "Oh, what a world of profit and delight, / Of power, of honor and omnipotence" (I.ii.80-8).

As Tamburlaine tries to approximate the wished-for greater self through destructive struggles, Faustus' devilish contract for a supernatural power verifies his unlimited thirst for self-grandeur. When Steane comments on Faustus' failure, he mentions that he ironically turns back from God to be God. The ascription of God to Faustus once more illuminates his inner desire to attain the heavenly, sublime nature of the self. Although Steane condemns Faustus for his devilish actions, he refers to "the aspiration to Heaven" (165). Within this context, Totino's concept of "constructive evil" puts a positive light on Faustus' devilish power. Totino believes that according to the early Christian doctrine, humans' devilish power is the positive outcome of their "free will" and the gift of God that enables them to ascend to the ultimate good. He adds that based on this explanation, Faustus endeavors to attain a greater self and a "fuller self-perception" (97). This way he uses the devil as the source of his ascent.

The fact that Faustus' soul is full of the worship of beauty and immortality allows for a constructive, sublime motivation supporting his destructive, devilish action. The presence of Helen as the supreme example of perfection and immortal beauty in Faustus' journey gives meaning to his apparently devilish struggle. For Faustus, Helen is not the incarnation of a physical beauty or the object of lust. He sees Helen's heavenly aspect and invokes her as a source of inspiration to attach him to the immortal soul which entails Faustus' wish to create a supernatural identity for himself in his challenging quest. Even when he praises Helen, he considers her power to return his soul to him. He pays attention to her supernatural being, not her sexual aspect:

FAUSTUS. Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss,
Her lips suck forth my soul. See where it flies!
Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again,
Here ill I dwell, for heaven be in these lips,
And all is dross that is not Helen. (V.1.91-97)

Levin refers to the symbolic presence of Helen for divine elevation and believes that the focal point of the play is on Helen's visual presence rather than her physical relation with Faustus (212). The idea demonstrates that Faustus' inclination towards Helen is a symbolic manifestation of the hero's quest for ascending to perfection.

Although Marlowe's characters catastrophically fall following their ambitious pragmatic search for self-grandeur, their continuous aggressive strivings, as Stull also asserts, lie on the desire not for power but for perfection, understood as self-completeness and fulfilment. Stull relates this idea to Adlerian system where "the prime mover is humankind's quasi-religious quest for

perfection" (445). He finally concludes that "what we know with certainty, thanks to Alfred Adler is that Marlowe and his characters strove for perfection according to their lights" (462). Considering similar struggles in Shakespeare's tragic characters, what I can assert is that the quest for self-realization which is manifest in the characters' struggle to attain a greater self appears as the core motif of Elizabethan tragedy.

In this regard, Shakespearean tragic characters reveal extreme involvement in an active quest to manifest a higher self. Like Marlowe's characters, they resort to pragmatic means of power or wealth to reach inward satisfaction. The fact that Shakespeare's tragedies follow a practical pattern of the quest similar to those of Marlowe and his symbolic motifs supports the idea that the underlying theme of Elizabethan Renaissance tragedies is the Aristotelian active, rational kind of quest towards attaining self-perfection.

It cannot be quite accidental that the heroes from Shakespeare's tragedies and those of Marlowe are usually fatherless individuals or from unknown or base origins. Shakespeare's Othello, who is a black stranger with an unknown origin among the community of the white noblemen, echoes Marlowe's Barabas, who is a Jew in the circle of Christian majority. Tamburlaine even comes from a peasant background. Macbeth, in a similar vein, has no lineage of nobility and is unable to have a child. If there is any family relation among the tragic characters, it is already broken or on the verge of destruction as in the case of King Lear and his daughters, or Gloucester and his sons. Hamlet is also Shakespeare's typical hero whose melancholy stems from his loneliness after the death of a great father. The obsessive involvement of these characters in various practical actions is an expression of both outer and inner loss and the attempt to make up for

foundational lack also expresses their own personal quest to attain a higher selfhood.

Othello is the embodiment of Shakespeare's tragic characters who obsessively attempt to manifest a wished-for higher self through excessive Aristotelian active rationalism mixed with Machiavellian pragmatism. Othello is obsessed with the desire for self-realization: "Not I, I must be found / My parts, my title, and my perfect soul / Shall manifest me rightly" (I.ii.30-2). Here, Othello implies that his social rank, which is an outward factor, is a means to attain his wished-for self. Bradley considers the characters' actions in the play as "the desire of advancement" (227). Othello's passionate desire to reveal the history of his heroic military achievements along with his practical involvement in his new role as a brave commander emanates from his inward aspiration to present a greater self and his social need to stabilize his position as a Venetian aristocrat.

As with the other tragic heroes already discussed, Othello's attainment of a greater self is enabled through his attachment to a beautiful, noble woman. Praising the beauty of Desdemona, Othello implies that her character is a model for obtaining virtue:

OTHELLO. Which I observing

Took once a pliant hour, and found good means

To draw from her a prayer of earnest heart. (I.iii.150-3)

With her outstanding beauty and unique characteristics, Desdemona symbolizes perfection, and the sense of self-unification and the wished-for grandeur Othello needs: "She is indeed perfection", "ardent with the courage and idealism of a saint" (II. iii. 25). Othello equates his love for her with his spiritual satisfaction: "O my soul's joy!"(II.i.182). Othello himself alludes to this kind of self-

unification when he refers to Desdemona's sense of contentment through uniting with him:

DESDEMONA. My soul hath her content so absolute

That not another comfort like to this

Succeeds in unknown fate. (II.i.189-91)

As Leung asserts in her study focusing on social bonds in *Othello*, this soul to soul relation signifies the intellectual quest for identity (59). Such an inward bliss is reminiscent of Barabas' feeling about his daughter: "O girl! O gold! O beauty! O my bliss" (II.i.172). It is also reminiscent of Tamburlaine's unlimited praise of Zenocrate's ideal beauty which symbolically reveals Tamburlaine's passionate desire for perfection. The desire for self-perfection even ironically ends in killing Desdemona who has been a symbol of perfection for Othello. He implies that in order to keep the self he has tried to attain he had to murder her: "An honourable murderer, if you will, / For I nought I did in hate, but all in honour" (V.ii.296-7). From Othello's point of view, Desdemona's supposed infidelity has hurt the greater image of the self Othello has been decisively trying to create through power and achieving political position.

Feeling dissatisfied with his self, "I am not what I am" (I.i.65), Iago's Machiavellian schemes reflect a similar practical means which aim to manifest a greater self. Similar to Othello, Iago also passionately desires to offer a greater image of his self: "It is merely a lust of the blood, a permission of the will. Come, be a man (I.iii.332). Iago's thirst for power which leads to his villainous schemes echoes his aspiration for creating a higher image of the self.

Iago is a man of action, a courageous military man like Tamburlaine, determined to elevate his position through pragmatic manipulation. Although he is

a villain, he reveals human's inward necessity for greatness. He is obsessed with the idea of practicality as a criterion for grandeur. It is in this context that he despises Cassio's mental qualification. He mocks anyone:

IAGO. That never set a squadron in the field,
Nor the division of a battle know
More than a spinster; unless the bookish theoric,
Wherein the togaed cosuls can propose
As masterly as he mere prattle, without practice, (I.i.22-4)

Perrello explicitly states that the devilish plans of the play construct its general motif: "Shakespeare surveys the inner terrain of his hero and villain in search of individual agency" (1).

If Iago is extreme in his desire to "be a man" (I.iii.332), then Macbeth is more so in his wish to be "More the man":

LADY MACBETH. When you durst do it, then you were a man
And, to be more than what you were, you would
Be so much more the man. (I. vii. 49-51)

The basic idea of being "more the man" which adheres to the motif of the quest for the higher self is prevalent in the play's main structure. Di Biase attributes the play's focal stress on action to the characters' "private desires" to be more than what they are. He adds that the repeating words of "name", "title", "addition", "signs", and "terms" along with verbs like "pronounce", or "speak" show the characters' preoccupation with creating a greater image of the self through outward signs. He says: "This way of assertion is the way the characters of *Macbeth* answer the moral imperative to know themselves; an imperative, by the way which is articulated quite explicitly" (26). There are other cross references

which show the hero's aspiration for greatness in the play like "own good" (III.v.135), "high placed" (IV, I, 97) and "dark, deep desires" (I.4.50). In Macbeth's thinking, like other Elizabethan tragic heroes, social self-improvement is a means to attain self-perfection. In this vein, Kirsch relates the dominant philosophy of Renaissance manifest in worldly achievements to Macbeth's "passion of the mind" in the way of self-realization (269-70).

The idea of the quest for a higher self is manifest in different degrees among the heroes like Macbeth's bold actions; Lady Macbeth's leaping ambition and even Malcolm, who can be seen as Macbeth in embryo seeking perfection. Macbeth's special character reflects his aspiration for a greater self. The words 'deed', 'doing', and 'action' shadow the whole atmosphere of the play. Favila reports that, the word "done" repeats thirty-seven times in the play (6). Such a repetition emphatically signifies the practical approach of the characters' quest towards attaining the wished-for greater self. Within this context, there are other expressions which indicate the same idea: "Are you a man?" (III. Iv. 57), "A bold one", "I dare, I am a man again" (III.iv.103), "Be bloody, bold, resolute, the power of man" (IV. I. 80), "Art thou afeard/ To be the same in thine own act and valour / As thou art in desire?" (I.vii.40), 'These deeds must not be thought' (II.ii.34), or "I dare do all that may become a man" (I. vii. 45). These lines clearly display the inclination of the characters towards decisive action. Considering Macbeth's preoccupation with pragmatic action, Everett declares that: "He is looking for some greatness; he can only express it in terms of blood" (89). In other words, Macbeth's self-realization, like Tamburlaine's, is rendered possible through killing others or destructive actions.

Bradley notes how the Renaissance hero is a man of action (359) and Macbeth exemplifies this: “When you durst do it, then you were a man” (I.vii.49). Bradley asserts that “there is a fever in his blood urging him to act, ambition, love of power; and love of power is too potent to let him resign” (360). Grierson judges Macbeth’s mad struggles as the devilish power born of the desire for good. The idea explains the paradoxical situation where destructive actions emanate from the desire for constructing a greater self. Grierson believes that Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, and even their devilish actions bespeak greatness of their souls (qtd. in Muir 3). Similarly, Bloom notes that “Macbeth’s entry upon a tyrant’s career” manifest in killing Duncan is “consequence of Macbeth’s greatness of soul . . .” (131).

The fact that the witches appear to inform Macbeth about his sublime fate symbolizes his own inward call for attaining a higher self. The opening scene with an indistinct line between dream and reality suggests the subliminal terrain of the mind of the hero which reflects the continuous attempts of the character to attain a greater self. Yoshioka also considers the witches as internal voice of Macbeth when he states: “the truth is that the formula of self- questioning is uttered continuously, though a little tentatively and skeptically, inside the hero after his encounter with the Witches. The inner voice eventually leads him to a hopeless battle with fate” (3). Macbeth himself feels some kind of inner unrest which verifies that the outward factors like witches actually reflect his inward aspiration: “How is it with me, when every noise appalls me?” (II.ii.59). Di Biase refers to this idea when he says that the witchcraft in *Macbeth* is the enchantment of humanity for self-discovery (42).

The motif of death and rebirth, nurturing and slaughtering permeate the whole play and emerge in allusions to a babe which signifies the hero's search for giving birth to his wished-for self. The very weird nature of the Witches with feminine feature and manly beards symbolizes the presence of a supernatural power within him guiding the hero to give birth to the "wayward son" (III.5.2) or a higher self. Although Yoshioka believes that birth in *Macbeth* is a spiritual awakening through his confrontation with his self (3), it can be inferred that after killing Duncan and attaining a greater social rank, a new Macbeth is born which is greater and more powerful than before:

Having completed the initiation rite of killing a king
and replacing an aging father, the new Macbeth is
born. With the gruesome knocking sounds, which
reverberate in one sense like the pulsations of the babe
in him and in another like the knell tolled for Duncan,
the door of pandemonium is flung open. Beyond it
stretches the labyrinthine vista of being. (14)

What might be seen as evidence of the birth of that greater self is the increasing manifestation of courage and power in Macbeth despite his previous uncertainty that Lady Macbeth was trying to change to manliness and decisive action. Now, it is Macbeth himself who courageously reveals a greater image of his self: "... there shall be done, A deed of dreadful note" (III.2.43). His elevation to Thane of Cawdor also signifies the renewal of the self he considers wrongly as a greater, perfect self. Macbeth even surprisingly feels the presence of a growing self within himself. He refers to the rise of a child, crowned with a tree in his hand:

MACBETH. What is this

That rises like the issue of a king

And wears upon his baby brow the round

And top of sovereignty. (IV. i)

The aspiration for giving birth to a higher self is also manifest in Lady Macbeth's obsession with motherhood and having a babe. The fact that she cannot have a child symbolizes a hollow self, one that lacks authenticity. Despite her murderous aspect, Lady Macbeth can be associated with the concept of rebirth through her passionate desire for giving birth to a babe. This is manifest in Macbeth's invocation: "come to her woman's breasts" (47-8), "she has given suck, and knows/ How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks her" (I. 7. 54-5) or her eagerness "to pluck [her] nipple from his boneless gums" (57-8). Considering Lady Macbeth's obsession with having a baby which symbolizes her inward desire for rebirth, it is not wise to regard her temptation and pragmatic schemes as completely devilish. Bradley even defends Lady Macbeth's spiritual goodness when he refers to her sense of love she feels towards Duncan's similarity to her own father: "Had he not resembled/ My father as he slept I had done't" (II.ii.14-15). All that attracts both Macbeth's and Lady Macbeth's attention is a new self symbolically referred to as a new life: "the life to come" (I. 7. 7).

Blindly over-involved with active destruction and killing others, Macbeth is finally reduced to nothing and turns pessimistic. Grierson ascribes Macbeth's failure to his over-involvement in pragmatic challenges. At the end of the play his destructive actions amount to nothing. His practical notion of "what's done is done" (III. 2.12) is finally changed to "what's done cannot be undone" (V. 1. 65). Having been a destructive machine, similar to Tamburlaine, Macbeth fails to

benefit from his imaginative faculty and his supernatural impression to manifest what is actually his own true self. Lady Macbeth with her extreme external power over him does not let him cling to his own imaginative potentialities to produce a higher self. Macbeth himself refers to his extreme approach this way: “I have almost forgot the taste of fears” (V. v. 9) which can be interpreted as his total destruction of his sensation and ultimately his imaginative faculty. Unfortunately, along the way of the quest for the wished-for self, Macbeth has only clung to material, earthly, and pragmatic means, discarding his own feelings. Thus, he is contrasted to Macduff who says: “Dispute it like a man. I shall do so. But I must also feel it as a man” (IV. 3.220-2). Although Macbeth’s practical struggles are due to the fact that he is “bent to know” (III.4. 133) the higher self which is buried in himself like a babe, his tragic end as Yoshioka maintains is due to “the wrong selection he makes at the start: that is to kill in order to pluck a new self” (25).

King Lear’s tragic faith also starts from his obsession with materialistic, pragmatic action as the means towards the wished-for higher self. Lear’s kingly power in demanding love from his daughters reflects his obsessive desire in manifesting a greater image of the self. The fact that he denies every restriction and believes that heaven and earth move the way he does, also conveys the infantile denial of his human limits and unlimited thirst for a higher self. It is power and earthly links which give Lear a true image of his self. Lear equates power to selfhood, and feels that his selfhood has been shaken when his power is weakened: “I am ashamed that thou hast power to shake my manhood” (I.iv.300). Confronting Edgar in his wretched condition, Lear tells him “Is man no more than this? . . . unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art” (I.iv.107). He emphatically focuses on being a king in introducing

himself to others. It is manifest in the way he replies to the Fool: "Prithee, nuncle, tell me whether a madman be a gentleman or a yeoman?", "A king, a king!" (I.vi.10). Kingship to Lear is the very essence of him "Ay, every inch a king" (IV.vi.108). Ironically, when power and kingly retinue are taken from him, Lear loses his sense of selfhood: "This is not Lear: Doth Lear walk thus? Speak thus? Where are his eyes? Either his notion weakens, his discernings, Are lethargied- Ha! waking? 'tis not so. Who is it that can tell me who I am?" (I. iv. 230). Such a sense of nothingness without kingly majesty is emphasized when the Fool says: ". . . now thou art an O without a figure: I am better than thou art now; I am a fool, thou art nothing" (I. iv.196-7).

From the beginning of the play, Lear demonstrates an active desire to manifest a higher self. As *Tamburlaine's* stage is over-crowded with the rulers and filled with majestic pageantry in his active quest for manifestation of a greater self, King Lear appears accompanied by so many attendants, his daughters, their husbands and his minister. Even after disinheriting Cordelia and dividing the kingdom between his other two daughters, in the beginning of his downfall, he still tries to manifest a majestic self through the accompaniment of a train of knights. His children aim to destroy this show of power: "What need you five and twenty, ten, or five?" (II.iv.259-61). This love of praise implies how he is preoccupied to create a higher self beyond kingly majesty. However, Lear is not the only figure in the play governed by the motif of the practical quest for self-realization. In *King Lear*, a large number of characters are seeking their selves. Goneril desires wealth and power and uses every practical means to get them. She is a very practical, pragmatic, Machiavellian person who has recognized the potentialities of herself well, although her approach is a negative way of assertion.

In my view, however, her approach follows other tragic heroes contemporaneous to her like Macbeth, Tamburlaine, Barabas, Othello and others. In a similar vein, Edmond in *King Lear* is trying to reach the crown which is the symbol of a majestic self. He pragmatically acts in pursuing his own ambition: “A credulous father and a brother noble, / ... I see the business” (I.i.175-8).

Cordelia acts as the symbol of perfection and the lost self-grandeur for the King as Zenocrate, Helen and Abigail do for Marlowe’s heroes. It is in this context that referring to Cordelia’s role, Everett explicitly interprets King Lear’s quest as a journey towards perfection: “the journey from power to love as steps of perfection” (65). After disinheriting Cordelia, King Lear attempts to affirm his lost grandeur in family union. Family union symbolizes the unified kingdom that is also the unified self of Lear. In a paper on ‘Solitariness and Self-discovery in *King Lear*’, Collington indicates that King Lear has lost his sense of self union by losing Cordelia. He adds that Kent is trying to return integrity and his lofty self to King Lear by repeated hints that he is still a king (248). The fact that Lear still reveals a restless lack of fulfilment emanates from his wrong materialistic choice in the way of self quest.

Lear’s quest of the personal through the public is, however, foreshadowed to be a failure. Cordelia’s reply “nothing” in the beginning of the play implies the change of approach from power and multitude to love and solitude. As the play continues, King Lear is seen bereft of his previous pompous, active challenge. The number of his henchmen and knights is symbolically getting less and less and ironically he demands: “Let me alone” (III.iv.3). He even commands the fool to leave him, although he does not obey. Such a desire can be interpreted as a means

to recognize the individuality in the private life. In other words, Lear's active, outward approach of the quest ironically leads to his final downfall.

Cordelia's "nothing" opposes King Lear's practical scheming viewpoint. What Cordelia explains about herself: "I cannot heave my heart" (I.i.6) reveals her self-expressive idea which is naturally different both from her father and her sisters in their pragmatism. With her symbolic name, which means 'the cord of heart', Cordelia suggests an inward approach to the quest which is basically different from the outward, materialized action of the rest of the characters. Dodd interprets Cordelia's emblematic figure in another way: "Cordelia stands for the Utopian idealised image and only Kent has partial right to access" (1). The final isolated scene of *King Lear* which presents the physical reunion of the destroyed king with Cordelia is King Lear's moment of recognition where the active, outward approach of the quest for a higher self is once more revealed to be doomed to failure. The shift of emphasis to King's philosopher, poor Tom, and the fool in the final stage of the play focuses on loneliness and demonstrates the change of approach from active outward struggle to spiritual inwardness.

King Lear's changing voice over Cordelia's body with a particular softness demonstrates that Lear's sense of self-integration happens when all his material, earthly links are disconnected. The reunification takes place only when Cordelia is dead and the king is destroyed. In this regard, Booth notes that "it is the journey from power to Love that implies the unification with the genuine or the originality" (60). King Lear's journey from active magnitude to passive solitude is the turning point of *King Lear*'s tragedy which like other Shakespeare's and Marlowe's tragedies demonstrates the moment of recognition where the excessive, over-involvement of the heroes in active pragmatism is seen

as mistaken. Macbeth's moment of recognition, which occurs at the moment of his catastrophic downfall, poetically demonstrates the failure of the pragmatic approach of the quest emphasizing that the practical strivings of the characters is "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing" (V.v.26). In Nietzsche's explanation of how one becomes what one is, severe pragmatic approaches are translated as "great imperatives" of the surface consciousness of which the quester should beware of. He adds that: "Beware even of every great word, every great posture, sheer danger! that the instinct comes to understand itself" too soon-while the organizing idea with a calling to rule grows deep down -- it begins to command" (*Ecce Homo* 9).

Like Macbeth, King Lear only finds the nothingness of worldly actions or "airy nothing", as Kang-Sok calls it, when he is on the stormy heath, passing from "phenomena to noumena, from form to formlessness" (297). In other words, the over-involvement of Lear in worldly actions related to power, order, and ambition is paradoxically proved to be worthless and doomed to failure. "The worldly thing itself" is according to Kang-Sok the "airy appearance" or "seeing" which leads the heroes to a "calm epistemological foundation of the true self" (298). When the characters' relationship with the worldly things gets disconnected and they incline more toward their feeling and spiritual manifestations, moments of insight start to appear. While Sean holds that *King Lear* basically demonstrates a divine approach of the quest for transcendence through the characters' "self-made conceptual idols" (146), it can be recognized that such an experience only takes place when the characters like Lear or Edgar are disconnected from materialistic means and become more connected to the spirit of nature in their loneliness and poverty.

While the ‘airy appearance’ of the outward practical challenge only finally leads to the hero’s moment of recognition in Shakespeare’s and Marlowe’s tragedies, *Hamlet* explicitly demonstrates Nietzsche’s Dionysian shift of emphasis from outward activity to inward suffering and spiritual self-loss. Hamlet’s famous reply to his mother exemplifies such an inward quest: “I have that within which passeth show’ (1.2.85). If *Macbeth* begins with physical witches hinting at spiritual forces, *Hamlet* opens with a ghost that seems to exist as much in Hamlet’s mind as in the material world. The emphasis, therefore, is seen to shift more clearly towards an inward, rather than outward quest.

Hamlet is an Aristotelian character entangled in a Senecan tragedy. Neither of the Senecan tragic heroes has Hamlet’s deep inwardness reflected in his unique soliloquies. He lacks Senecan tragic characters’ determination and practicality. *Hamlet’s* ghost is particularly different from other Senecan ghosts in nature. Although the ghost asks for revenge, what he advises naturally differs from the Senecan motif of measure for measure (Abjadian 66). What the ghost orders makes Hamlet more preoccupied with his inward world rather than an active avenger. His soliloquies demonstrate the powerful overflow of his inward feeling and his better consciousness. Unlike other Aristotelian tragic heroes contemporaneous with him, Hamlet is a philosopher who lives inwardly. Therefore, Hamlet’s complexity makes it possible to consider him as the forerunner of an inward movement which sets the base for a new philosophical approach in the field of the quest for self-realization.

The inviting ghost refers to Hamlet’s inward call for the lost unified self symbolized in the murder of his father. The shift of emphasis is from ‘doing’ and ‘deed’ manifest in *Macbeth*, *Othello* and *Tamburlaine* to ‘hearing’, ‘ear’ ‘seeing’,

and ‘mind’ advocated by the ghost and later by Hamlet himself: “I am bound to hear” (I.5.6). Hamlet’s revenge which is the central action of the play has no practical manifestation and he is more inwardly occupied with the idea of revenge than being actively involved: “My *thought* be bloody or be nothing worth” (IV.4.66 *italic mine*).

Hamlet’s severe grief for the death of his father reveals the image of an unworldly figure which symbolizes perfection: “A man, Take him for all in all, I shall not look upon his like again” (II, 2187). The images Hamlet ascribes to his lost father are not worldly and reveal a supernatural figure:

HAMLET. Hyperion’s curls, the front of Jove himself

An eye like Mars, to threaten and command

A station like the herald Mercury

New Lighted on a heaven-kissing hill

A combination and a form indeed. (III.4.67-71)

Hamlet even ascribes a God-like feature to his lost father, which confirms the idea of Hamlet’s preoccupation with the idea of self-perfection and the inward ultimate wholeness: “Where every god did seem to set his seal / To give the world assurance of a man” (III.4.62-3). This is reminiscent of God-like figures that Marlowe’s characters try to embody like Tamburlaine’s “Scourge of God” (III.iii.30) or Faustus’ “deity” (I.i.63), which reflect the heroes’ inward wish for self-perfection. Hamlet’s reply to his mother which explains the depth of his grief can be read as his extreme obsession with the loss of something beyond apparent phenomena and symbolically connects to the loss of an authentic inward self. Hamlet explicitly refers to this inward loss and says: “But I have that within which passes show / These but the trappings and the suits of woe” (I.2.85-6).

In a parallel way, the motif of loss recurs in Laertes' case as he comes back to avenge his dead father, exactly like Hamlet's motivation for revenge. Polonius' advice to him once more refers to the idea of the quest for his authentic self that is actually equal to the true self: "Above all: to thine own self be true" (I.3.78). It is reminiscent of Othello's insistence on manifesting the true self: "My parts, my title, and my perfect soul/ Shall manifest me rightly" (I. ii.30).

The core theme of identity is made clear in the opening question of *Hamlet*: "Who's there?" (I.i.1). The apparition points to its original whole self and to the kingship that is Hamlet's fulfilled role. He is prevented from realizing his potential by his uncle's usurpation of the throne and the royal bed. Hamlet's aside retorted after the king's superficially affectionate declaration, reveals Hamlet's unconscious rejection of the false self: "A little more than kin, and less than kind!" (I.2.66)

The way Claudius kills king Hamlet through pouring poison into his ear can be symbolically understood as the destruction of the inner self that is actually the authentic self below the superficial self. The deep penetration of poison through the ear that acts like a gate for the body clarifies what Zamir remarks about *Hamlet* as the study of the inner self: "Unlike other sense organs, the ear promises almost limitless exploration of interiority" (169). The ghost's insistence on the sense of hearing can be considered as the hint of the inner self which teaches and calls human being to recapture the lost authentic self. Such an idea reflects Ficino's belief about the relationship between the auditory effects which penetrate to the depth of the soul. Hamlet's recurrent questioning of "Do you hear?" (2.2.519; 2.2.531; 3.2.62; 5.1.283) symbolically foregrounds his particular approach of the quest for his lost unified-self.

That Hamlet thinks disclosure of any kind ruins the authentic truth reflects his particular Dionysian spirit of imagination towards the manifestation of the truth. Danner attributes Hamlet's introvert character to the nature of his goal. He observes that Hamlet's aim is reaching to the very essence that cannot be reached by outward action. In this regard, he writes: "Authentic as it is, it is inaccessible, his mystery can be gestured at but not known, fretted but not played" (31). It is in this context that Hamlet is dissatisfied with Horatio's usage of violent words (1.2.170-71), and rejects the effects of any action as destructive of the original self: "For use almost can change the stamp of nature" (III.4.169) or "Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the nature" (III.2.17-18).

Hamlet's Dionysian discarding of the outward world is symbolized in his melancholy which even leads him to stay away from his beloved. His melancholy is more than a mere fake madness to conceal his action as he naturally lacks enough Senecan courage and practicality. Although Bloom considers Hamlet's inwardness as "expanded consciousness" responsible for constructing his personality (22), his melancholy is reminiscent of a Dionysian self-forgetfulness which makes him able to realize the essence of the things better. He sinks himself to melancholy and considers that even love separates him from the manifestation of the truth that is the quest for his lost higher self symbolized in the loss of his father. Lloyd confirms this idea when he remarks that "love and desire are central to the fashioning of a genuine self, detached from unauthentic tastes of being. But this centrality complicates the poetic process, for while it envisions a climactic fusion of ethos, eros, and being, the Platonic model also expresses uneasy caution" (60). He adds that "the desire's relation to true being is an ideal

possibility marked by two risks of failing to reach the goal or entirely disregarding it” (61).

Psychologically, he is in a double-blind, surrounded by the world he can neither think of as a “goodly frame” (II.2.298) nor withdraw from. Hamlet’s authentic self is lost and in order to have control over himself, he attempts to step aside, not to be dissolved totally in the assailing current of society. He undertakes to preserve his interiority, thereby trying to forge a proper model to answer the question of who he really is. This is why modern drama has considered Hamlet to be the forefather of modern characters. Hamlet’s separation of outer roles from inner selfhood in response to extended questions: “who is there?” (I.1.1), “say why is this?”, “wherefore?”, and “what should we do?” (I.4.57) makes him break with the dominant Renaissance model of self as outward action and exemplifies inner integrity.

Regarding the particular approach of Hamlet in having control over his self, Levy relates Cartesian philosophy to Hamlet’s way of discovering selfhood where he employs the cogito.³ Levy believes that “the fundamental focus of thought concerns the clarification of identity in Hamlet” (225). However, Hamlet’s inclination to interiority which is different from the pre-planned active rationalism of other Renaissance characters, demonstrates that he is uncertain about thinking. Hamlet cannot even decide for certain whether to think “too precisely” (IV.4.41) or fall to the category of forgetfulness and enter “bestial oblivion” (IV.4.40). His famous ‘delay’ actually emanates from his uncertainty about thought and action. In a similar vein, Hamlet’s famous soliloquy of “to be or not to be” reveals his manifest difference from other Renaissance tragic heroes

3- Cogito means the consciousness of being which is subordinated to the experience of thought.

and opens another possibility or “transformation” (II.1.5) in the way of the quest for self-realization.

Although Levy considers ‘thinking’ as the particular strategy of Hamlet in his quest for self-realization, he clarifies his argument by asserting that it is a special kind of thinking “beyond the reaches of our souls” (I.4.55). Hamlet’s specific domain has the capability of going deep into the matter and as Auerbach points out “penetrates to the depths of existence” (351). That is how Hamlet tries to manifest the very essence of his self or the buried higher self: “I will find, / Where truth is hid, though it were hidden indeed / Within the centre” (II.2.157-9) also referred to as “the heart” of his “mystery” (III.2.357). In the final act, Hamlet explicitly and climactically betrays the kind of thinking he finally discovers as the means to reach his wished-for identity and he names it as “rashness” (V.2.7). What Hamlet calls ‘rashness’ is reminiscent of the final act of Macbeth where the meaning of ‘man’ is attached to feeling and untimeliness through Macduff for the first time in the play. The idea is manifest in Macduff who is the “babe of fate”, “tell that Macduff was from his mother's womb / Untimely ripp’d” (V.5.15-16). The shift of emphasis, thus, as Yoshioka asserts, is on the word ‘untimely’ which connotes “beyond human calculation and manipulation” (20). In a more emphatic way, Hamlet’s ‘rashness’ rejects any artificiality or pre-planned action in the quest and focuses on natural outburst of feeling.

Schlegel refers to how Coleridge interprets Hamlet’s internal challenge as “a great, enormous intellectual activity and a consequent proportionate aversion to [real] action” (62). Rayner also implies the inactive kind of action Hamlet gives birth to. He argues that “Hamlet begins in an act of mourning” and adds that “such mourning is a positive act based upon an absence, leading toward the creation of

an identity as a symbol” (111). Within this context, Hamlet’s mourning, that is an internal, inactive feeling, leads to create the identity he has been after for long. In other words, following Rayner, I want to indicate that Hamlet’s inactive inner feeling can be considered as a creative action which connotes the presence of the self in its absence or asserting the self through a kind of Dionysian self-negation. Such an approach paves the way for the future regressive progression of the modern characters who attempt to attain a greater self through atrophying, regressive self-renunciation.

The way *Hamlet* ends in a sword-playing scene, with two symbolic figures representative of practicality and natural skill, reinforces the idea of “unpremeditated action as the means of revealing a higher order of thought than human comprehension” in Levy’s idea (227). It is in this unplanned duel that the truth is revealed and Hamlet’s lost self-grandeur is recovered. Followed by this kind of indecision and freedom, Hamlet finally announces his legitimate identity as “This is I / Hamlet the Dane” (V.1.252). Hamlet’s inaction implies another kind of action through his melancholy and sufferings, which as Lukacs believes, are not quite different from action, are directed from within. He continues to consider Hamlet’s melancholic action as a positive inaction. Lukacs thus evaluates Hamlet’s delay positively and maintains that “to hold back means to keep possibilities open” (qtd. in Rayner 107). The deliberate importance of the introspective delay in *Hamlet*, as Grazia also observes, represents the epochal positive change from “enactment” to “repression” which shows a progression towards the emotional side of human beings in modern times as part of self-construction. While she remarks that “the shift in focus signals the advance of the modern over ancient” as “modern consciousness comes the recognition that the

responsibility resides not in deeds but in knowledge and volition” (255), it can be recognized that modern tragedy reveals a return towards true tragedy in its Dionysian spirit focusing on emotion, rapture and joyful loss.

Hamlet’s recognition bespeaks the process of a challenging development which starts from privileging thought over action and continues to his Dionysian melancholic phase which focuses on inwardness and the emergence of a natural, immediate combination of feeling, thought and action. This is foreshadowed in Hamlet’s organization of the play within the play, in order to arouse feeling and attain the truth indirectly. It proves to be a failure as Hamlet condemns the actors: “who imitated humanity so abominably” (III.2.35). What Danner thinks about Hamlet’s disapproval of the players is what can be taken as the reason Hamlet switches to his third stage of the quest. He thus remarks: “Hamlet finds that the actions a man might play are disabled by intention” (52). Finally, Hamlet asks for ‘rashness’, understood as spontaneity fitted to circumstance, and considers it to be the appropriate means to obtain his lost self-grandeur and reach the truth. He finally reaches a particular kind of thinking that can be described as dynamic thought.

The process of development in Hamlet sheds light on the appearance of a new model of performance in the world of drama. According to Hegel “in sharp contrast to ancient tragedies, *Hamlet* drives dramatic focus inward in order to emphasize the modern principle of subjectivity or self-assertion” (qtd. in Grazia 331). *Hamlet*, thus, affirms the change of dramatic domain from external act to internal speculation and sudden eruption. While Hamlet’s inaction or “deferred action” is taken as “the only alternative” available to him according to Ross and Horvath (58), his ability to action which is demonstrated in two occasions, killing

Polonius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern indicates that despite the possibility of action, Hamlet consciously atrophies the practical faculty and sees victory in turning to a Dionysian spirit of self-loss manifest in feigned madness and emphasis on inward nature.

Hamlet's Dionysian inward approach then verifies Nietzsche's idea about the impracticality of reason as a means for self-realization. Hamlet's constructive transition to doubt and incapacity is the result of his recognition of conscience as disabling and corrupt. He believes in the impracticality of consciousness and finally switches to Dionysian madness. Hegel considers Hamlet's dissatisfaction with consciousness as a means to transcend his self (qtd. in Grazia 257). Hamlet tunnels from his consciousness toward feigned madness. He switches to Dionysian self-forgetfulness and freedom from blocking world of reason. Hamlet's specific way of the quest is penetrating into the dark realm of imagination and inwardness making a shortcut to the manifestation of the truth.

Although in *Phenomenology of Mind*, Hegel singles out that Hamlet is not driven by external agent principle (Apollo or justice) in the way of self-realization, he does not relate his 'prophetic soul' or 'the seed of ruin' to Dionysius which is very reminiscent of Coleridge's generative and destructive 'germ' in Grazia's idea. Considering the Dionysian spirit of rapturous destruction, Hamlet's feigned madness, which is a manifestation of his inwardness, makes him different from other Elizabethan tragic characters in his Dionysian spirit. According to Nietzsche, it is Hamlet's Dionysian faculty and nausea which inhibit action and let him look through the essence of things. Nietzsche asserts that through the ecstasy of the Dionysian state, Hamlet is separated from the

phenomenal world and becomes repelled by action. Nietzsche refers to Hamlet's doctrine and thus asserts:

Action needs veils of illusion: that is the doctrine of Hamlet, not the cheap wisdom of Jack the dreamer who reflects too much and as it were, from an excess of possibilities does not get around to action. Not reflection, no true knowledge, an insight into the horrible truth that outweighs any motive for action. (*Birth of Tragedy* 39)

Here, Nietzsche refers to Hamlet's special kind of reflection that is different from negative, obsessive rationalism implied in the analogy of Jack the dreamer whose analytical passive reasoning blocks his way towards a decisive end. According to Nietzsche, Hamlet's delay is the result of his Dionysian imagination, not of obsessive rationalism. It is a Dionysian withdrawal from the outward world which suspends action and makes him penetrate into the very essence of the truth.

Hamlet's positive inaction or inward action is relatively successful in manifesting the wished-for authentic self as he pronounces his obtained identity at last. Although, the play ends in a tragic scene, it foreshadows the substitution of the truth in the place of the unreal. The secret of this relative victory is Hamlet's conscious deviation from the Renaissance dominant idea of active rationalism which is manifest in the contemporary tragedies, especially those of Marlowe. Although Hamlet dies, he is successful in avenging Claudius. He is also successful in making his mother and Laertes understand the truth. Most importantly, Hamlet is able to cry out his lost authentic selfhood as he announces that he is the Dane, king of Denmark. Unlike the dejected fall of many other Renaissance tragic characters who die without retrieving their wished-for self,

Hamlet is remarkable as a tragic hero who recovers his lost identity following conscious self-suspension. This is reminiscent of Nietzsche's notion of death and rebirth, unlike other heroes whose deaths are actually destruction and fall without claiming the lost identity. Hamlet is also successful in fulfilling his vocation to put right what has been wrong, bringing the true essence back both to other characters and Elsinore. In brief, "duty was performed" (Wilson 245).

Hamlet's conscious melancholy which leads him to his indecision and uncertainty is reminiscent of Nietzsche's "loss of purposiveness and meaning" (11) in the way of the quest for self-transcendence. Hamlet's apparent degenerating and atrophying actions manifest in his delay reflect Nietzsche's "partial becoming useless" that he considers as the conditions of a genuine progress towards the attainment of self-transcendence (*Genealogy of Morals* 2.12). Within this context, among other Renaissance tragic heroes who demonstrate the Aristotelian philosophy of the era in extreme active rationalism towards the manifestation of self- grandeur and the wished-for perfection, Hamlet is the only Renaissance hero who reveals a Dionysian tragic spirit in losing the self and becoming a great individual. Resting on an underlying substratum of suffering, and self-imposed melancholy, Hamlet discards the false external world and approximates to his wished-for genuine lost authentic self which is symbolized in his final announcement of the name 'Hamlet' for the first time during the play. Although Hamlet dies at the end, his death envisions the Dionysian sacrificing of life and the joy in destruction. As Bloom emphasizes, Hamlet's inwardness, which is his particular approach for self construction, is introduced to the dramatic world for the first time: "the internalization of self before anyone else was ready for it" (429). In addition to Bloom's emphasis on

Hamlet's inwardness, his tragic readiness manifests a true Dionysian spirit of self-loss which is symbolized in his melancholy and conscious involvement in what Nietzsche calls "the substratum of suffering" (*Birth of Tragedy* 23).

Hamlet's struggle to freedom and self-loss then becomes the inspiring model of the nineteenth-century Romantic characters who, as Grazia asserts, "replaces classical closure with a new openness and freedom" in their "Hamletized absence of action" (365-374). The inactive and inward model of the quest in *Hamlet* sets the appropriate base for the future 'imaginative action' of Ibsen's and Chekhov's dramas. Within this context, the psychological hesitations of the modern dramatic heroes reflect Nietzsche's conscious self-forgetfulness of Dionysus which Hamlet once more rekindles in the world of tragedy.

Chapter 3

The Notion of the Quest for Self-realization in Nineteenth- Century Thought

The Neo-classic idea of the great chain of Being and the notions of balance limit the potential of the Renaissance tragic hero. Nevertheless, we have seen how Hamlet expresses the ideal of striving for personal greatness. After the Jacobean era, however, we see a change in general attitude. In *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift focuses on human incapability and limitation. In *An Essay on Man*, which is the manifesto of Restoration period (Abjadian 37), Alexander Pope says: "Know thy own point: this kind, this due degree/ Of blindness, weakness, Heaven bestowes on thee. / Submit-..." (qtd. in Abjadian 282-85). The notion of the quest for a higher level of self-recognition which has been the dominant philosophical motif from ancient classics to the end of the Renaissance era is changed to a skeptical movement which focuses on human weakness.

Static perfection, social conformity and rationalism are the key philosophical trends of the Neo-classic period, unlike the dynamic challenge for self perfection in Renaissance thought. Both the Restoration age and eighteenth-century philosophy demonstrate enlightenment thought which included religious skepticism and questioning of society. The major philosophical understanding of this period is based on the controversy between seventeenth-century scientific rationalism and a kind of skepticism about human rational faculty. As a result, universal human issues like the quest for self-recognition are replaced by personal attacks or social failings and human follies. Satire becomes the dominant literary type during this hundred-and-forty-year period with the aim to reflect and amend human flaws. Despite the emphasis on rational analysis, there is also an increasing Romantic trend that questions the ability of humans to reach the truth.

The dominant philosophical controversies of the Neo-classic period end in a widespread rise of satire so that the era is called the age of satire. The instability

of the social and political issues emphasizes the search for a static mechanism which limits any dynamic philosophical subject like the quest for self-recognition. Rather than tragedy which naturally suits universal and dynamic motives, Neo-classic satire targets personal and social flaws and aims to amend them. Therefore, as satire is the major literary genre of the Neo-classic time, the thesis ignores the period in its evaluation of progressive course of Western tragedy.

This chapter reviews the notion of the quest for a higher level of self-recognition as it appears in the philosophic thought of the nineteenth century after a lapse of hundred and forty years following the Renaissance era. The present review which traces the recurrence of the motif of self-realization in history of Western ideas also justifies the analytical gap which the thesis demonstrates in evaluating specific dramatic phases. In a similar vein, Romanticism once more sheds light on the notion of the quest for a higher level of self-recognition in its emphasis on dynamic change and ideal perfection. Unfortunately, Romantic dramas are mainly written for recitation. They are closet dramas or dramatic poems like Byron's *Manfred* or Shelly's *Prometheus Unbound*, which are not intended for performance. Abjadian asserts that "Romantic dramatic poems cannot be compared with classic Western dramas" (25). However, the romantic ideals of perfection and dynamic change are so influential on the final phase of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century that this part of the study surveys the motif of the quest for self-realization in Romantic thought as well. Reflecting the romantic spirit of imagination, dream of perfection, and dynamic change, European nineteenth-century play is then the second manifestation of the notion of the quest for a higher level of self-recognition in the present analytic study of Western tragedy.

The idea that humans, like God, can reach perfection is the theory of the Deists which tries to reconcile reason with revelation at the end of eighteenth century. Deism thus preludes Romanticism but could not affect the philosophy of eighteenth century. Following the new spirit of the Deist philosophy, the skeptical and mystic philosophers like Sir Thomas Browne analyze the defects of rationalism in self-recognition and consider revelation and imagination as the only fruitful approaches to reach the truth. Such a theory leads to Hume's philosophy about human nature which stresses feeling, imagination, and human instinct. The centrality of the self in the Romantic movement is then the result of the shift of emphasis from reason to feeling. Romanticism breaks the philosophy of the Great Chain of Being and considers human dignity and the God-like potentiality of humans. Abjadian believes that "Romantic idea of becoming and change creates self perfection, livelihood and growth" (40).

The social human of Pope's *Criticism on Man* is substituted with an imaginative human represented in Wordsworth's *The Prelude*. Believing in the power of imagination, Romanticism claims to have the ability of realizing the truth of everything. Within this context, self-recognition is also possible through imagination. William Blake believes that humans can transcend themselves to a supreme self through imagination. He symbolically refers to transcendent self as 'infinity' in *Auguries of Innocence*:

To see a world in a grain of sand,
And heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
And eternity in an hour. (356. 1-4)

In *Speculations*, Hulme reveals a similar idea. He asserts that humans can manifest unlimited potentials through the chaos which imagination creates (78). In the romantic philosophy of self-realization, the motivation for self-creation emanates from human unconscious. Based on this notion, negative Romanticism, which justifies human withdrawal from the material world, preludes spiritual growth. In “Romanticism and Antiself-Consciousness,” Hartman exhibits that self-satisfaction lies on “escaping from self-consciousness” (554).

The dream for self-perfection and a dynamic unification with the absolute essence has been mentioned as the general inspiring sources of Romantic movement in Gerard’s *English Romantic Poetry*. The major philosophy of Romanticism is to transcend the fallen humans and make them approach a higher level of self-recognition. In *The Romantic Assertion*, Foakes refers to this idea and confirms that before Romantic movement, poets just thought about the outside organized world (17). In Shakespeare’s *King Lear* for instance, after the failure of Lear’s two devilish daughters and illegitimate Edmond, disturbance is removed; but it is just an outward amendment and organization. For inward self-unification, Foakes considers imagination as an appropriate means. Within this context, the motif of the quest for a higher level of self-recognition once more reappears in Romantic thought after the unstable period of Neo-classic age. In a more exaggerated evaluation, David Simpson’s “Romanticism, Criticism and Theory” refers to Trilling’s idea where the notion of self recognition is interpreted as self-liberalization which starts from the end of the eighteenth century and continues into modern times.

The desire for wholeness, exaltation, and perfection still continues as seen in the values of *Bildung* originating in German Romanticism and Kantian idealism emphasizing self-construction and the unification of the spirit. It also emanates from the Counter-Enlightenment and the social, political experiences of nineteenth-century Germany. Generally, the French Revolution, which emphasizes the spirit of liberation, reflects a new kind of approach in Philosophy and literature. It demands absolute freedom and complete discarding of the outside reality in a search for higher reality. Considering the emphatic appearance of imagination advocated by Romantic thinkers in the early nineteenth century, it is not surprising that Nietzsche turns to a Dionysian approach and attempts to reveal a higher human existence, manifest in distinct philosophical terms as ‘self-construction’, ‘species-essence’, ‘subliminal self’, ‘absolute identity’, ‘absolute humanity’, ‘true selfhood’, ‘world spirit’, and ‘superhuman.’

The metaphysical notion of giving birth to a higher self once more appears in German philosophy. The romantic idea of freedom advocated by Schlegel considers the self as a unit. It is in this context that Goethe sees self-liberation in the death of the phenomenal self and considers that as a rebirth. Rousseau defines the individual as a “free spontaneous self” and gives credence to the existence of an absolute genius which is volcanic in nature (qtd. in Nelson 175). The notion of existence in Romanticism is also explained by Schelling in his discussion of positive philosophy which unlike negative rational philosophy begins not from thought to being but from “immediate being” to thought (qtd. in Nelson 178).

Hume lays a basis for Romantic constructions of the self when he certifies a kind of search for the self that is beyond the world of wisdom and calls for “emotional realization” (Abjadian 114). He gives priority to ‘impression’ and

imagination as tracing means of the truth. Focusing on the practicality of dream, he argues that dream opens the veiled eye of the flesh to clearer vision of the absolute (Pippin 63). Hume adds that dreams and psychosis create new models of reality higher than the reality itself. In a similar vein, Pippin reveals Hegel's emphasis on the importance of the inner world to determine the self. He refers to what Hegel believes about spiritual beings that are capable of internalizing their connections to everything that initially seems to be alien to them. For such beings nothing is irreducibly external:

We must designate as the distinctive determinateness of the concept of spirit, ideality that is ... the process of turning back and the accomplished turning back into itself from its other ... what we have called the ideality of spirit is this triumph over externality. Every activity of spirit is nothing but a distinct mode of leading back what is external to the inwardness which spirit itself is, and it is only by this leading back, by this idealization or assimilation, of what is external that becomes and is spirit. (22)

In *The Philosophy of World History*, Hegel also describes the condition of modern human beings as those who are automatically taking shelter to their inner world:

They are irresistibly impelled to perform their life's work. That is then what is right, and the rest, even though they may not have thought that this was what they wanted, adhere to it and endure it, it is a power within them that rules over them,

even though it may appear to them external and alien and contradictory to their consciousness of their supposed will. For, the mind that has progressed further is the inner soul of all individuals, albeit the unconscious inner soul which the great men bring to their consciousness. It is, after all, what they themselves truly want, and therefore, it exercises a force to which they surrender even when their conscious will contradicts, for this reason they follow these leaders of souls, for they feel the irresistible power of their own inner spirit, stepping forward to meet them. (19)

Hegel's logical discussion of freedom demonstrates the ability of achieving genuine infinity, overcoming the finitude of the world of reality. His belief roots from the basic principle of the modern world allowing total freedom of subjectivity, which generates a passion of freedom and the historical movement towards free manifestation of any kind especially related to the issue of being. Hegel himself says: "Fully actualized and institutionalized human freedom is the goal of history" (*The Philosophy of World History* 62). His basic principle that is the 'spirit', in another way exhibits his idea about a dignified existence, which he believes to be the essence of human beings. It is, as he himself says, "pointing in faith to something higher" (15). He even believes that the realization of the spirit presupposes a humanistic value to human beings that he calls "superhuman" (57). The idea focuses on the attempts that individuals undertake to regain sublimity and exaltation, escaping their phenomenal self and the bondage of social reality.

The nineteenth century begins in full flush of German Romanticism advocating radical idealism, spontaneity of feeling and faith in the visionary

imagination. In other words, the whole pattern demonstrates a romantic search for a transcendent principle to govern human existence in a mode between freedom and contingency. Being a nineteenth-century theorist Myers asserts that the romantic desire for wholeness and its passion for idealism reflect human's desire for "sublimity" (202). It might not be without significance that Smith refers to the willingness for the pursuit of something higher or more sublime when he defines *Bildung* this way: "The word denotes the value in a person of wholeness, integration, or a state in which every part of education and life contributes to the pursuit of the good, the true, and the beautiful" (375).

Influenced by the powerful aspiration of Romanticism, the later nineteenth-century quest for a higher level of self-realization also reflects the essential spirit of freedom, spontaneity, imagination, and inwardness. The recurrent notion of self-realization appears in Kierkegaard's idea about an existence which is beyond the finite reality, reason or generally what is beyond the here and now. He asserts that humans need to come to realize the truth of that fact in order to realize their passion for the task of obtaining true selfhood. He assumes an isolated self which according to him represents "absolute humanity." Marx's idea of alienation, mentioned in the Manuscripts of 1844, adheres to the isolation of humans from their true human nature or "*Gattungswesen*." It is usually translated to 'species-essence' or 'species-being' and reflects the increasing inclination of the early nineteenth century towards the idea of the quest for a higher level of self-realization. The romantic spirit of alienation which sets the foundation for the future nineteenth and twentieth-century philosophy follows the era's emphasis on achieving the ideal of self-perfection through protecting the self from the outside phenomenal world. Such a desire for seclusion and

alienation justifies human's need for protection from the complete resolution in the falsehood of the outside world. What Marx and Kierkegaard believe about the modern philosophy of alienation reflects the humans' eagerness to discard the outside world of the reality.

Nietzsche's idea of the superman, which aims to fill the absence of God in the nineteenth century, in a similar vein, demonstrates human's inward desire for a higher level of self-realization. Such a belief comes to be the result of the nineteenth-century irrationalism and eternal recurrence. Lowith refers to the direct connection between Hegel's notion of "spirit" and Nietzsche's idea of the ascent when he shows the similarity between the two philosophers by using Hegel's words to explain Nietzsche's theory: "Nietzsche attempts to transcend the whole fact of man" (197). Lowith takes benefit from Nietzsche's symbolic story in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* where the sufferer "bore his ashes to the mount" and sought to "reach his goal with one leap" (197). Lowith then mentions that, according to Nietzsche, human beings try to get rid of their bodies and struggle to ascend beyond this physical obstacle: "It was the body which despaired of the body..." (197). The idea of 'leaping' 'to the mount' symbolically connotes the attempt of the individuals to ascend to a higher existence. In a similar vein, his idea about human transcendental desire appears in what Zarathustra contends about the possibility of an '*Übermensch*' (*homo superior*; the English translation is 'super-human'). Nietzsche's will to power is also "a metaphysical conception of the Dionysian principle. His terms like 'apart' and 'beyond' do not signify the flight from reality, it is only his absorption, immersion, and penetration into a higher reality" (Habermas 19). Nietzsche's idea about human's transcendental desire

introduces the concept of ‘forgetfulness’ which suggests the aspiration for a complete destruction of the false identity imposed by society.

Demolishing the defences of the *principium individuationis*,⁴ Nietzsche speaks of Dionysian emotions which, as though under the influence of a narcotic, relinquish phenomenal self-awareness and awake a higher level of self-realization through unification with Primal Unity.⁵ In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche refers to the time when under the spell of Dionysian emotion individuality is broken down:

All the stubborn, hostile barriers, which necessity, caprice or ‘shameless fashion’ has set up between man and man are broken down. Now, at the evangel of cosmic harmony, each one feels himself not only united, reconciled, blended with his neighbor, but as one with him, as if the veil of Mâyâ had been torn and were now merely fluttering in tatters before the mysterious Primal Unity. (14)

By the mystic rapture of Dionysus, “the spell of individuation is broken, and the way lies open to the Mothers of Being, to the innermost heart of things” (14). Habermas asserts that “Forgetfulness is another manifestation of the Dionysian issue named as a mode of Dionysian reasoning” (104). Images and symbols in most of Nietzsche’s works beautifully reveal the relationship of this kind of positive forgetfulness and the triumph of rebirth. In *The Dawn*, the key symbol is the child figure with innocence as the child of forgetfulness which

4- Schopenhauer’s “*principium individuationis*” is the Apollonian principle in Greek culture opposed to Dionysian principle. It means the unique individuality of man.

5- Primal unity is the fall of individuality through direct absorption into the Dionysian principle.

signifies a “new beginning”, “a primal movement” and “a sacred affirmation” of a source (*The Dawn* 293f).

Nietzsche’s *The Wanderer and His Shadow* is the manifest reflection of the romantic idea of inwardness in the nineteenth century. Here, Nietzsche reflects the romantic motifs of visual imagination, silence, and ecstasy. Focusing on the notion of “the most beautiful” in *The Dawn*, Nietzsche aggrandizes the world of inward intuition this way: “So much beauty gave rise to a shuddering amazement and to the silent worship of its momentary revelation.” (I, 993f) Further, in a section which is specifically named “The Great Silence”, he fully describes the moment of stillness and bliss, emphasizing silence as a sign of inaction and inwardness.

The romantic spirit of freedom is also implied in the first speech of Zarathustra which demonstrates the threefold transformation of the spirit. Here, Nietzsche shows that the “thou shalt” of the Christian faith is transformed into the liberated spirit of “I will,” and then in the “desert of his freedom” to be nothing, there occurs the final stage of destruction and rebirth in which “I will” becomes “I am”. Later, in another chapter of *Zarathustra*, entitled “Of Redemption,” Nietzsche maintains that the will is imprisoned and finally demonstrates the will as it redeems, converting to unwillingness capable of reaching the sublime world of eternity because through not willing, the being is still becoming. Zarathustra thus calls this stage the “heavenly nothingness” revealing the decision made by the will “to will nothingness rather than not to will” (192). Lowith also sees the similarity of Nietzsche’s will to power and his nothingness to mysticism as far as the absolute freedom is concerned. Nietzsche’s emphasis on willing nothingness thus advocates the idea of phenomenal self-denial and withdrawal from the

phenomenal world. Within this context, his idea affects the notion of self-realization, producing the quest as a negative progress.

In *The Genealogy of Morals* where Nietzsche provides a general account of the directionality towards attaining the “sovereign individual”, he refers to the general idea of loss as a transcending element in the quest for self-progression: “I would like to say that even partial becoming useless, atrophying and degenerating, loss of meaning and purposiveness, in short, death, belongs to the conditions of a genuine progressus, . . .” (2.12). It is in this context that Nietzsche asserts that individuals gain themselves by confronting tragic condition including pain, loss, and suffering (*Twilight of the Idols* “skirmishes” 38).

The fact that according to Nietzsche human beings can only reach greatness through suffering reveals his paradoxical strategy of the quest for a higher self. He asserts that “only thus does man reach his height, when lightning strikes him” (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 13). Nietzsche’s idea of “pessimism of strength” thus emphasizes that in order to create a higher being, humans must first destroy, and in order to affirm, they must first deny and annihilate. It is in the light of such denial that the Dionysian signs of suffering, pain, intoxication, and forgetfulness are joyfully welcomed by a Dionysian disciple to attain the highest of heights. For Nietzsche, submission to Dionysian madness and drunkenness creates passionate frenzy where the boundaries between the authentic self and false self dissolve. Moreover, in the state of Dionysian diving ecstasy that individuals enter into a higher community that is the primordial unity. Nietzsche’s “pessimism and its overcoming”, as Pfeffer notes, “represents the heroic individual who overcomes nihilism” and finds a higher meaning for the self

through eternally destroying and eternally giving birth (37). Such a paradoxical notion that he calls the spirit of tragic leads to the greatness of the individuals.

Although in his emphasis on individualism, intuition, feeling, and heightened sensitivity Nietzsche conveys romantic principles, his focus on joyful and decisive overcoming of the meaningless modern world, leans more towards the mystic notion of affirmative annihilation. While tearful lament, sickness, and decadence are signs of a life-negating romantic individual, delightful acceptance of pain and joyful conscious self-denial are features of a Dionysian individual. Nietzsche's strong pessimism then represents a heroic individual who courageously welcomes destruction and self-annihilation to fulfil his inward aspiration of reaching a higher self.

In line with the Dionysian spirit, Nietzsche considers human integrity to lie on lack of consciousness, lack of physicality, intoxication, and frenzy. In a book subtitled "How one becomes what one is" (*Ecce Homo* "Clever" 9), Nietzsche suggests that the individual, cannot be understood in terms of anything available to his/her unconscious. Thus, the exploration of the non-rational and the unconscious that began with the Greek tragedians is rekindled by Nietzsche and is resumed by Freud a half century later.

It is also worth mentioning that the twentieth-century Freudian idea which focuses on the relationship between dreams and eternal existence emanates from the Romantic pattern of the quest for self-realization strengthened by Nietzsche's notion of Dionysian forgetfulness. The psychology of thought in Freudian system which focuses on the topics of feeling, emotion, and memory once more reflects the idea of Dionysian emotion in self-recognition. This way, imagination comes to actualize the abstract, outside world followed by the idea of the role of such an

imaginative actualization. Memory, imagination, the power of dream, and the role of inwardness appear to reveal their constructive role in the nineteenth-century notion of self-realization.

Very close to the function dream has in manifesting the absolute, fantasy plays its role “in expressing desire” (R. Jackson 17). “Fantasy can operate in two ways, it can tell us or manifest desire or it can expel desire, when this desire is a disturbing element which threatens cultural order and continuity” (17). Tolkien specifically cites fantasy as another kind of “human activity” activating human mind to reach the origin of meaning. He maintains that “fantasy is a means of setting needs and desires free, confirming the validity of their pursuit and fulfillment, presenting the recovery of fragmented or lost desires and offering consolation” (20).

Timelessness, the unconscious, and fragmentation, which make the substance of fantasy, are as Tuckett declares the mingling of unconscious parts in the quest for certainty. He affirms that, “Fantasy offers escape from reality, but the purpose and effect of escape ranges from wish-fulfillment, to release from habitual assumptions, thus providing a vantage from which new possibilities can be realized” (41). He adds that most fantasies implement hope and open new possibilities which are towards betterment. Regarding the ability fantasy has to fulfil human desires through allowing us to enter the realm of imagination, it shows the limitation of the outside world of reality and the powerful realm of the inside world. Kline asserts that the expression of fantasy exactly means the expression of the self.

Exulted by the period’s dominant understanding of absolute freedom mainly after the political dissent and unrest of French Revolution and

Romanticism, philosophers saw the attainment of a free, sublime self following an inward visionary pattern. Parallel and even more meaningful than philosophical theories of the era, the European nineteenth-century literature, especially the romantic plays of Ibsen and Chekhov, manifest the attempt of the characters to get rid of the false phenomenal self. Although the European nineteenth-century play sets a new base for realistic and naturalistic style, the underlying motif of the quest for a higher level of self-realization reveals a romantic pattern where the characters switch to the ideal world of imagination which can unite to form a free and fulfilled origin. Indeed, the way of the quest for self-recognition is shifted to an inward world as the modern world of reality appears impotent for self-fulfilment.

The European nineteenth century-play demonstrates the rejection of the previous established values and allows new freedom on the stage as well as in the characters' way of expressing the quest for a higher level of self-recognition. Generally, the strong rush of emotion and the free run of imagination exhibit a new kind of the search for a higher identity in Ibsen's and Chekhov's dramas. Beneath the melodrama of conscience lie the central concerns for the self and the ideal. Being the forefathers of modern realism in play, Ibsen and Shaw still make use of the devices they set out attack in the beginning of the play of ideas. Shaw himself introduces mysticism, hypnotism, symbolism and supernaturalism as Ibsen's basic elements in the attempt towards self-realization in his tragic characters. Such an approach is manifest in the mystical behavior of Ibsen's Hedda Gabler, or the hypnotic image-making of Peer Gynt, and all the symbolic objects like the mountain peaks, high towers, rivers, or the supernatural elements like the trolls recurrent in his plays. Shaw continues to defend Ibsen's new way of

conveying the theme and asserts that although his style is not poetic drama, it is very close to it as his tragedies use the pattern of inward manifestation. Evaluating modern plays, Downs affirms that “the dream of Romanticism remains and it is an imaginative literature” (144). It is the continuation of Rousseau’s Romanticism, which according to Downs can be seen in Ibsen’s plays.

Ibsen and Chekhov demonstrate their characters living in the world of imagination, inwardness and impracticality. Reviewing Western play, Mann asserts that “in Chekhov's plays nothing seems to happen, utilizing multiple points of view, changes of focus, an abundance of subtext, and internalized action, communication the sensation of life” (qtd. in King 505). It is by the special focus of individual's inwardness that, as Mann remarks, these two dramatists influence modern and twentieth-century play. The way Ibsen demonstrates the ordinary human being who needs illusion for survival affects the twentieth-century Theatre of the Absurd with its focus on dream and imagination. The psychological inwardness of Chekhov's plays, similarly, inaugurates fundamental changes not only in the composition of the plays, but also in their performances in modern Western play. According to Fishell, such an idea is also applicable to Ibsen’s plays whose inactive, inward acting style influenced modern and twentieth-century plays (qtd. in King).

While continuing the motif of the quest for a higher level of self-realization, these European nineteenth-century dramatists link the Dionysian romantic approach of the quest to the spirit of denial which represents the particular style of the twentieth-century Absurd Theatre. As Gray also argues, by allowing the characters to repeat, these dramatists remind us of the Hegelian concept of self-expression as the “essential manifestation of the Spirit *in extenso*”

(199). In another comparative study, Dvergsdal relates Kierkegaard's cognition, which has its background in Greek and Christian mystics, to Ibsen's notion of 'via negativa' reflected in his usage of silence and in the impracticality of the characters (214). Dvergsdal uses a similar notion to Kierkegaard's Apophatic theology which reflects the Pseudo-Dionysian idea of the quest for a "beyond-beingly human":

Into the dark beyond all light
We pray to come,
Through not seeing and not knowing,
To see and to know
That beyond sight and knowledge,
Itself: neither seeing nor knowing.
For by the denial of all that is
One sees, knows, and beyond –beingly humans
The beyond being. (qtd. in Dvergsdal 215)

In Kierkegaard's apophatic theology, epiphany and revelation is expressed through silence which means the manifestation of the unutterable:

The *Via Negativa* is employed not as a means of making knowledge impossible but of enabling the individual to progress beyond the confines of human knowledge to a mystic union in which he knows God non-conceptually and non-linguistically. As Dionysus puts it, "This quite positively complete unknowing is knowledge of him who is above everything that is known." (Law 1993:212)

The romantic spirit of the unconscious manifest in European nineteenth-century play is also reminiscent of Freud's psychotherapeutic method. Brandell compares the inwardness of Ibsen's characters with the way Freud behaves towards his patients through the neurotics of dreams and the appearance of the unconscious in pictures and visual images as a means of realizing a higher identity. Brandell argues that, "Ibsen and Freud have occasional meetings and what Ibsen does not fully accomplish about his characters' psychoanalysis leading to the tragic end of his plays like *Romersholt* and *Hedda Gabler*, Freud completes by uncovering psychological means" (43). Describing the freedom of such plays, Tuckett refers to a kind of suspension which is similar to Freud's particular kind of freedom. Freud's idea of achieving freedom presupposes a specific kind of wisdom which according to him brings a mature type of freedom. Nelson refers to the idea when he writes: "He has achieved the wisdom for freedom" (280). Tuckett also describes the style of Ibsen's plays as: "The co-presence of not-thinking and thinking" (15).

Considering the limitation and impossibility of satisfying the ideal due to the imposed load of the false social reality, modern dramatic characters switch to the inward world. Following the two-dimensional explanation of the concept of dream and the Freudian account of wisdom in producing a mature freedom, a new kind of approach helps modern dramatic characters seek for self-realization through their unconscious. In other words, such characters deliberately choose not to lean on the real world or actual objects in their search for a higher level of self-realization and try to simulate the wished for self in the imaginative world of fantasy and dream. This is what I call 'imaginative action' for the second phase of the quest in Western tragedy.

Based on this idea, the following chapter will be a selective case study of the European nineteenth-century tragedy with a new approach of imaginative quest in the attempt towards manifesting a higher level of self-realization. It will demonstrate a basically different way from the Renaissance approach towards self-assertion. This phase consciously follows the deliberately imaginative, inactive, loose and inner strife followed by Hamlet's Dionysian self-forgetfulness. The analytical study will demonstrate the dominant thought of the nineteenth century considering the notions of self-realization. The particular imaginative quest of the characters for self-realization shows what the dramatists have in common with the romantic ideas of Hume, Hegel, and Kierkegaard later developed by Nietzsche and Freud in the nineteenth century. With these philosophers' conception of self-recognition, especially that of Nietzsche's Dionysian style of life, Ibsen and Chekhov demonstrate their entire accordance. Ibsen's and Chekhov's masterpieces will be evaluated as the best representatives of the romantic/antiromantic dramatists of the European nineteenth century demonstrating the continuous tradition of self-realization through an inward quest.

They reveal that consciousness can be subdued by a kind of rapturous apprehension, analogous to drunkenness and to dreaming, and that through such intoxication, truths can be reached that are only dimly to be known through cognitive, structured perception. The characters demonstrate a kind of inward quest which equates Dionysian apprehension where inwardness, self-forgetfulness and imaginative action result in awakening the self. They dramatize a condition that Nietzsche calls "Dionysian." The study focuses its analysis on *Brand*, *Hedda Gabler*, *The Master Builder*, and *When We Dead Awaken* as representatives of three major phases of Ibsen's dramatic life. There is also cross reference to similar

thematic material in his other plays. Among Chekhov's plays, *The Seagull*, *The Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard* will be examined.

Chapter 4

Imaginative Action:

The Quest for Self-realization in Tragedies of Ibsen and Chekhov

Within, within that is my call
That is the way I must venture, that is my path
.....
There shall the vulture of the will be slain.
And there shall the new Adam at last be born again.

(*Brand* 114)

The tradition of the quest for self-realization reappears in the European new play movement represented by Ibsen and Chekhov. Despite its naturalist/realistic style, play of this phase reflects an underlying Romantic nature in conveying the motif of the quest for self-realization which is evocative of Dionysian joy of self-sacrifice. Hamlet's inwardness, which is the vehicle of his self-discovery, terminates the practical outward pattern of the quest in Renaissance tragedy and anticipates Romanticism. As Oort argues, "modern dramatic characters take Hamlet's capacious imagination as their model for dramatic performance" (323). He adds that "the dramatic narrative of suspended action" is positively "translated into a narrative of psychological hesitation; the romantics reversed the historical priority of dramatic performance over internal reflection" (323).

After Hamlet's feigned madness as a means towards self-realization, a Dionysian spirit of self-forgetfulness recurs as the dominant feature of the quest for self-recognition in Ibsen's and Chekhov's tragedies. In Sokolyansky's words Hamlet's "interior conflict" is a common feature shared between Hamlet and modern figures specifically Chekhov's characters, whose dilemma "to be or not to be...", represents their inwardness and their preoccupation with illusion. As

Shestov asserts, these characters act, but their “actions develop just from nothing” (qtd. in Sokolyansky 102). This specific kind of passivity in Russian dramatic characters which is called “Russian Hamletism” emanates from Hamlet’s imaginative inwardness and is the particular characteristic of modern characters describing the “romantic interiority with the incapability of action” (Sokolyansky 103). A more inclusive range of this romantic interiority coming from the melancholic inwardness of Hamlet is also manifest in other modern dramatists in modes of Chekhovian, Pirandellian, Shavian, Odestian, Brechtian, and Becketian as Keyshian also believes (74).

The present chapter is a review of a selection of the plays by Ibsen and Chekhov. It suggests that there is a new kind of approach to self-realization by the characters of such plays different from the rational, active method followed by the characters of Renaissance Shakespearean or Marlovian tragedies. I have taken *Brand*, *Hedda Gabler*, *The Master Builder*, *Lady from the Sea*, and *When we Dead Awaken* as central representatives of three major phases of Ibsen’s dramatic life and made cross references to similar thematic material in his other plays. In the same way, *The Three Sisters*, *The Seagull* and *The Cherry Orchard* are selected from Chekhov’s plays and there are some additional proofs to reveal the presence of a recurrent tradition of self-realization through self-forgetfulness. Although some critics have produced individual scattered criticisms on Ibsen’s or Chekhov’s plays concerning the inward surge of the characters in the longing for self expressed as a repulsive flight from the pressure of the time through an imaginative yearning, there is no sense of their linking the plays thematically and historically into a sequenced understanding of the tragic mode as a continuous exploration of possibilities for self-fulfilment. More importantly, despite the fact

that the critics have considered the basic motivation of such inward attempts as attaining some sort of “Edenic perfection” or sometimes “mystic world of revelation”, I assert that there is a degree of success in the characters' approximation to some sort of self-liberation in such an imaginative-laden journey.

Emanating from the Romantic idea, inwardness is the framework of the modern self (Taylor 21). Evaluating the shift of emphasis from outward man to the inward man, Ackerman considers Hamlet to be the pole of transition. He states: “This transition is fundamentally related to change in the concept of vision. In this context, Hamlet, with emphasis placed upon the figure of the ghost and on Hamlet’s imagination, becomes a central Romantic text” (120). He then traces a genealogy that begins with Hamlet and “evolves in a debate in which dramatic structure and terms, images and characters, taken from Hamlet are represented in turn by artists such as Goethe, Ibsen, and Wilde” (120). He refers to the analogy of the rampart of Hamlet’s castle which divides the boundaries between outward and inward worlds. Ackerman finally concludes that: “Hamlet begins to interrogate the separation of the vision from the body, of the mental image from the concrete reality. This separation is reconsidered at the beginning of the nineteenth century” (125). While Ackerman considers *Hamlet* more as a technical shift from outer to inner world, we recognize that the hero's melancholy transfers the spirit of Dionysian self-forgetfulness to the modern characters in the quest for self-realization. This self-losing is developed as a key idea in the nineteenth-century philosophy of Nietzsche, who focuses on the Dionysian spirit of creative destruction.

Ibsen relates the motif of the quest for self-realization to the inward realm of spirituality in *Brand*. The hero protests the idea of “erasing of God in the soul of man” mentioned in the Provost’s speech (134). In sharp contrast, Brand believes in the individual’s self-liberation and offers a clear picture of God being in man’s soul. In a major speech, he urges the people to lift themselves and be self-redeemed, shifting from the world of flesh to that of the spirit:

BRAND. One thing that does prevail and endure
That is the uncreated spirit, once redeemed
From chaos in the first fresh spring of time, still
Extending bridges to unaltered faith
From banks of flesh to banks of spirit. (92-3)

In Ibsen’s plays, the motif of self-realization is thus interrelated with the idea of inwardness. Dvergdsdal sees this emphasis on the inner life as typifying the quest for self-realization in Ibsen’s works (33). The desire for reaching a higher level of self-realization is explicitly referred to in Brand’s inward aspiration to find a place where he can get rid of the bondages of society and free his self. Here, Brand expresses that a fully realized self is his final goal:

BRAND. O, for room in the world’s wide arch, a place
Where I may be myself that is the lawful right
Of every man this granted,
I should demand no more. (12)

Protesting the heavy plight laid upon him by society and his elders; he rejects the spirit of compromise and goes to the mountain. According to Ganz, “Brand is the starting point of self-fulfilment where the self may live out its dreams unimpeded based on the dreams of reshaping or finding this world and

realizing the self within its sheltering borders” (19). Brand is finally coiled in the seclusion of the “ice-cathedral” at the peak of the glacier where he is called a saviour by Gerd, who finally shoots the great hawk, symbolizing the final success of Brand in killing the “vulture of the will”. Brand’s self-exile echoes his own idea: “Soul, be steadfast to the end. / The victory of victories is to lose everything. Only that which is lost remains eternal” (127). Unlike other people who have worldly desires, Brand welcomes sacrifice of all kinds in order to attain a greater self: “A thousand started with me from the valley; Not one has followed me to the mountain top. All of them have the craving in their hearts /But the sacrifice frightens them” (149).

Such self-sacrifice reflects the influence of Kierkegaard’s writings on Ibsen especially his paradoxical notion of human greatness:

There was one who was great in his strength, and
one who was great in his wisdom, and one who was
great in hope, and one who was great in love; but
greater than all was Abraham, great with the power
whose strength is powerlessness, great in that
wisdom whose secret is folly, great in that hope
whose outward form is insanity, great in that love
which is hatred of self. (*Fear and Trembling* 50)

Georg Brandes compares Kierkegaard's Abraham to Brand in his strong weakness, wise foolishness, and his love of self-hatred. Brand's oxymoronic features recall Kierkegaard's central paradox in *Fear and Trembling*. Although Abraham's journey is the centerpiece of *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard's focus is on the paradoxical notion of suffering and human greatness. Discarding worldly

aspirations, Brand then becomes a Christ-figure symbolized in his scarred nails, blood in his hair, and thorn's teeth on his forehead (155). He is finally self-liberated and reveals a greater self claimed by his companion in the Ice Church, "You're the Big Man. The Biggest of all. .../ I know you. You are the Saviour Man" (154-5). An unknown voice, which he hears at the time of his shrinking before the onrushing avalanche, approves his self-sacrificing approach towards ascending to a greater self. Asking God how Man can be redeemed if not by Will, the voice confirms, "He is the God of Love", showing God's approval of Brand's negation of the will rather than pursuing worldly cravings (157). The voice signifies that Brand's wish concerning the attainment of the whole self has come true after his fighting against the fragmented image of the self separated from divinity. Indeed, the fact that he has attained a greater self is presumed.

Self-liberation is still part of the quest for self-realization in Ibsen's later works. In *Hedda Gabler*, Hedda implies the need for self-liberation in her bold praise of Lovborg's suicide: "Oh, Judge! This act of Eilert Loveborg's –doesn't it give one a sense of release!" (431). She explicitly refers to her inward need for being herself: "for me, I mean. A feeling of release to know that there is still place in the world for something courageous, done of one's own free will. Something enveloped in the radiance of instantaneous beauty" (431). She not only praises Mr. Lovborg's suicide that is his conscious "break with life" but also demonstrates her own desire for it: "... I sometimes think there's only one thing in this world I'm really fitted for,". . . "Boring myself to death!" (380). Demonstrating a Dionysian will for self-sacrifice, Hedda longs for a higher self which will raise her above the phenomenal-self. The ideal of self-transcendence is involved at the end of the play when Hedda comments on Loveborg's death: "...I

only know that Eilert Loveborg has had the courage to live according to his own principles. And now, at last, he's done something big! Something beautiful! To have the courage and the will to rise from the feast of life so early!"(431)

The sense of discrepancy between the false self and the authentic self is the core of the play. The three major dimensions of the play -- escape, revenge, and suicide -- are all the result of the characters' passionate desire for an authentic self. Hedda is feeling bored with the self she presently has. She has actually killed her authentic self in marrying George Tesman, following social codes. Loveborg refers to Hedda's lost self after her wrong marriage. He says: "Oh, Hedda, Hedda! How could you throw yourself away like that?"(406) In a similar vein, Mrs. Elvsted's escape from her husband is to find the authenticity she feels when she is with her lover: "I don't know. I only know that I must live wherever Eilert Lovborg is. If I am to go on living" (391).

The discovery of one's authenticity in the presence of another figure is analyzed by Shapiro who sees Solveig's sudden appearance in *Peer Gynt* as a 'divine' foreshadowing of hope and an indication of an ultimate realization of the self. He argues, " Solveig serves as Peer's spiritual guide, she is for Peer the teacher who offers him the truth ...and by her relationship with God, her purity of heart is able to bring Peer into a condition for understanding "the truth"(qtd. in Gerland 2). Gerland, in a similar vein, describes the role of Solveig as not just an emblem of the Holy Mother, she is everything that *Peer* needs in order to become self. He adds that:

Peeling his onion self, Peer finds that he has been a
merchant and trader, a prophet, archaeologist, fur
trader, prospector and passenger-he may also have

become a troll. In the end, Peer takes refuge in an idealized other who offers him perfect emphatic support. Solveig's unselfish and apparently nonsexual love, something like empathy of Kohut's ideal analyst, enables Peer to totalize his disintegrating self. (6)

Such a symbolic relation also exists in other kinds of attachments. Ellida's mysterious relation in *The Lady from the Sea* is like

... an *attachment* to something or someone or else to which it *echoes*... So, we think of her in notions of attachment with body or with spirit, or in the mother-daughter mystery, in the masculine-feminine pairings, or in compensation with the persona, in collusion with the shadow, or as guide to the self. (Lothe 232)

In *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, Taylor remarks that true individuality is achieved through "confronting with any partner in this new, indirect way" (38). This kind of approach towards higher level of self-realization also reflects some aspects of negative theology, which includes the manifestation of one's identity through the complete dissolution of the ego in those who somehow reflect the ultimate reality, either playing the role of a master or lover. Whatever the source of inspiration is, the main purpose is to dissolve the phenomenal existence and be absorbed into the supreme essence.

Nora's departure in *A Doll's House* once more conveys the motif of self-release as she tries to liberate her authentic self that has been shattered and

ignored by her husband. After the decision to leave, she immediately states: “I must stand alone” (67). Nora’s self-emancipation which takes place through leaving her life and going out into a very dark night is like Hedda’s and Brand’s self-exile and implies her success as her leaving arouses a sense of hope in the audience.

Ambition has kept Solness away from a true realization of his self in *The Master Builder*: “The more I think of it now, the more it seems to me as though I had gone about all these years torturing myself” (87). Idolized by Hilda, a vivacious young woman, Solness’ acute existential crisis is awakened and he feels the necessity to recapture his lost free self: “What a good thing it is you have come to me now for I have been so lonely here...And this is why I have locked and bored myself in” (88). Intoxicated by Hilda’s image of the ideal, he attains the courage to liberate himself from the cage of his worldly life and tries the impossible: “I scarcely know myself. But now I know so much for certain, that I ...that I ought to have done it” (102). Hypnotized by Hilda, Solness supports Shaw’s claim in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* where mysticism, hypnotism, symbolism and supernaturalism are introduced as elements in Ibsen’s plays (27). Hilda’s obsession with climbing, shown in her mountaineering dress, suggests that she, too, is seeking for self-liberation: “I suppose I am a strange sort of bird . . . I had only a cage, the wild bird never wants to go back the cage” (100). Solness endangers himself and eagerly goes up the high tower as an attempt to discover a higher self: “His will is to reach the top; so at the top you shall see him” (104). His desire is reminiscent of the Dionysian will for elevation through self-destruction. Although he is finally crushed, his death is a willing self-emancipation. It is considered to be a rapturous victory, as Hilda affirms: “[As if

in quiet spell-bound triumph.] But he mounted right to the top. And I heard harps in the air. [Waves her shawl in the air, and shrieks with wild intensity.] My, my Master Builder!”(107)

In a parallel way, the final scene of *When We Dead Awaken* symbolically demonstrates the motivation of the characters to liberate their self from the unsatisfactory bondages of the earthly self. Similar to Solness, Rubeck is acutely sick with the self-loss which is the result of his unsatisfactory life with his wife. The desire to find his lost authentic self is awakened by confronting Irene, a girl belonging to his past. “The Day of Resurrection”, which is Rubeck’s finely-cut statue of Irene, is the incarnation of the hero’s wished for self-perfection. He completes it as “my vision of Resurrection -- the loveliest, most beautiful image I could think of, was a pure woman unattained by the world.” (278). The statue reflects his preoccupation with the idea of pure perfection: “She, this awakening girl, was to be all that is *noble*, all that is pure; perfection in woman” (336). Rubeck finally concludes that such an intact self-perfection is what he is actually searching for: “To me, you were something sacred and untouchable, And I conceived that if I touched you, if I desired you sensually, my vision would be profaned so that I would never be able to achieve what I was striving after” (336). Suppressed with the meaningless phenomenal self, Irene also refers to her attempt towards reaching “something better”:

IRENE. I must! I must! Thus bids me a voice

In the depth of my soul and I will follow it.

Strength have I and courage for something better,

For something higher than this life. (551)

They eagerly sacrifice every worldly desire, pass through the channel of mist and finally go to the mountaintops: “That love which belongs to our life on earth, that beautiful, miraculous life so full of riddles, that love is dead in us both.” Irene again calls for their ascent to a higher self: “Up, up to the top of our tower” (553). She even refers to “the glory” which symbolically indicates her obsession with attaining a higher self liberated from the phenomenal world. Similar to the Dionysian rapturous death of Brand and Solness, Rubeck and Irene liberate themselves from the bondages of the real world. Although they die under the rushing avalanche, they have already freed themselves from the false social self, hoping for the emergence of a higher self. Although their death is tragic, it is self-liberating and transcendental, as the height of the mountain symbolizes.

Although Dvergdsdal specifically refers to Peer Gynt, his equation of “self-realization with the inner liberation” (38) from the bondages of the phenomenal world is also applicable to other Ibsen’s characters like Brand, Hedda, Nora, Solness, Hilda, Irene, and Rubeck. He relates Dionysius’ Apophatic theology to Ibsen’s notion of ‘via negativa’ manifest in his dramas. In this context, Ibsen’s characters consciously shrink themselves so that the expression of a higher entity might be possible. The idea thus reflects Dionysius’ notion:

Into the dark beyond all light
We pray to come,
Through not seeing and not knowing,
To see and to know
That beyond sight and knowledge,
Itself: neither seeing nor knowing.
For by the denial of all that is

One sees, knows, and beyond beingly humans

The beyond being. (qtd. in Dvergsdal 215)

After Ibsen, the nineteenth-century new dramatic movement still echoes the continuous tradition of the quest for authentic self in Chekhov's plays. The characters' sense of exhaustion from the phenomenal self is the particular manifestation of Chekhov's characters in expressing their aspiration for a higher self. The pervasive atmosphere of boredom in *The Three Sisters* reflects the characters' sense of dissatisfaction with the false social self. The characters' incessant complaining throws light on their longing for a greater self. Irina refers to her sense of self-exhaustion this way:

IRINA. Oh, I'm miserable.... I can't work and won't work. I'm sick of it, sick of it! I was a telegraph operator, and now have a place with the Town Board, and hate and despise everything they give me to do ... I'm going on twenty-four and have already been working a long time, and my brain's dying up, I'm getting thin, losing my looks, getting old, and there's nothing, nothing, no satisfaction of any kind, and time is passing, and it all seems to be moving away from any real, beautiful life, all moving away farther and farther into some abyss... I am in despair, and how I'm alive, how it is I haven't killed myself, I can't understand. (198)

Olga equally reveals her exhaustion from the false social self when she says: “I’m exhausted. Our headmistress is ill, and I’m taking her place. My head, my head aches,” she adds that “Tomorrow I am free, O Lord, how pleasant it is! Tomorrow is free, the day after tomorrow is free, my head aches” (185). Finally, it is Masha who confesses to boredom as well: “I want to confess, my dear sisters. I’m tired in my soul, I love Vershinin....” (199). Switching from the world of practicality to the Romantic world of the ideal is both seen in Masha’s confession of love and Olga’s fantasizing about the life she could have by getting married and staying home. Irena explicitly demonstrates what is ideally missing in the life they have: “I must try and find another position, what I wanted so, what I dreamed of, is what’s exactly not there. Work without poetry... I can’t, I am tired” (170). Work without poetry has trapped her in her phenomenal self to the extent that she has almost lost touch with her essential being. Parallel to the sense of self-exhaustion, these characters are preoccupied with the idea of release. Andrei clearly exhibits the feeling of self-liberation: “The present is hateful, but on the other hand, when I think of the future, Oh, how good it is, I begin to feel easy, so free, and in the distance a light dawns, I see freedom.” (216).

The sorrowful mood of Chekhov’s characters, which is manifest in their passive regression, is reminiscent of Nietzsche’s Dionysian spirit of suffering that leads the characters to the realization of a greater self. Evaluating the dominant lyric style of Chekhov’s plays, Gilman shows the relationship between sorrow and the manifestation of an authentic self:

Lyricism doesn’t transform or redeem the weight of
sorrow; it doesn’t even physically lighten it. What it
does is place it, environ it, bring it into intimacy

with the soul which, tested by grief, learns about itself. At the same time lyricism makes visible the hidden and speaks of how grief makes us human; the beauty that inheres in sorrow is our recognition of mortality, which happiness obscures. (261)

The Seagull, begins with Masha's complaint about her life revealing her dissatisfaction with the self she presently has. Replying to Medvedenko's question about why she always wears black, Masha says: "I am in mourning for my life. I'm unhappy" (413). She explicitly ascribes her suffering to the loss of something spiritual and inward: "It isn't a question of money. Even a beggar can be happy" (413). In a similar vein, Trepleff's view about writing echoes his dissatisfaction with the phenomenal self. He tries to represent his characters as they should be, not as they are in real life: "...Living characters! I must show life not as it is, but as it appears in my dreams" (416). In a similar manner, Trigorin idealizes Nina as an agent of transcendence. Nina's image of the artist who soars like a goddess above ordinary people reveals her obsession with becoming an artist to attain a greater self: "I should give my whole life to the ordinary people, realizing at the same time that their happiness lay striving to rise to my level and then they'd have harnessed themselves to my chariot" (150).

Nina's aspiration for an authentic self is manifest in the analogy of the seagull and the lake, symbolizing life and freedom. Her authentic self is imprisoned and she is thirsty for the new self that love and art offer her: "My father and his wife won't let me come here; they say it's Bohemia. They are afraid I'll go on the stage. But I am drawn here to this lake like a sea gull. My heart is full of you" (416). She feels uplifted in art as Dorn also observes: "... But if ever I

had felt the elevation of spirit that comes to artists in their creative moments I believe I should have despised this body and all its usages, and tried to soar above all earthly things”(420). Nina’s role on the stage is indeed the symbolic expression of her own problem, reflecting the question of the self and an empty feeling: “I am like a prisoner cast into a deep, empty well, and know not where I am nor what awaits me” (418).

In Chekhov’s *The Cherry Orchard*, the inward, unconscious prompting for the authentic self reveals itself in the importance of the orchard itself symbolizing Ranevskaya’s identity: “After all, I was born here, my father and mother lived here, and my grandfather; I love this house. Without the cherry orchard, my life has no meaning for me, and if it really must be sold, then sell me with the orchard...” (248). The recurrent references to the nursery room also remind her of the innocent self she has lost. For Ranevskaya, the preservation of the orchard and the nursery means returning to the realization of her authentic self which gives her inward bliss and self-satisfaction: “Oh, my childhood, my innocent childhood. I used to sleep in this nursery- I used to look out into the orchard, happiness waked with me every morning ...” (198) Being back home, she has found herself again and regained an inward rapture: “Can it really be I sitting here? I feel like dancing, waving my arms about” (187). Ranevskaya’s dancing is reminiscent of the Dionysian ecstasy that occurs in the time of phenomenal self-annihilation. The orchard with its nursery is the incarnation of a spiritual stillness where Ranevskaya takes refuge and it reminds her of the lost authentic self. Trofimov also expresses his inward need for stillness “... I am afraid of serious talk. It would be better for us just to keep quiet” (250).

Despite the different styles each dramatist reveals, both Ibsen's and Chekhov's characters manifest a similar compulsion to engage in the quest for self-realization. Generally, the characters withdraw themselves from the outward practicality of the phenomenal world and cling to a Romantic inwardness to dissolve the false social self. This is a "passionate idealistic outburst of spirit" which best describes the inwardness of the modern time (Merezhkovsky 12). Fantasy, dream, natural scenes, music, madness, drinking, and seclusion are all means of dissolving the characters' phenomenal self and approximating the authentic self. Living in uncertainty and passivity of the imaginative world, both Ibsen's and Chekhov's characters demonstrate a negative capability which, as Eliot observes, has been set up by Hamlet's psychological inaction (qtd. in Greenburg 216).

Reflecting Hamlet's inwardness, Ibsen's and Chekhov's characters probe, excavate, and descend into the psyche or into the dark regions of the self. Modern drama is then a voyage of solitude, a descent into the interior self to seek spiritual liberty. It is "a domain of creativity, hallucinations, illusions and dreamsan exorcism of inner demons, a descent into the internal underworld, and the illumination of decadence in order to encounter the splintered and embattled individual soul" (Nor 65) 'Imaginative action' is then the proper term for this particular approach.

In Ibsen's plays, the substance of the imaginative world is enacted in the real world demonstrating various manifestations. The pattern is reminiscent of Lyons' explanation about Peer's imaginative enactment: "The quality of the illusion is based upon the experience being rationalized. Peer creates a myth and then enacts that myth. He suffers experience and then from the substance of that

experience re-evaluates it, reforming it into some pleasurable kind of illusion” (49). Describing the Romantic approach of Ibsen’s *Brand*, Bradbrook also argues, “Fantasy reinforces, underlies and sustains a planned course of activity particularly in this drama” (24). He adds that “Imagination involves all the action and experience of the drama” (25). Similarly, Brandes believes that Ibsen applies symbolism to his realism and this contrast reflects his mixture of fact and mysticism (88). Hamlet’s emphatic expression focusing on the possession of something “*within* which passes show” (I.ii.85) is once more emphasized in *Brand* as the particular methodology of the quest:

HAMLET. Inward; inward! That is the word!

There goes the way. There is the path.

One’s own hear, that is the world. (454)

Brand wants to engage in “slaying the will”. This will lead to the manifestation of a new self referred to as the “new Adam”:

BRAND. Within, within that is my call

That is the way I must venture’ that is my path

One’s own inmost heart-that is the world

Newly created, and ripe for God’s work

There shall the vulture of the will be slain.

And there shall the new Adam at last be born. (114-15)

The underlying atmosphere of quietness in Ibsen’s plays helps the characters leave the external world and take shelter in the internal one (Gray 182). In *Emperor and Galilean*, the hero explicitly reveals the positive aspect of silence when he considers invisibility as a form and silence as sound in the world of infinity. Rubeck in *When We Dead Awaken* implies the relationship between the

eternal world and silence: "... No one got off...the train stood there, absolutely silent, as it might have been eternity..." (263). The structure of Ibsen's plays conforms to the model of the Romantic quest as the settings are appropriate for imagination and the fanciful journey of the self. The characters depart from the outward world and seek self-liberation in the wild nature and the solitude of the mountains.

Although Brand is certain to fail, he is determined to die climbing. In Ibsen's *Little Eyolf*, the final exhortation is to: "look towards the mountain peaks and the great silence" that is Allmer's illustration of the notion of self-liberation (56). "Going to the mountain is going to where that is free from the "taint" of man; liberation and revolt were pure and absolute. It is the dissatisfaction from perfection and silence that becomes the language of conversation" (Gray 184). Although Lyons ascribes the repetitive images of the ascent to mountains and lookouts to the characters' great fear of a void, he considers it as a sign for a "promised land" and an ascent to self-liberation. In *Emperor and Galilean* Julian says: "Above in that infinite arch which before had seemed empty to me, there was life, there, invisibility assumed form, and silence became sound" (86).

In *Rosmersholm*, the emphasis is on the wild flowers and birch branches decorating the stove on the stage. In *The Master Builder* Hilda conveys the motif of self-liberation through comparing himself to a strange bird. In *The Wild Duck*, rabbits, pigeons, and the wild duck of the garret are the fantasy-laden realities which reflect the purity of wild nature, symbolizing the authentic self. Ekdal explicitly mentions his obsession with the wild life of the forests: "In the forests, you know—the forests!"(38) He celebrates "the free life in the forests and in the high plateaus among the birds and beasts" (37). The garret of *The Wild Duck*

resembles the Ice Church in *Brand* in their symbolic function of keeping the constructive part of the phenomenal experience within the limitation of the illusive world.

Pastimes, games, Romantic fantasies of mysterious knights and mystical wedding feasts are the fantastic world created by the characters in *When We Dead Awaken*. Here, the sea stands for seclusion which connotes the privacy of the inward nature. Maja in *When We Dead Awaken* displays how determinedly Rubeck stands away from the people: “You’ve begun to wander round restlessly, as though you couldn’t find peace, at home or anywhere else. And you’ve begun to avoid people lately” (320). Rubeck demonstrates his preoccupation with the imaginative life of the forests: “From my schooldays I used to say it to the other children when I wanted to get them to come and play with me in the *forest or up in the mountains*” (323, italics mine). Irene specifically focuses on a special kind of sea bird and Rubeck finds it to be “red-billed gulls” (358). Maja, in a similar vein, refers to the idea of imaginative self-liberation when she talks about her husband’s obsession with having a sea voyage. The idea is also manifest through the motif of “havsens bunn” (the bottom of the sea) in *The Wild Duck*. In *Lady from the Sea*, the sea gives Ellida the sense of self-satisfaction: “How right you are! Night and day, winter and summer, it fills me — this homesickness for the sea” (47). Ellida adds that she talks mostly about gulls and eagles and other sea birds symbolizing the spirit of self-freedom. These water imageries convey the characters’ attempt to wash away the false phenomenal self and give birth to an authentic self. Water is explicitly referred to as a “cleansing agent” in Dvergdsdal’s commentary on *Peer Gynt* (37). He thus remarks: “The self is assuming the character of being something entire and genuine, an authentic dimension of the

person. Thus self-realization is considered as purification, where what matters is to rid oneself of elements that are accidental, conventional and inessential” (38).

To detach themselves from the false social self, the characters restrain themselves from engagement with the practicality of the phenomenal world. The paradoxical situation where the characters try to realize their authentic self through self-exile from the real world echoes Lysell’s consideration of the modern quest to attain the total self possession in Ibsen’s tragedies. He positively justifies Nora’s slamming the door and leaving her family in the last act of *A Doll’s House* as an affirmative negation where her departure symbolizes a kind of death (140). Johnson also calls Ibsen’s tragedies Hegelian, as the characters are self-alienating to protect themselves from falsity which the repressing reality of the world has imposed on them (207).

In *Rosmersholm*, Rosmer’s insistence to keep his love relation with Rebecca pure is another example of Ibsen’s recurrent theme of conscious withdrawing from the material/ social world to attain authentic self: “All the rest, that evil, sense-intoxicated desire is gone, far, far away from me. All that energy is suppressed into quiet and silence. An inner rest has fallen on me. A stillness as upon one of the cliffs where birds nest under midnight sun at home in the north” (45). Followed by the characters’ stillness, they escape from active, passionate love and approximate the “infinite arch of heaven” (47) symbolizing self-release. There is a conscious transformation from frenzy to self-liberation which Rebecca refers to as “ennoblement” (47). Withdrawing from the allures of the phenomenal world, a sense of self satisfaction comes to Rosmer: “When we were together, I felt *joyous, calm, desireless happiness*. When we think about it truthfully, Rebecca, our life together began as a sweet, secret, child-love” (69 italics mine).

Ibsen's tragedies "*Gabriel Borkman* and *When We Dead Awaken* are especially static creations; they are spiritual events in sequential lines. They are less dependent of action, more sparing of means and images he relies on linear movements" (Shaw 79). In *When we Dead Awaken*, Rubeck boldly remarks: "what's the use of working oneself to death to please the masses, the mob, the whole world" (321). The characters' passivity makes the transcendent realm a welcome escape from life (Reid 616). When the phantom asks Brand to join him, he rejects the idea referring to his own approach: "O hurry, Brand, come with me!" "Alas, I dream!" (243) Indeed, Brand considers dream as a version of action: "live the vision into deed" (244). Invoking man's exile from Paradise, Brand sees endless longing as the only possibility and this is reflected in the obsession of Ibsen's characters with imagination and dream:

BRAND. Remember, one with flaming sword
Drove man out from Paradise
Outside its gate he set a chasm...
Over that you will never leap!
But he left open the path of longing! (246)

I agree with Ganz's idea when he states: "Brand is the starting point of self fulfillment where the self may live out its dreams unimpeded based on the dreams of reshaping or finding this world and realizing the self within its sheltering borders" (19).

The images of stasis in Ibsen's plays emphasize the characters' inwardness and the inactive approach of the quest. The inclination of the characters to the inactive world of imagination appears in their obsessive desire for art and reading books in *The Wild Duck*. Hedvig is preoccupied with reading the books despite

her weak sight. Hedvig is fascinated by the old book of engravings and the History of London with engravings of death and an hourglass. She resists the idea of time passing. She points out that the clock isn't going any longer and Gregers replies that "So time has ceased to exist in there, beside the wild duck" (35). Knowing that in this play the wild duck habitually delves deeply down into the water, the timelessness creates a kind of infinity which the absolute detachment from the phenomenal world offers. Although Durbach considers this kind of obsession negatively as a sign of "deterioration and decay" (24), the transformation of Ibsen's characters from the outward world to inwardness and stasis is a flight from the time which gives them a sense of self-protection and spiritual peace.

The desire to remain in the imaginative world emanates from the characters' fear of the outside world even in Ibsen's most realistic plays. As Durbach also reflects, Ibsen's characters search for their wished-for fully realized self in the imaginative world they create: "The desire for spiritual transformation, for resurrection from the sleep of death into a state of Edenic perfection, finds expression in nearly all of Ibsen's plays. A paradise regained through the artifacts of the artistic imagination" (15). He adds that "the essential self can discover its analogue in the epiphany of natural supernaturalism" (16). The idea of Edenic perfection which conveys the hero's preoccupation with a greater self outside the limitations of the phenomenal self is once more visible in Brand's notion of his authentic self as a "paradiser". The character dreams of the primal perfect self lost after being expelled from paradise. This kind of manifestation indicates the deep nostalgia of the character for the absolute. Croce describes such a mental

obsession in Ibsen's heroes and says they are "all absorbed in anxious longing for the felicity to be attained by attaining to the sublime and the extraordinary" (334).

Fantasy as a strategy for self-realization, is referred to in *Brand* as "life's illusion" or "livsogneen" which means "life-lie", focusing on a kind of life which is not based on reality but on imagination. In *Hedda Gabler*, Hedda considers the real world to be a danger: "I realized the danger; you wanted to spoil our intimacy, to drag it down to reality. You talk of my boldness, my candor, why did you try to abuse them?"(239) In *Lady from the Sea*, Ellida takes refuge in the idealizing agent of the sea to protect herself from the destructive force of the real world: "... Afraid of the stranger...Yea, afraid. The sort of fear that only the sea can give you..." (53). She indicates that the calmness and isolation of the sea make her be afraid of the outward world. It is only the sea that gives her such recognition. She emphasizes her imaginative obsession when talking to Wagnel: "But my mind, my thoughts, my dreams and longings, those you cannot imprison" (103). She confesses the rapturous seizure of her imagination this way: "My dear Judge, I really don't know. I suddenly get impulses like that and I simply can't control them. I don't know how to explain it myself" (377). In *The Master Builder*, Hilda also likens herself to a bird of prey whose expression of happiness is spontaneous. Wagnel refers to Ellida's obsession with imagination when he calls it "sick imaginings" (105). He also believes that this kind of preoccupation emanates from her desire for self-liberation: "You think and feel in pictures and visual images...all that was nothing but an expression of your longing for freedom."(105).

The constructive role of imagination is referred to by Ibsen's characters either implicitly or explicitly. In *The Master Builder* Solness asks Hilda if she

usually dreams at night and Hilda replies that “it’s so delicious to lie and dream, almost always” (91). Solness’s castle in the air beautifully reflects the manifestation of his desire to transcend his phenomenal self via his creative imagination. In *The Wild Duck* Relling considers imagination as a way of treating Hjalmar. He says that “I see to it that his life-lie is kept going” considering that as a stimulating principle (63). The positive role of rapture in attaining self-liberation is asserted in *Hedda Gabler*. The insistence on drinking alcohol shows Lovborg’s desire for ecstatic forgetfulness: “Therefore, imagine yourself away from it through drink” (490). Hedda’s world of ecstasy is demonstrated in her devilish dance on the piano and the idea of the vine leaves she introduces to Lovborg. She describes the leaves as having a liberating power changing Lovborg to a free man: “...with vine leaves in his hair, flushed and fearless!” “And then, you see, he will have regained confidence in himself. He’ll be a free man forever and ever” (395). Immediately, she refers to the transforming power of such a visionary strength: “For once in my life I want the power to shape a human destiny” (395).

Such intoxication leads the character to approximate the wished-for self realization. It is a prerequisite for entering the mystical world of revelation. The image of the vine leaves is remarkably reminiscent of Dionysian rapturous self-forgetfulness which leads to self liberation. This kind of preparation which leads to revelation is implied in Ibsen’s *Emperor and Galilean* when Maximus invites Julian to drink sparkling wine and witness a Promethean-like self-revolution:

MAXIMUS. Roses in the hair! Sparkling wine!

Look, Look at the beautiful play of limbs

A glint of the fire Prometheus stole. (255)

Nora's wild dancing of the Tarantella in *A Doll's House* is also reminiscent of such an attempt towards freedom. Nora tries to free herself from realistic, middle-class concerns attaching herself to the world she creates in her imagination. It is manifest in her Romantic relation with Dr. Rank, her Tarantella's dress, and playing the tambourine. The way she lets her hair loose and wears a black shawl as the continuation of the exotic tarantella scene in the third scene are metaphoric images of Nora's struggles to capture spiritual release. The fact that Nora the child-wife wishes for something miraculous reflects Durbach's idea about "Hafmannsthal" or "out there" which refers to the aspiration for liberating the self from the phenomenal world. It is a longing for "imprevu" which means "nothing but the dream longings, for some undreamed – of fairy tale element in life" (16). Nora's playfulness seen in her 'hide and seek' game and snow playing also reveals her fanciful way of escaping from the false self. Helmer, as he confesses himself, likes to drown himself in the fanciful imaginations of Nora. His desire is seen when he buys the Capri fisher girl's costume or when he asks Nora to dance in public. According to Nietzsche, the degree of success with which the individuals obtain the free self depends on humanity's attempt to be of the same nature as the source of freedom. He thus argues, "The votary of Dionysus could not be understood except by his own kind" (11). More than other Ibsen's characters, Hedda and Nora are involved in such Dionysian ecstatic actions in their attempt to liberate their authentic self.

Madness is the culmination of these self-forgetful characters who "close themselves up in the cask of the self" and meet a true sense of self-realization: "It is here that men are themselves completely/ Themselves and nothing else" (*Peer Gynt* 104). In *The Master Builder* Solness insists that he is mad. In *When we Dead*

Awaken, Irene is considered to be mad. In *The Wild Duck* Hjordis' desire is also fulfilled only in the mood of madness. Ellida's mother in *The Lady from the Sea* goes mad and lives in an asylum. Lyons even relates madness to self-recognition when he describes the madmen's scene in *Peer Gynt*: "Each of the madmen he sees is fixed upon some illusory identity which is the denial of the limitations of his real nature or position" (40).

Along with the symbolic manifestations of imaginative approach of the quest within the texts of Ibsen's plays, the unreal, weird atmosphere of the plays is also reflected in dramatic performances. Imagination and inaction construct the foundation of performance in Ibsen's plays. The first performance of *Peer Gynt* at Komissarzhevskaya's Dramatic Theatre directed by Meyerhold in Russia in 1906 reflected a special "relief stage by reducing acting area to a broad shallow strip" (Braun 117). The director increased soothing colors like light blue and gold and limited the characters' action to reveal the imaginative atmosphere of the play.

The imaginative freedom that is first suggested by Ibsen in *Peer Gynt*, is beautifully manifest in Peter Stein's open-stage production of the play at Schaubuhne am Halleschen Ufer, West Berlin 1971. Marker asserts that Stein obviously reflects the play's fantastic, fairy-tale elements associated with nineteenth-century theatre by using a hilly panorama with a white cloth to cover this landscape, a splendid expanse of canvas sea, and a Sphinx rising up from the stage floor (119). In the Royal Shakespeare Company's chamber-theatre production of *Peer Gynt* in 1982-3, the imaginative, fantasy-stricken world of Ibsen's plays is once more reflected in the way Peer acquires a tail in the palace of the Troll King (act II) clearly revealing the imaginative blending of Ibsen's Romantic and realistic plays.

The murky gray scene with partial lightings and half-lighted spots convey the weirdly unreal nature of *Ghost* in Munch and Gordon Craig's performance in 1906. The play "crystallizes a place which harmonizes with the thoughts of the poet and forms a new theatre in which Ibsen rejects the photographic replica of reality and goes towards imagination and symbolism"(Marker 121). He adds that "understated acting has become the approved method for steering a safe course, and it is in pursuit of this goal that experiments in non-realistic staging that have been undertaken" (121). Marker even mentions: "For the Alan Bridges revival at the Aldwych in 1967 Jocelyn Herbert provided a relentlessly gray monochrome design based on nineteenth-century motifs and surrounded by large panes of rain-wet window, that was intended to match and facilitate the muted tones and restrained, unhistrionic reactions of the performance"(121). Along with the reformation set by Munch and Craig demonstrating the spirit of imagination in Ibsen's dramas in performance, Bergman's *John Gabriel Borkman*, performed at the Residenztheater in 1985 for the first time, manifests the spirit of inaction in performing Ibsen's plays. Bergman demonstrates the general immobility of the characters. "They sit there in the chairs-they stand there unmoving-they are rooted to the spot. Everything remains only half an attempt at contact..." (Marker 216). What Marker finally concludes then is the reformation which Reinhardt's *Ghosts*, Craig's *Rosmersholm* and Meyerhold's *Hedda Gabler* bring to the world of Ibsen's performance which was generally meant to reveal the true nature of Ibsen's plays that deal with the inner spirit.

Imagination and inwardness still continue to be the underlying pattern of the quest for self-realization in Chekhov's plays. Lucas calls the dominant stillness of Chekhov's characters "Mute melancholy" and considers it as a shelter

they take refuge in as a positive mystical movement (114). Such a mute melancholy is praised by Masha in *The Three Sisters* as it offers her a complete self-forgetfulness represented in her analogy of Gogol's madman: "My darlings, I confessed to you, now I'll be silent ...like Gogol's madman...silence...silence..." (157). The stillness seems to be a paradoxical means to create sound. It is as if an imperceptible transcendence emerges through stillness.

The stillness shatters the characters' phenomenal self through taking them away from the false social self. This kind of stillness which impresses the inwardness of the characters is the Romantic principle that activates the characters' imagination and enables them to create the authentic self they have lost. Indeed, the Romantic principle of imagination is the basic approach of the quest for self-realization in both Ibsen's and Chekhov's plays. Quietness is overtly praised in *The Seagull*. Dorn says: "The angel of silence is flying over us" (419). Nina, who can be claimed as the model character of Chekhov's imaginative world, demonstrates the quiet world of Chekhov's plays: "I am alone. Once in a hundred years I open my lips to speak" (417). The Romantic world of *The Three Sisters*, in a similar vein, is covered with all sorts of quietness as a strategy to withdraw from the false phenomenal self which the social involvement produces. The characters feel a fuller self-realization when they are not with other people. In *The Three Sisters* Solyony confides that whenever he is alone with someone, he feels all right, but when he is in a group he feels depressed. Different instances of silence act as the dominant Romantic approach in Chekhov's plays. Gilman names such instances as questions that won't be answered, short-cut conversations, news met with silence, and speeches that are ignored (43).

Closely related to the Romantic stillness, a complete inwardness leads Chekhov's characters to an inactive approach in the way of the quest for self-realization. Indeed, this kind of inaction reflects the characters' ambiguity about the practicality of action in the phenomenal world. Such a "specific vision of ambiguity" suggests Hamlet's influence on Chekhov's characters (Rosenberg 103). "The romantic interiority with the incapability of action" is then, as Sokolyansky observes, the specific feature named "Russian Hamletism" describing the special modern phenomenon (103). This kind of inwardness which produces a Romantic inaction reveals the characters' severe rejection of the outward world in the way of the quest for self-realization revealing the "desperate grasping for selfhood", as Escolme remarks (52).

The main recurring motifs of Chekhov's masterpieces are determinism and giving up the life of practicality ironically to live. In order to gain the stasis and peace of the infinite whole, Chekhov's specific approach is to suspend the phenomenal world which, as Lyons asserts, needs suspension of action (32). *The Three Sisters* manifests a complete inactive life where the characters only dream to go to Moscow, giving up any practical approach towards their goal. These characters are happily submissive to inaction. Irina says: "...That's my lot. There's nothing to be done. All is God's will, that's the truth" (208). The ending scene of the play emphasizes the passive, waiting approach of these tragic characters: "We shall live and we shall see" (212). The passionate longing for rest is also manifest in what Sonia says in *Uncle Vania*: "We shall hear the angels, we shall see all the heavens covered with stars like diamonds, [...] all our sufferings swept away [...] We shall rest... [...] We shall rest [...] We shall rest" (244-45).

John Burrell's *Uncle Vanya*, directed at the New Theatre in 1945, presented an exaggerated mode of inaction demonstrated in a slow-motion performance which can be considered as the most effective demonstration of Chekhov's earth-bound passive characters dreaming of the heavens (Braun 100). Such passive inwardness is also manifest in Stanislavsky's first performance of *The Seagull* in the Art Theatre when, as Braun asserts, he could make little of it because of the lack of physical, visible action. Another exaggerated example of Chekhov's inward inaction occurs in 1973 in Adolf Shapiro's performance where he provides no garden and the characters cannot move in nature. In a unique scene, a big rubber ball Andrey is chasing is bounced off the wall but does not roll away (103). The newly inactive, imaginative approach of Chekhov's plays is visible in Stanislavsky's performing *The Three Sisters* at the Moscow Art Theatre in 1901. He sees the spirit of inaction in the play and tries to reveal it. The style as Senelick reports was "intentionally musical." He quotes Gorky's description of the performance as "music not acting" (62). Elsewhere, he asserts that "Chekhov was a creator of passive and impotent heroes" (107).

The Cherry Orchard portrays the end of a practical life style which has been already lost (the lost recipe for jam) to live. The sheer inclination of the characters towards complete inaction and inwardness is seen in Giorgio's Strehler's performance of the play at Piccolo Teatro di Milano (1974) where the spirit of passivity is illustrated through a complete whiteness of the stage and the characters' dresses which make them transpicuous as shadows (Styan75). Therefore, the only approach lies in giving up, departing or fleeing, dreaming and postponing a better life. Melchinger considers the secret of such passivity this way: "...to allow occasions of the freedom are to contribute to a feeling of relative

motionless” (152). He continues to bring Chekhov’s own consideration when he counterbalances “blessed idleness” to “pragmatic toil” and quotes Chekhov’s belief when he says: “Life does not agree with philosophy, there is no happiness without idleness and only the useless is pleasurable” (30). Finally, he evaluates Chekhov’s idea and states that work neither “transfigures” or “transforms” or most importantly it does not help any release of the soul. He says: “It doesn’t ennoble or redeem” (180).

In addition to the transcending function of stillness, Chekhov’s characters also cling to romantic yearnings, dream stimulation and imaginary journeys which also act as “the shape of action” in the plays (Magarschack 39). Chekhov’s dramatic characters switch to an imaginative world in order to get rid of the false social self. In such a world, they strip the self from the phenomenal world and visualize the self they wish for. The relationship between the wild natural sceneries and the motif of self-liberation is reflected in Chekhov’s excessive use of natural scenes in his plays which in Melchinger’s word symbolize “despoliation” (7). He notes the emphatic presence of trees in *The Three Sisters*, seeing “beautiful fir trees” as signs of the permanency of life in their recycling birth and death (7). Such natural sceneries strip the characters of every belonging and cause a self-rebirth. This stripping causes the characters to fight against their destruction even as they yearn to be laid open, as Astrov does in *The Cherry Orchard*. The idea implies the annihilation of the false social self and the spiritual freedom from the worldly objects which link the characters to the infinite world in the same way Dionysian imaginative self-forgetfulness separates the individual from phenomenal self.

Romantic scenery practically fills the void that is the result of a spiritual absence. Esslin proposes that the reason for the humans' fragmented selves is the "crucial absence" or the disappearance of spirituality (qtd. in Gerland). By delving deep into such a Romantic world, the characters feel self-integration. Natural sceneries' function is akin to Lacan's 'mirror stage' by constructing a sense of wholeness in the individuals and replacing fragmentation through objects, scenes and images. Lacan believes that the image of wholeness is perceived as being placed outside the subject (qtd. in Schleifer 886). Referring to Lacan's theory, Schleifer explains that the objects reflect the desire of individuals, but the dissolution of the self in the scenes, images and objects acts as the discovery of ultimate salvation. He adds that according to Lacan, objects, imageries, visionary scenes and even dialogues equal continuity, and the impersonality of salvation. After meditating on these, the individual self is thus transformed (887).

The idea can be obviously seen in Nina's identification with a seagull or Solovyov's mystical dissolution in the lake, manifest in addressing his poem to it in *The Seagull*. The image of the lake, as Reid observes, symbolizes "the feminine spirit of the world soul" (611) which suggests the characters' aspiration for a new birth. According to Lyons, such images are forms of imagination and the inner will for "free movement within an unlimited space" of infinity, a "desire for a sense of the self as unique, integral and whole being, and an unspecific part of some larger, undetermined whole" (23).

In *The Three Sisters*, Trigorin praises natural wildness and the motif of "virgin forests" is repeatedly referred to by the characters. The play bases its setting on wild nature: "A long alley of fir trees, at the end of which a river is seen, on the other side of the river, a wood" (203). The powerful influence of such

Romantic scenes in Chekhov's plays creates a deep impression which leads to spiritual peace of the characters like "continual movements of intuition guided by fertile silences" (Catterall 12). The example of this kind of peace which implies the character's sense of self-integration is seen in *Uncle Vanya* when Telyegin explicitly shows how nature gives him his authentic self:

TELYEGIN. Do you know, Marina Timofeyevna,
whether I'm driving through the fields, or
strolling in a shady garden, or just looking at
this table, I can't explain how blissfully happy I
feel! The weather's enchanting, the birds are
singing, and we're all living together in peace
and harmony, what more can we ask for? I'm
exceedingly obliged to you. (107)

Romantic experiences such as love, music, poetry and reading fiction also help the characters forget their phenomenal-self. They act as Dionysian agents of self-dissolution. *The Seagull* demonstrates various kinds of such Romantic experiences. Trigorin's considers love as a healing power: "the only thing that can bring happiness on this earth" (161). When Pauline and Dorn exchange their ideas for the first time, the doctor dismisses his flirtatious eagerness for Arkadina's company as "the pursuit of the ideal" (I. 416). Reid believes that "the motives for love are not spiritual, or mystical, but human" obviously hindering these characters from reaching a spiritual exaltation (612). However, I believe as far as the characters, through love, strip the self from the false phenomenal self, such an experience has a transcending power. Similarly, music plays an important role in dissolving the false self of the characters. The ending scene of *The Three Sisters*

reveals the self-forgetful, Dionysian power of music which Olga's peaceful mood demonstrates. The Dionysian spirit of music is introduced from the beginning of the play. Dancing offers a similar Dionysian rapture which helps the characters suspend their phenomenal self through transitory forgetting. In *The Cherry Orchard*, immediately as the characters hear the voice of music from the anteroom, they dance all together, escaping from the reality of the outward world. In Kohut's idea of "idealizing transference", the characters' self-dissolution in the idealized objects can create a whole self through sacrificing the false self to the "ideal other." (qtd. in Gerland 11).

The visionary world of dream constantly gives Chekhov's characters the opportunity to visualize the self they long for. Throughout Chekhov's four major plays, the visionary world is the reflection of the characters' wished-for higher self. According to Lucas "the evocation of a visionary realm in which the longing of the self may be satisfied occurs in all four of the plays, it is through symbols" (37). *The Three Sisters* is based on the ennobling power of the dream where the characters dream. The dream of going to Moscow acts as a transcending agent which helps the three sisters envision a greater self. Irene puts it as: "... Oh my Lord God, I dream of Moscow every night, I am like someone completely possessed...." (170).

The hope of going to Moscow thus plays to be "the evocation of a visionary realm in which the longing of the self may be satisfied" (Lucas 37). In this play, Andrei is also obsessed with the dream of going to Moscow and being a university professor which symbolizes the self he thinks he deserves. Chekhov's characters fall into the category of preserving the dream of the ideal and a self worthy of it. (Ganz 29) Such a search for self-satisfaction also emerges when

Masha explicitly refers to finding “true love” in Moscow: “I kept waiting for us to move to Moscow. I knew I’d meet my true love there” (176). Chekhov’s characters rely on the world of imagination and passively remain in it. Vershinin only dreams about the future: “What about? Let’s dream...for the life that will come after us in two or one hundred years” (171). In *The Cherry Orchard*, Trofimov passively dreams about a prosperous future: “And my soul was always, every minute, day and night, full of inexplicable forebodings. I have a foreboding of happiness, Anya. I see glimpses of it already” (729). Pitcher restates Chekhov’s idea about the practicality of dream in opening a window to the supernatural world where the characters can give authenticity to their inauthentic, worldly selves: “Their heart aches for things they don’t see with the naked eye” (112).

Acting as self-dissolving agents, dream, imagination, and fantasy paradoxically recreate the identity which the characters feel satisfied with. “To be oneself is to slay oneself” (*Peer Gynt* 411) thus conveys the paradoxical spirit of the quest both in Ibsen’s and Chekhov’s characters. The voluntaristic activities of Ibsen’s and Chekhov’s characters in imaginative image-making is reminiscent of Alison Thorn’s argument about the theory of dissolution based on Antony’s creating intelligible forms into clouds in *Antony and Cleopatra*. She argues that “In *Antony and Cleopatra*, dissolution [is] a necessary precondition of, and prelude to recreation. Identities are dislimned (erased [...]) only to be recast into a new, more perfect or more fantastic forms” (qtd. in Jan 45). Although Sara Jan specifically ascribes this method to Ibsen’s *Peer Gynt* where the hero’s figures constantly fade “...back/further and further away! [...] everything fades away to blue in the clefts’ (93-4), the recurrent visualizations of Ibsen’s other characters

along with those of Chekhov are the manifestations of the self which is dissolved to be created in another shape.

The paradoxical motif of self-dissolution and self-creation appears as a mystical idea manifest in *Emperor and Galilean* focusing on “that which is, is not, and that which is not, is” (269). Reflecting this mystical notion, Ibsen’s and Chekhov’s weak or injured characters are good examples of the paradoxical relationship between feeble physicality and strong inwardness emphasizing the role of imagination in the way of the quest for self-realization. The earliest manifestation of this motif is first revealed in Ibsen’s dramatic poems where the spiritual melancholy of Brand and Peer’s moment of epiphany symbolize the necessity of self-mutilation.

The majority of the characters both in Ibsen’s and Chekhov’s plays like *The Master Builder*, *Rosmersholm*, *The Wild Duck*, *A Doll’s House*, *The Lady from the Sea*, *The Sea Gull*, and *The Cherry Orchard* are weak, fragile, injured or wounded physically or mentally. It is visible in obvious physical maladies present in cases like Dr. Rank, or Torvald, the blindness of Solveig or Hedvig, physical weakness of the three sisters and the fragility of Ranevskaya the owner of the cherry orchard, and Nina, suggesting the absorption of the phenomenal self.

The paradoxical relationship between the dissolution of the phenomenal-self and the realization of the authentic-self still demonstrates a more severe degree of self-extinction in Ibsen’s late plays. The inclination towards the complete annihilation of the ego through a voluntary death demonstrates the characters’ aspiration for complete self-liberation. In Ibsen’s *Rosmersholm* when Rebecca implies that attaining the authentic self comes about through complete fusion of love with Rosmer, she gladly sacrifices herself to her love and dissolves

her ego through a Dionysian joyful death. Rebecca has completely departed from her sexual drives and then in her final submission, refashions her new identity in committing suicide gladly and wholeheartedly. Feeling guilty about the loss of his pure innocence which symbolizes the authentic self, Alfred in Ibsen's *Little Eyolf* longs for the quietness and seclusion of death in mountain peaks. The desire to meet peace and self-perfection is also symbolically referred to when the Rat Wife explains the desire of the rats for the peace of death as she encourages them to go to the fjord.

Similarly, in *When We Dead Awaken* the symbolic image of the tunnel that Irene and Rubeck pass through and are faded into a complete darkness foreshadows death. Rubeck refers to the process of self-ascent by passing through the destructive mists of the tunnel "And then..." as Irene continues "up to the top of our tower" (287). The suggestion of the complete dissolution manifest in the example of the tunnel of mist reveals the continual attempt of the characters for self-release following the self-forgetful strategies of madness, fantasy, and dream which could temporarily suspend the phenomenal-self.

Such a splitting of the self from the phenomenal world offers a complete protection from the allure of the false-self and offers a temporary spiritual relief. Unlike the Renaissance over-involvement of the characters in the practicality of the phenomenal world, the characters' withdrawal from mundane action in Ibsen's and Chekhov's plays prevents them from the catastrophic fall to the abyss of degradation. If the heroes' finally die or commit suicide, it is their Dionysian voluntary decision towards the complete self-liberation. The ecstatic eagerness of these final moments differentiates them from the regretful unexpected death of Renaissance tragic heroes. The only remaining sense of tragedy is that the

characters cannot attain the fully realized self in the real world. They die hoping to witness spiritual transcendence. Although the characters feel self-liberated through the Dionysian spirit of self-forgetfulness offered by such a transitory transcendence, they are still anxious about “the inability to solve the paradox of the phenomenal self and the self they try to capture by the help of the visionary world” (Lyons 7). However, compared to the unexpected tragic fall of Renaissance characters’ pragmatic quest, the visionary suspension of the self is relatively successful in liberating the self from the bondages of the false phenomenal self.

The self-forgetful approach of Chekhov’s and Ibsen’s plays serves as a prelude to the imaginative atmosphere of the Theatre of the Absurd where the quiet, barren scenes symbolize the complete negation of the phenomenal self of the characters. Similar to the imagination-laden scenes of Ibsen’s and Chekhov’s plays, the symbolic settings of the absurd plays aim to convey the attempts of the characters to detach themselves from the falsity of the real world. Indeed, the attic of Ibsen’s *The Wild Duck* is comparable to the refuge of Hamm and Clov in Beckett’s *Endgame*. Nora’s doll’s house is also compatible with the sandhill of *Happy Days*.

In such cases, the characters are deeply inarticulate and flat, reflecting Pinter’s modern sophistication as the workings of the mind. Lyons compares Ibsen to Beckett from the perspective of the only category of the form in their tragedies that is imagination (172). Ibsen provides a legacy for James Joyce, Beckett, and Pinter in using a special speech that is imagination manifest in the specific kind of symbolic settings (Williams 298). The high towers, the castle in the air, the churches, the wild duck, the sea gull, the orchard, and journey to

Moscow are the dreamlike projections of the characters' inward aspiration for a fuller realization of the self in Ibsen's and Chekhov's plays. As Esslin also observes, Ibsen's *Brand* and *Peer Gynt* "propelled Ibsen away from realism with the dream-like elements, highly reminiscent of the introspective fantasy world of the Absurdists", that "again and again the action shifts from the external world into the protagonists' dreams of fantasies...; they are dreamlike projections of the characters' inner visions" (81-2).

Chapter 5

The Notion of the Quest for Self-realization in Twentieth-Century Thought

Following the modern Spiritualist movement blooming in the nineteenth century, the new model of struggle for self-realization inclines more toward spiritual quest through connecting the ego to the unconscious world, in line with the theories of Freud and Jung. This new movement, according to Webb, reveals “a revival of traditional occultism,” focusing on the flight from the world of consciousness and direct access to human inwardness (15). Myers suggests that this occultist tendency takes on a myth-making function that focuses on the idea of the “subliminal self” (39) and gives rise to the increasing separation of the conscious ego from the individual’s world of unconscious in the twentieth century. In a similar vein, Heidegger’s notion of “Dasein,” and Jung’s idea of the “Self” exhibit the quasi-mystic aspect of such a spiritual model in the new era.

The idea of the quest for a whole self is once more rekindled in the anxiety-laden atmosphere of the twentieth century. As one of the most influential figures of the century anticipating the rise of existentialism, Heidegger clearly reveals the relationship between the anxiety of human beings and their aspiration for the authentic self. Heidegger’s specific type of Being (*Dasein*) which literally means ‘Being-there’ calls attention to the fact that without experiencing an existential loss, there is no authenticity of being. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger postulates, we have a ‘Being-in-the-world’ *Dasein* which can exist in two modes, inauthentic and authentic (117). According to Heidegger, this ‘Being-in’ is an existing state for the authentic Being since the anxiety and the fear which exist in the world lead the individuals to experience all the elements of the inauthentic existence urging them to ask for authenticity.

Very close to Heidegger’s idea, Steiner clarifies the relationship between anxiety and the emergence of authentic being. He remarks that anxiety is:

that which makes problematic, which makes worthy of our questioning our Being-in-the-world. Angst is one of the primary instruments through which the ontic character and context of everyday existence is made inescapably aware of, is rendered naked to, the pressure of the ontological. And, further, Angst is the mark of authenticity, of the repudiation of the 'theyness'. (78)

Considering the antithesis of possessing authentic and inauthentic Dasein as 'oneness' and 'theyness', Heidegger hypothesizes that the state of 'falling-away' or "a cadence into decline" (*Verfall*) is a positive state where the individual feels the necessity to ascend to the authentic Being:

Dasein has, in the first instance, fallen away [abgefallen] from itself as an authentic potentiality for Being in its self, and has fallen into the world. 'Fallenness' into the world means an absorption in being with-one-another, in so far as the latter is guided by idle talk, curiosity, and ambiguity. Through the interpretation of falling, what we have called the inauthenticity of Dasein may not be defined more precisely. On no account, however, do the terms 'inauthentic' and 'non-authentic' signify 'really not', as if in this mode of Being, Dasein were altogether to lose its Being. 'Inauthenticity' does not mean anything like Being-in-the-world, the kind

which is completely fascinated by the world and by the Dasein-with of Others in the 'they'. Not being-its-self functions as a positive possibility of that entity which, in its essential concern, is absorbed in the world. This kind of not-Being has to be conceived as that kind of Being which is closest to Dasein and in which Dasein maintains itself for the most part. (182)

Based on this notion, according to Heidegger, human beings' fallenness into the mundane existence is a positive state which makes them aware of their inauthentic self urging them to strive for an authentic Being. He adds that in order to give rise to a sense of the uncanny and emptiness which is the prerequisite for the recognition of the self-loss, humans must keep such a frenetic state under control by habitual everydayness, and talk. Thus the anxiety of this bitter recognition must be preserved by the sense of presentness in this fallen condition. Heidegger explains such a strategy this way:

When Dasein understands uncanniness in everyday manner, it does so by turning away from it in falling; in this turning away, the 'not at home' gets 'dimmed down'. Yet the everydayness of this fleeting shows phenomenally that anxiety, as a basic state of mind, belongs to Dasein's essential state of Being-in-the-world, which, as one that is existential, is never present-at-hand but is itself always in a mode of

factual Being-there-that is, in the mode of a state of mind. (198)

Heidegger believes that to meet a complete self-fulfilment, anxiety forces the human beings towards the freedom that death suggests. Such an opportunity changes anxiety to a feeling of certainty which foreshadows final attainment of the authentic self. Heidegger finally states:

Death is a possibility-of-Being which Dasein itself has to take over in every case. With death, Dasein stands before itself in its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. This is a possibility in which the issue is nothing less than Dasein's Being-in-the-world. Its death is the possibility of no-longer being-able-to-be-there. If Dasein stands before itself as this possibility, it has been fully assigned to its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. When it stands before itself in this way, all its relations to any other Dasein have been undone. This ownmost non-relational possibility is at the same time the uttermost one. (219)

The self-releasing nature of the phenomenal falling, the forlornness, anguish and despair of humanity which twentieth-century existentialism advocates, can be also positively interpreted under the light of Heidegger's Dasein's Being-in-the-world. In this way, Heidegger's paradoxical notion of emptiness and fullness is reminiscent of Nietzsche's paradox of self-forgetfulness and self-liberation in the nineteenth century. This kind of negative affirmation which is both manifest in Dionysian self-suspension and Heideggerian severe self-

reduction and non-relation echoes the negative teachings of apophatic theology and mysticism. In a similar way that tragic self-destruction is blissfully endured by the Dionysian individuals, the idea of death offers freedom from the uncertainty and anxiety of the inauthentic being in Heidegger's idea. However, while Dionysian self-suspension is accomplished through merging of the individuals' ego with the elements of nature as the source of meaning, the transformation of inauthentic Dasein to authentic Being is accomplished through the ego's own state of loss which mystically turns to transcendence. In Heideggerian theory then, self-transcendence takes place through dissolution of the ego by putting itself in the process of gradual loss, while Dionysian transcendence occurs through the chaotic transmutation of the ego to nature.

While the twentieth-century definition of the Self provided by Jung reflects Nietzsche's idea of the 'Übermensch' and the quest for wholeness, Jung's approach inclines more towards the spiritual side of dissolution, focusing on the transmutation of the ego to the world of unconscious. His notion of the Self represents a sustained attempt to elevate the human being, an idea he inherited from the previous century. As discussed earlier, Nietzsche's 'Übermensch' emphatically focuses on the Dionysian notion of the whole self. In Nietzsche's project, individuals are supposed to achieve the whole self through uniting with nature so as to be redeemed and saved from the moral doctrines of the time which repress their instincts. The Dionysian individuals thus promote the "natural body" as Nietzsche remarks in the prologue of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1).

Nietzsche's naturalized individuals who try to attain a higher self through taking shelter into nature, intoxication, madness, art, love, literature, and blissful endurance of suffering, reflects Nietzsche's idea of the unification of body and

spirit, joy and sorrow, creation and destruction. Dionysian individuals, then, are those who are reunited with the essence of humanity and whatever is passionate, irrational, and chaotic in themselves. They blissfully and tragically demolish the ego to restore themselves to the humanizing spirit of nature and “experience an ascent-up” into a high and free naturalized self (*The Will to Power* 120).

Jung’s “Individuation” is the term he applies to describe the individuals’ instinctive search for a whole self in the twentieth century. His image of the whole self as “Mandala”, “ring” or “circle” shows his extensive adaptation of Nietzsche’s Dionysian Eternal Recurrence representing the idea of the whole self (Nietzsche’s Zarathustra I, 191). However, unlike Nietzsche’s vigorous promotion of the “natural body” through passionate unification with natural elements, Jung’s focal point is more spiritual. Since Jung considers God as a unifying guide in the depth of the unconscious, his idea of the ‘Self’ is more internal and immaterial. As Huskinson observes, Jung maintains that Nietzsche’s *Urbmensch* promotes the ‘natural body’ too vigorously, so that it over-identifies with the material and does not adequately support its spiritual opposite, God (96). Jung’s ‘Self’ is the centre and summation of unconscious, correlating more with the metaphysical notion of self awareness symbolized in the idea of *atman*⁶ in the East. Unlike *Urbmensch*’s destructive unification with nature, via escapist rapture, Jung advocates using one’s active imagination as the method by which one can gradually bring the unconscious to the surface without either destroying or inflating the ego in the process of transcendence.

Jung’s idea of active imagination is the development of Freud’s notion about the relationship of dreams with eternal existence. The psychology of

6- The immortal aspect of the mortal existence. It is the very self, the microcosm which imparts to us divine qualities.

thought in the Freudian system which focuses on the topics of feeling, emotion, and memory already reflects the crucial role of the personal unconscious. This way, imagination comes to actualize the abstract, outside world followed by the idea of the role of such an imaginative actualization. Freud brings forth a new method of presentation for human's insight in a different field of human activity.

Very close to the function dream has in manifesting the absolute, fantasy plays its role, according to Rosemary Jackson's Marxist and Freudian view, "In expressing desire, fantasy can operate in two ways, it can tell us or manifest desire or it can expel desire, when this desire is a disturbing element which threatens cultural order and continuity" (17). Tolkien maintains that: "fantasy is a means of setting needs and desires free, confirming the validity of their pursuit and fulfillment, presenting the recovery of fragmented or lost desires and offering consolation" (20). Comparing Nietzsche's Dionysian method of self-realization to that of Jung, I agree with Jackson's idea about the double-edged nature of dream and fantasy. In Nietzsche's Dionysian approach of the quest, fantasy acts as an agent for creating various manifestations of the wished-for self while in Jung's imaginative action it expels any desire and exposes the ego to the spiritual world of the unconscious.

Redefining the notion of the Self, Jung focuses on its ideal potency where the Self is actively able to generate images which it should ideally become. The unconscious is thus a permanent given that is the main transforming agent of the ego. Taking this into account, Jung identifies the Self with the traditional religious representations like the Ultimate or Absolute. In his radical consideration, the Self is indistinguishable from God, Christ, Buddha or Khizr. Jung's reified 'other' within the very depths of the unconscious considers the ego as a distinct entity

from the subjective activity of the individuals. Similar to Hegel's idea of the "spirit" discussed in the *Phenomenology of Mind* where he forestalls the alienation of the ego through appealing it to its other dimension, in Jung's idea of the reified ego, finding one's authentic self demands the alienation of the ego from the Self. In such an intrapsychic affair, personalization of the individuals is an internal process negating the conscious dimension of the ego. This intrapsychic process considers the ego only as an agent which monitors, experiences, and remembers the contents of the dreams in the unconscious world. It is through the journey of the ego which the consciousness is formed and elevated with the treasures brought from the underworld of the unconscious. Here, the Self is also considered as an agent of realizing the ideal which is in need of the stimulus of the ego for self-perfection. Parallel to the intrapsychic pattern of self-realization which is an internal process, there is also an indifference to the world of nature as the source of meaning unlike Nietzsche's emphasis on union with the natural. In Jung's idea of individuation, the source of value is within the unconscious world as an idealizing agent.

The psychic state which is produced as the result of interconnection of the ideal world of the unconscious and the conscious ego is reminiscent of the Sufi mystical world. As Corbin observes, in the *Book of Ophanies*, the great mystic Ibn Arabi describes "the intermediate suprasensory world where the Active Imagination perceives events, figures, presences directly, unaided by the senses" (43). Similar to Jung's intrapsychic affair which is indifferent to the outside world, the process of active imagination is also free from the sensual world in mystical revelation of the self. The mystic thus surrenders the ego in the state of annihilation which gives him the permission to let go of the illusion of

separateness and to perceive the unity underlying all life (Halligan 278). According to Halligan “what Jung might call the Collective Unconscious, is essentially the realm of the Active Imagination of [the Sufi] Ibn Arabi” (277).

The imaginal world in both mystic and Jungian models links the opposite world of matter with spirit through the annihilating space that the vision creates. As Jung interprets the entrance of the individuals into the meaningful world of the unconscious as a journey, Ibn Arabi’s *Journey to the Lord of Power* basically concerns the travel of the human beings to the world of vision (qtd. in Halligan 277). He also describes the state of the intuitive individuals as: “the intuitive person sees in his waking state what the sleeper sees in the state of sleep and the deceased after death” (278). The recurrent mystical motif of the union of opposites which leads the mystics to the manifestation of the ultimate truth is reminiscent of Jung’s psychic experience. Ibn Arabi’s idea of *Sophia aeterna* which demonstrates the union of the male mystic with God as his beloved is reflected in the image Anima in Jung’s psychic state. (Halligan 285)

According to the mystical belief of Ibn Arabi, it is in the interface of such a union [“interval”] where the intuitive person reaches a sense of self-fulfilment. Jung similarly approves of such satisfaction by referring to the release of psychic energy in the moment of the union of the opposites. The sense of fulfilment which the intrapsychic affair produces is according to Jung the manifestation of a higher self. Evaluating this transcending moment, Stein says: “In certain altered states of consciousness . . . one finds a subliminal self or subject, an inner figure who is not the ego but shows intentionality and will. The ego can enter into dialogue with this other subpersonality” (98). Jung’s psychic space which takes place in the total surrender of the will throws light upon his mystic aspect of self-realization. In

other words, the surrender or annihilation of the will which occurs in the psychic state, leads to a higher level of realization which Corbin refers to as the moment of presence in mystical experience. Annotating the mystical approach of Ibn Arabi in his active imagination, Corbin writes:

The mode of presence conferred by the imaginative power . . . is by no means an inferior mode or an allusion; it signifies to see directly what cannot be seen by the senses, to be a truthful witness. The spiritual progression from the state of simple believers to the mystic state is accompanied through an increasing capacity for making oneself present to the vision by the imagination . . . progressing from mental vision by tipification . . . by way of dream vision . . . to verification in the station of imagination witnessing vision [which] . . . becomes vision of God by Himself, the heart being the organ, the ‘eye’ by which God sees Himself. (23)

The fact that the mode of presence cannot take place through the senses makes the intuitive person annihilate the ego which prepares the ground for the appearance of unconscious images during the wakefulness. Through annihilating the senses, the individuals cross over the material world and are increasingly surrendered to the world of spirit which is transmuted and concretized in the shape of visions. Therefore, based on what Jung and the mystics believe about annihilating the senses, the phenomenal world is turned to be illusory itself very close to the nature of the unconscious world. In this regard, along with the

twentieth-century idea of the void advocated by Camus' or Sartre's existentialism, the meaningful empty space which is produced following the transmutation of the individuals' consciousness to the spiritual world of the unconscious reveals the quasi-mystic dissolution of the ego towards attaining the whole self.

One of the manifestations of this quasi-mystic, nirvana-like search for the whole self in the twentieth century is the Theatre of the Absurd. What the saintly hermit in the forest replies to Zarathustra demonstrates the culmination of the traditional occultism which focuses on the individual's alienation of the ego through appealing to its other dimension. When Zarathustra asks the old man how he passes his time in his solitude, he replies: "I make up songs and sing them; and when I make up songs I laugh, I weep, and I growl; thus do I praise God" (II. 279). Although Zarathustra declines the hermit's offer, in private, he speaks to himself this way: "Can it be possible! . . ." (II. 279)

Following the spiritual nature of the ideas which focus on the transmutation of the ego to the unconscious world early in the twentieth century, the Absurd Theatre paradoxically reveals symptoms of a quasi-mystic quest for self-realization. While the existentialistic parallels may be informative, the particular richness of the mystical signs in the Absurd plays opens opportunities for positive interpretations. Making songs, singing, laughing, weeping, and growling exemplify the timid effort of the Absurd characters to transmute the ego to the spiritual world of the unconscious through expelling the egoistic desires. The hermit's seclusion in a similar vein suggests the purposeful attempt of the individuals to become unaware of the surrounding world and connect themselves to the spiritual world of the unconscious in search of a dimension of the spirituality.

The radical devaluation of language, reliance on dream, fantasy, and memory, lack of communication, irrelevancy of speech, and addiction to silence are all instruments which take the individuals from the conscious world to the spirituality of the unconscious. Inaction is the keynote to the whole process of transmutation as it cuts off the relation of the individuals from the meaningless void of the surrounding reality. Plunging the characters into the passivity of waiting, Godot is the symbol of illusion and inaction who takes the characters back into the spiritual world of the unconscious in the Absurd Theatre.

Being a Jungian psychologist, Metman also asserts that “Godot’s function seems to be to keep his dependents unconscious” (51). The idea is emphasized in *Godot* when the characters who are about to realize they have been dreaming and must wake up are suddenly faced with the arrival of Godot’s messenger who plunges them again into the world of illusion (60). Throughout the whole play, the characters are journeying from the conscious world of the ego to the spiritual world of the unconscious. The characters’ persistent devotion in a similar vein paralyzes their consciousness which aims to enable the individuals to enter the realm of essential being. In some of the absurd plays, the characters are even demonstrated to start the play at the level of the unconscious. The characters’ paralysis is reminiscent of Heidegger’s idea of the necessity of recognizing the self-loss through keeping a frenetic state of habitual everydayness, and idle talk. Such an ability is reminiscent of what Beckett calls the substitution of the “boredom of being” to the “suffering of being” (*Proust* 8). He implies the attainment of the authentic self through paralyzing the individual’s consciousness: “The suffering of being: that is the free play of every faculty. Because the

pernicious devotion of habit paralyses our attention, drugs those handmaidens of perception whose cooperation is not absolutely essential” (*Proust* 9).

The idea of paralyzing the attention connotes the transmutation of the consciousness to the spiritual world of the unconscious. This kind of transmutation is remarkably manifest in Beckett’s allusion to Bram’s painting. He explicitly refers to the relationship between non-relation and the idea of fruitful univocity when he writes:

If I say that he paints the impossibility of painting,
the deprivation of relation, of object, of subject, I
appear to put him in relation with this impossibility,
with this deprivation, in front of them. He is inside
them, is this the same thing? He is them, rather, and
thy are he. (82)

According to Uhlman, Beckett’s illusion clarifies “the notion of non-relation” which “necessarily involves the bringing to the light of the univocity of Being” (14). He then explains Beckett’s consideration this way: “Once all links are severed paradoxically all runs together becoming indivisible” (14). Uhlman also relates such disjunction to a quasi-religious experience where the body is emptied of all conscious thought and perception. He argues:

The first kind of apprehension (the isolation of a
singular object) opens the way to the second kind of
apprehension (sensation in the absence of all choice)
admitting all possibility and so having done with the
possible, renouncing all possible action for: ‘Our
representation of matter is the measure of our

possible action upon bodies: it results from the discarding of what has no interest for our needs, or more generally, for our functions' (Bergson, 1991:38). The renunciation of this perception, then, involves the abandonment of all possible relation, dissolving one's own identity in merging with all Being. (76)

The influence of the idea of non-relation is manifest in all Beckettian characters and those represented by Pinter. Paralyzing the conscious ego, Pinter's characters reach the climactic point of transformation where they regressively move from the superficial ego to the preliminary stage of selfhood. Begley takes Pinter's *Betrayal* as an example and explains such a psychological movement this way: "This idea is that regression allows a return to early life experiences that connect the divided self to its underlying truth or origin" (132). In this play, the characters' self-paralyzing experience easily separates them from the conscious world and lets them enter the level of the unconscious.

There is remarkably a close affinity between the process of transformation in Pinter's characters and those of Beckett. It is accomplished through similar devices like the showing up of speech represented in the characters' silence and deliberate evasion of communication. Begley's idea about psychological movement through which the divided ego is connected to the underlying origin of all reflects Jung's quasi-mystic idea of transmutation of the ego to the spiritual world of the unconscious.

Uhlman reveals the mystical aspect of such a transmutation when he refers to the merging of the finite with the infinite side of the individuals. His idea of

merging the finite with the infinite is reminiscent of Jung's quasi-mystic notion of individuation transmuting the consciousness to the spiritual unconscious:

In turn, requires a merging again with the plane of immanence, the univocity of Being which is Spinoza's one substance. This occurs through a process of inclusive disjunction whereby the modes are at one and the same time finite or individuated and merging with the infinite substance within which they are no longer individuated, (that is, there is a disjunction through which a mode is individuated, but that disjunction is inclusive so that it remains indistinguishable from the substance from which everything emerges. Alluding to Beckett's phrase in *Malone Dies*, 'everything divides ...into itself', Deleuze states: " The disjunction has become *inclusive*, everything divides, but within itself, and God, who is the ensemble of the possible, intermingles with Nothing, of which each thing is a modification. (13)

The twentieth-century experience of transmutation of the ego to the world of the unconscious expresses the unending tradition of the quest for the authentic self through an inward, inactive approach. The recurrent mingling of dream and reality along with the ceaseless mental argument focusing on inwardness and immobility terminates the idea of futile preoccupation with the false alluring of the outward world and the continuous effort towards expelling any desire. This

recurrence also prevents the catastrophic failure of the questers in the light of a situation that everlastingly repeats itself.

While Nietzsche's Dionysian pattern of the quest passionately asks for chaotic dissolution of the ego through ecstatic merging with the spirit of nature as the source of meaning, the spiritual transmutation of the ego to the world of unconscious demands a persistent inwardness, implying a kind of order or spiritual peace, as Clov represents it in Beckett's *Endgame*: "I love order. It's my dream. A world where all would be silent and still and each thing in its last place, under the last dust" (57). Clov's silent world reflects the completely spiritual or quasi-mystic notion which emphasizes that there is no need to pursue any other alternative. Such stillness signifies the final recognition of the positive nothingness which represents itself in Beckett's favorite quotation: "Nothing is more real than nothing" (*Malone dies* 193).

In other words, the dissolution of the ego in Nietzsche's Dionysian rapture (Bataille 177) ends in a dangerous destruction which despite being blissful only foreshadows self-liberation after death. The imaginative world and fantasy-laden atmosphere of the nineteenth-century Dionysian quest is shattered by the phenomenal reality of the outside world. The suspension of the ego is transitory as the source of meaning is shared between the mind of the questers and nature. On the other hand, the individuation of the twentieth century focuses on the interrelationship between the conscious ego and the buried layers of the self itself as the source of meaning. The quasi-mystic renunciation of the ego through its recurrent transmutation to the world of unconscious promises the hopeful manifestation of self-realization without any dangerous end. The attempt at spiritual transmutation to the unconscious world, which is the dominant spirit of

the twentieth-century idea of the quest for self-realization, demonstrates a meaningful emptiness of nirvana leading to the manifestation of authenticity without the death of the questers. The Theatre of the Absurd is one of the expressions of such a quasi-mystic emptiness conveying the idea of self-nullification and self-realization.

Some might think that the self-nullifying actions of the characters of the Absurd Theatre prevent theatre from harboring any tragic sense. Referring to what Roche believes about the definition of tragedy and the conscious attempts of the absurd dramatic characters to annihilate the ego, we can consider the Theatre of the Absurd to be a continuation in the developmental process of Western tragedy rather than a deviation from it. Defining tragedy based on the notion of the hero's greatness, Roche asserts that "the various forms of greatness, which can be viewed dialectically, allow us to speak of different types of tragedy" (49). He adds that "the initial form we see [is] a tragedy of self-sacrifice. The hero does good knowing that she will suffer for it" (49).

The conscious self-renunciations of the absurd dramatic characters lead them to an ongoing substratum of suffering which can be considered to be a kind of self-sacrifice in the quest for greatness. Although based on the weakness of the modern dramatic characters in coping with the absurd situation, Roche distinguishes between tragedy and the twentieth-century drama of suffering, as the characters try to attain their wished-for higher self; they are still great and not submissive to the circumstance.

The fact that self-annihilation and complete withdrawal from the allures of the outside world are the only possible choices left for the absurd dramatic characters to challenge the finitude of the environment in order to achieve the

wished-for greatness, makes it possible to consider them as great as Oedipus, whose self-imposed blindness at the end of his quest for self-realization led him to an inward insight.

The tentative calmness that the absurd tragic characters feel, either during the moments of suffering or after the whole process of suffering, once more justifies the type of tragedy which the Theatre of the Absurd can suggest. The sense of mild happiness or the internal rejoicing that can be recognized in the absurd characters is reminiscent of Schelling's notion of tragic sacrifice where "precisely at the moment of most sublime suffering the tragic hero enters into the most sublime liberation and most absence of suffering" (qtd. in Roche 52). Here, Schelling's idea well reflects the quasi-mystic nature of the Theatre of the Absurd, where the conscious self-renunciation of the characters are reminiscent of the Sufi's rapturous self-annihilating actions which lead them to attain a higher degree of self-realization. The idea is also applicable to the Jungian reading of the Theatre of the Absurd where the transmutation of the ego makes the individuals enter the spiritual world of the unconscious. The idea also matches a Nietzschean interpretation of the Theatre of the Absurd where tragic suffering is happily welcomed by the Dionysian individuals to make them attain a higher self.

From another view point, based on Scheler's definition of tragedy reflected in "On the tragic," whatever leads to greatness and allows the hero to realize a positive value also engenders suffering (22-29). The idea is reminiscent of Icarus of the Classical mythology whose ascent was supposed to give him a sense of a higher self, but the glue that held his wings led him to suffering and his final fall. Therefore, in this context, the suffering must not necessarily stem from the hero's greatness. It can stem from the attempt towards greatness.

Considering either of these suppositions, whether the absurd dramatic characters are great themselves because of their heroic self-annihilating attempts or their endeavors towards achieving greatness, based on the tradition of the quest for self-realization, the Theatre of the Absurd can be considered as a continuation of the process of development in Western drama. It might be better to consider it as a specific kind of tragedy in twentieth-century plays where the characters take benefit from the only possible option left for them in the meaningless absurd world.

Chapter 6

Annihilating Action:

**The Quest for Self-realization
in the Absurd Theatre of
Beckett and Pinter**

“Old endgame lost of old, play and lose and have done with losing.”
(*Endgame* 51)

Following the transitory suspension of the phenomenal-self in Ibsen's and Chekhov's imaginative world, characters of their plays finally welcome death as a joyful Dionysian self-destruction. From a Nietzschean point of view, such a voluntary death is expected to flourish a new life. However, from another angle, despite its liberating nature, the end result is still tragic as the questers must die to witness the emergence of the authentic self.

While the characters of the European nineteenth-century plays resort to nature, fantasy, dream, intoxication, or madness as a means to create the ideal manifestations of the self, the absurd non-heroes are constantly dissolving the conscious ego through concrete reduction of their physicality and the conscious elimination of their access to the phenomenal world.

The non-heroes of the Theatre of the Absurd recurrently nullify their conscious ego, trying to be transmuted to the spiritual world of the unconscious. Jung's belief about the death of ego which gives birth to the soul can be seen to underlie the self-nullifying efforts made by the characters of the absurd plays. To quote Doll, “in his moving away from Freud's ego theory, Jung refers to humans' “instinct”, “feeling,” “fantasy,” and “sickness” as necessary materials for excavation of the essence of being”(3). While fantasy acted as a means for creating the ideal manifestations of the wished-for self in Ibsen's and Chekhov's plays, a similar kind of active imagination acts as a paralyzing agent eliminating the operation of consciousness in the absurd plays. Non-heroes of the absurd plays reflect clear images of physical paralysis which are reminiscent of Jung's idea of self-imposed sickness. The characters are persistently involved in a self-reducing

struggle which aims to transmute the conscious ego to the spiritual world of the unconscious where “stripped of every possession and preoccupation, the soul contacts its own absoluteness, its Self” (16). Describing soul-mysticism, Webner relates self-renunciation to the manifestation of the whole self (16).

In “God and Beckett”, Coe implicitly refers to Beckett’s particular strategy of reduction, reflecting Jung’s idea of sickness. He states:

... his characters allow themselves to be mutilated, becoming armless, legless, featureless, in an effort to approximate to their quintessential ‘selves;’ they stagger to a standstill, now bed-ridden, now propped up against walls, now stuck in vases like sheaves of flowers, in order to escape from the tyranny of movement and its despotic corollaries: or else they try to die, and dying, strive to detach their ‘selves’ from the unhappy accident of incarnation, hoping thereby to redeem at last the catastrophe of spatial and temporal identity only to discover that their ‘personality’ against all the odd survives. (67)

Although this description relates most clearly to Beckett’s characters in his famous trilogy, a very similar reading can be made of his dramatic characters, especially his three dramatic masterpieces which represent a course of development not only in shape and language, but also in concept. Beckett’s and Pinter’s absurd plays consistently portray embedded philosophical concepts that connect to a positive, mystical view. Existing studies of Beckett’s and Pinter’s absurd plays have failed to fully recognize a unified positive view of how the

tragic characters of such plays try to attain authentic selfhood through self-annihilating actions. Although, there are a few scattered writings on the metaphysical indications of Beckett's or Pinter's plays, no one has offered a unified reading of both as working with positive mystical ideas underpinning a quest for meaningful identity.

Given the thematic and conceptual affinity between the absurd drama of Beckett and Pinter and basic mystical trend of annihilation and rebirth, the present chapter tries to demonstrate a new dimension of the quest for the authentic self in its recurring tradition. The critique focuses selectively on three major plays of Beckett namely *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame*, and *Happy Days*. It also evaluates *The Room*, *The Caretaker*, and *The Birthday Party* as three masterpieces of Pinter's plays. There is also scattered cross reference to minor plays for further evaluation. Through locating a new trajectory of inquiry, the chapter tries to demonstrate that the characters' intentional involvement in a kind of negative and cyclical attempt towards self-realization is positive and fruitful in the light of mystical notion of annihilating action. Following the preceding chapters on Renaissance and the European nineteenth-century plays and their specific matrix of approach towards self-realization and the degree of their success, this part of the study finally proposes that, contrary to its seemingly regressive appearance, the inaction of the absurd non-heroes is actually a mystical, nirvana-like 'annihilating action' directed towards self-realization. As the interminable paralysis of the ego recurrently breaks temporal and spatial bondages through complete ignorance, cyclical movement of everydayness, or habitual talk, it is rarely shattered by the interrupting forces of the outside reality and thus the

achievement of the wished-for spiritual peace is more successful compared to the pragmatic and imaginative strategies of the previous dramatic eras.

The purpose of this chapter is then twofold. First, it indicates that, unlike the commonly held view of the search for the longed-for identity in the absurd plays as nihilistic, it is possible to see them as positively meaningful in their negative, non-active aspect. Second and more important, it demonstrates a line of improvement which is regressively developing from the catastrophic utilitarian approach of Renaissance tragic characters through transitory Dionysian imaginative suspension of the European nineteenth-century plays to the Nirvana-like stasis of the absurd plays. The characters are consciously shrinking away from the outside world to a protective reduced atrophied lessness which is manifest in their unhousedness, broken utterance, and defective physical features. The atrophying attempts of such characters delineate a movement towards the centre, demonstrating the ongoing transmutation of the conscious ego into the spiritual world of the unconscious.

Federman also refers to such a reduction when he evaluates Beckett's plays as "the substitution of ignorance for knowledge, impotence for creativity, lethargy for efficiency, confusion for understanding, illusion for reality" (15). He adds that the characters are invariably crippled in some way, blind, paralyzed or both. Turned to the inevitable catastrophe of the final dissolution of the ego, they perceive a world in which the distinction between living and having lived, between sanity and madness fades into a constant oscillation, a muted universality. It is the interminable process of reduction that leads to final annihilation of the ego.

The idea conveys a struggling attempt toward a new means of the quest for the authentic self which is based on a decisive detachment. Beckett insists on encouraging performances which limit the external physical techniques and work toward inward psychological centres (Kalb 22). Kalb also points that “it is the disempowerment of Beckett’s protagonists, removed from the sphere of active engagement in the world, which guarantees their integrity” (205). McMullan, in a parallel way, evaluates Beckett’s art of directing and states that Beckett’s actors, like Lois Overbeck, describe their experience of being put in a “strait jacket making their bodies and senses cut off” (202).

In the beginning scene of *Waiting for Godot*, Vladimir demonstrates the prelude of a new approach in his resumed struggle: “All my life I’ve tried to put it from me, saying, Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven’t yet tried everything. And I resumed the struggle” (370). Such an inactive way is clearly manifest in the play’s performance as Robbe-Grillet represents it: “Everything happens as if the two tramps were on stage without having a role” (112). In other words, annihilating action is the only action of Beckett’s plays.

This inactive and reductive strategy is prevalent in the bare stage setting of a country road with a naked tree and a setting sun. Parallel with the objective reduction, the play reveals subjective self-diminishment manifest in Estragon’s symbolic attempt to take off his shoes. Vladimir’s response intensifies the importance of such a reduction when he emphasizes that “boots must be taken off every day. I’m tired telling you that. Why don’t you listen to me?” (371). The fact that Vladimir in the same way takes off his hat and peers into it recurrently shows his spiritual discomfort. Given the symbolic role of the hat, which represents thought in Lucky’s case, Vladimir’s discomfort in taking it off and recurrently

peering into it can likewise imply his struggle to get rid of the rational faculty. Vladimir complains about the impropriety of his hat and is doubtful about the suitability of Lucky's hat as well: "Then I can keep it. Mine irked me. (*Pause.*) How shall I say? (*Pause.*) It itched me". (*He takes off Lucky's hat, peers into it, shakes it, knocks on the crown, puts it on again*) (390).

Estragon's problem with his boots suggests the inefficacy of a mobile quest. Beckett's inactive style is manifest from the very beginning in his scenic directions. For instance, evaluating Beckett's plays, Cohn refers to his scenic direction for *Eleutheria* and notes that Beckett created not so much an action as a space, often empty (18). Cohn continues to say that "Beckett's intention was to harmonize stage setting with soul setting" (19). Elsewhere, he refers to Schneider's idea about Beckett's inactive performances: "He is not frustrated by the decreasing physicality of the plays, and he scorns gratuitous embellishment" (195).

The characters' sense of uneasiness paves the way for the core motif of reduction which is at first introduced in Beckett's trilogy. The process of reduction starts in Molloy's suffering, and reaches completion in Malone's expectation of death. A similar shrinking course of development is visible in Beckett's three major plays and is thematically summarized in Vladimir's idea when he says: "There's man all over for you, blaming on his boots the faults of his feet" (372). Here, Vladimir prescribes the complete detachment or atrophying approach for the spiritual malady of lost identity for which neither Estragon's boots nor Vladimir's hat could offer a treatment. In other words, both practicality and rationality seem to be unreliable in helping the individuals realize the authentic self.

Evaluating the notion of absorption and the dissolved self in Beckett's works, Gendron concludes that to be present, one must be absent. She adds that "In order to reflect upon the self, the self must mutate into something other than it is" (2). Gendron also mentions that the status of being absent is the main feature of the majority of Beckett's characters reaching to the threshold of "vanishing" and "on the threshold of being no more" as Malone asserts (194-5). In other words, "one tries to limit materiality to get in touch with infinity" where the frailty of body leads to transcendence (Federman 36). This kind of atrophying approach is very similar to the idea of self-annihilation in Persian mysticism which asserts that being bodiless leads to the manifestation of an authentic self. This kind of relationship which is the basic trend of Persian Sufism is emphasized by Rumi: "Headless, footless, indeed, without retinue I lead, / In my own sweet land, sweetness to myself feed" (*Divan e Shams* 101).

In the light of Persian Sufi philosophy, the inaction of Beckett's and Pinter's characters can be categorized by a stage-bound procedure which is reminiscent of the Sufi stages of the soul explained in Attar's *The Conference of the Birds*.⁷ The process begins with a conscious quest or 'Talab' which basically demands a conscious search for a higher self. In this stage, the characters' involvement is so that they completely submit themselves to the quest and detach themselves from the outward environment. This kind of detachment is called 'Faqr'. The detachment symbolically appears in different manifestations like waiting, solitude, self-imprisonment, or self-burial. After undertaking several painstaking efforts like heedless melancholic persistence that is known as

7-Seven stages of self-perfection also known as seven valleys of the quest. For a complete introduction to Sufi stages see Charles Stanley Nott's translation of Attar's *The Conference of the Birds*.

‘Eshgh’, self-protection or ‘Moraghebeh’ appears that includes self-forgetfulness, dumbness, or deafness leading to uncertainty, dejection, suffering and bewilderment or ‘Tahayyor’. The characters ultimately reach the final stage of self-annihilation or ‘Fanā’ that simultaneously implies the rebirth or ‘Baghā’ of the human essence (Nott 124-8).

In *Waiting for Godot*, the rudimentary means for enacting is reflected in the names of the tramps reduced to Gogo and Didi. Considering the tramps’ reduced names which reflect the attributes they stand for as defective motion and deed (Gogo-Didi), it can be inferred that the reduction is meant to reveal the essence. Beckett’s reduced world can be considered as stripped to essentials. Such a collapse unbinds the essence through offering freedom. This paradox “negate[s] every possibility of movement and rationality, the more the creatures are immobilized and dehumanized, the more freedom they seem to gain to extricate themselves” (Federman 105). In a 1992 interview, Walter Asmus refers to a kind of freezing movement in directing *Godot* at the Schiller Theatre in Berlin in 1974. He also refers to balletic movement of the actors which express Beckett’s belief in a “blocking that had a meaning” (344). Within this context, the freezing collapse of the action is meaningful and positive.

The characters’ recurrent forgetfulness similarly delineates the diminished power of consciousness which is reinforced with their continuous chat as a paralyzing agent. The quest of the tramps is basically accomplished by reducing action to non-action as expressed by Vladimir: “Don’t let’s do anything. It’s safer” (380). They prefer not to act as they are afraid any action might interrupt the constancy of the process of the quest. Vladimir states it obviously when he says: “Let’s wait till we know exactly how we stand” (381). However,

after Vladimir's vague supplication, Godot's answer displays how they should act. It is as if Vladimir already knows what he should do and automatically is doing what he has been asked. He is waiting as Godot implied in his answer to his prayer. "That he'd see," "That he couldn't promise anything" and finally "That he'd have to think it over," (382) — all of which demand waiting. Estragon's asking if they are tied to Godot ascertains that Vladimir is exactly doing what Godot expects them to do, that is waiting and doing nothing: "To Godot? Tied to Godot! What an idea!"(385).

Pozzo's and Lucky's entrance into the scene following Vladimir's reveals an unconscious link between them and Godot. That Pozzo and Lucky are tied together is a concrete illustration of the hidden link existing between the tramps and Godot. In his bondage to Pozzo, Lucky carries a huge burden of luggage which makes him uncomfortable. When Pozzo reveals the secret of this self-imposed suffering, it appears that through this kind of shrinking Lucky can stay tied to Pozzo as a way of protection against the endangering threats of the fair where he is going to be sold: "He imagines that when I see how well he carries I'll be tempted to keep him on in that capacity.....He imagines that when I see him indefatigable I'll regret my decision" (Pozzo 399).

Considering the role of suffering as a reductive element and its ability in paralyzing the conscious ego and its transmutation to the spiritual world, Lucky persists in carrying heavy burdens and suffering severely. The fact that Lucky finally bleeds symbolically indicates a severe self-renunciation which leads to a moment of epiphany manifest in his monologue. Nearly paralyzed after his monologue, Lucky "recovers his senses gradually at the feel of his bag" (416). It is not until the second act where Lucky's anticipation proves to be true. Here,

Pozzo enters while he is blind and needs Lucky as his master this time. The rope is now shorter as Pozzo can follow Lucky easily. Lucky's nearness to Pozzo signifies that he is gradually approximating emancipation and spiritual mastery. Such a symbolic demonstration shows that all of Lucky's self-mortification has been fruitful, taking him from slavery to mastery. On the other hand, given the uncertain identity of Pozzo, who is recurrently considered to be Godot, it can be proposed that Lucky has already approximated the longed-for transcendence or the unified whole which is incarnated in the God-figure of Godot through being tied to him and persisting in reductive suffering.

Following Lucky's reductive efforts, Vladimir confidently remarks that "We were beginning to weaken. Now we're sure to see the evening out" (454). Here, Vladimir implies the rewarding nature of Lucky's reductive attempts. He thus reveals his satisfaction immediately: "We are no longer alone, waiting for the night, waiting for Godot, waiting for ... waiting. All evening we have struggled, unassisted. Now it's over. It's already to-morrow" (455). Vladimir finds that waiting keeps him tied to Godot which is itself the attainment of the looked-for spiritual rebirth. Waiting can be considered as a diminishing strategy manifest in the allegory of Lucky's endurance. The Pozzo-Lucky binary of attachment, in a similar vein, is the prototype of the play's dominant motif of detachment and illumination.

This kind of recognition is symbolically demonstrated in the elaborate exchange of the hat scene, with Lucky's hat fitting both Vladimir and Estragon. Vladimir is now more certainly doing what Lucky has been demonstrating in presenting a suffering Christ-figure. He suggests role-playing to Lucky, which connotes his preoccupation with this promising approach: "We could play at

Pozzo and Lucky... I'll do Lucky, you do Pozzo" (449). He imitates Lucky sagging under the weight of his baggage. The role playing is positively followed by the second coming of Pozzo and Lucky whom the tramps see as Godot's arrival. The triumphant shout of Vladimir echoes phonemes which reflect the seekers' sense of self-unification. Taking Pozzo as Godot, Vladimir shouts: "It's Godot! At last! Gogo! " (450). The nearby phonemes suggest that Gogo is Pozzo who is considered to be Godot. Pozzo is seen continually playing with his names: "Godet ... Godot ... Godin ..." (19). Equally, the two tramps are not sure about the name of Pozzo:

ESTRAGON. His name is Godot?

VLADIMIR. I think so.

ESTRAGON. Fancy that (14)

Godot's present absence is once more revealed when Estragon asks:

ESTRAGON. Is that him?

VLADIMIR. Who?

ESTRAGON. (*trying to remember the name*) ... Er

VLADIMIR. Godot?

ESTRAGON. Yes.

POZZO. Pesent myself: Pozzo

VLADIMIR. (*to Estragon*).Not at all!

ESTRAGON. He said Godot.

VLADIMIR. Not at all. (15)

In other words, Gogo, Didi, Lucky and Pozzo who are either visibly or invisibly tied together, in being so completely alike, imply that they are the fragmented aspects of one unified whole. Lamont also studies the similar sound of

the names in this play. He states that “even their names sound like the distorted double echo of a single name uttered in the void. Reverberated Godot might become either Gogo or Didi, a child-like nickname for God or Dieu” (199). Such a unity which emanates from visible or invisible attachment ironically means a detaching withdrawal from the world of matter and transmutation of the ego to the spiritual world of unconscious and achieving the Godot of identity. Such a fusion is reminiscent of the Sufi story in Attar’s *Conference of Birds* when the thirty birds, looking for the absent king-bird named ‘Thirtybird’, after “waiting long enough” (1557) and undertaking a number of self-reductive stages and suffering, find that they are ‘Thirtybird’ themselves. The quest of the thirty searching birds takes them through seven valleys of the self-annihilating quest in the first of which they withdraw from the world. They undergo many trials as they try to free themselves from all their precious belongings. Once successful and filled with longing, they ask for wine to dull the effects of dogma, belief, and unbelief on their lives, symbolizing the complete forgetfulness of worldly attachment. They give up reason and pass through seven valleys of ‘forgetfulness’, ‘love’, ‘detachment’, ‘unity’, ‘bewilderment’, ‘manifestation’, and ‘annihilation’.

Assailed by suffering and dejection, they feel that they know nothing. They are not even aware of themselves. The thirty birds finally reach the abode of the ‘Thirtybird’ (Phoenix). But there is no ‘Thirtybird’ (Phoenix) anywhere to see. Thirtybird’s chamberlain keeps them waiting for him long enough for the birds to figure out that being thirty birds, they are ‘Thirtybird’ themselves. It is the thirty birds themselves who are lost in the valleys of detachment, attaching themselves to the sea of the king’s existence through long period of waiting. The allegory of thirty searching birds looking for the absent king-bird phoenix named

‘Thirtybird’ (Simurgh) throws light on the absence of Godot who is already present through Gogo, Didi and Pozzo in Beckett’s play.

It is through the help of illusion that Beckett’s tramps are able to ascend the conscious ego and reach a greater self: “We’re in no danger of thinking any more. . . .Thinking is not the worst. . . . What is terrible is to have thought” (64). Waiting “can have as consequence a consummation that provides a clear understanding of the self and its relation to the situation- a state of being-free from the morbid transition of matter” (Ghosh 308). Even toward the end of the play when Vladimir is about to realize he has been dreaming and must wake up to face reality, the appearance of Godot’s messenger plunges the tramps back into the inactive world of illusion. Interpreting the notion of waiting under Hindu philosophy, Ghosh also sees waiting as a proof of Godot whom he would think as the true self. He adds that, “waiting is a striving towards attainment of identification with the ultimate (Godot)” (313).

Immediately after the boy leaves the tramps, in a determined gesture Estragon finally throws away his boots and decides to continue his mission bare-footed as the suffering figure of Christ. Bare-footed like the Christ, he is determined to suffer and continue his waiting: “Then all we have to do is to wait on here” (426). Lucky’s conative persistence in enduring suffering proves to be the prototype of the quest for self-realization. This kind of persistence is demonstrated concretely in the Christ-like figure of Lucky which invigorates an enduring process of reduction. Vladimir’s conviction — “you’re right, we’re inexhaustible” (435) — as a result, is similar to the way Pozzo describes Lucky’s indefatigable persistence under the heavy load of his luggage. Referring to the positive function of waiting Lamont even argues that “in *Waiting for Godot*,

Vladimir and Estragon may not stray far from their place of waiting, yet they come to realize that patient expectation of something or someone has meaning in itself, that it represents in fact the enduring hope of mankind” (200).

Productive endurance once more comes into view when Vladimir’s decisive fortitude leads to another moment of manifestation: “Wait ...we embraced...we were happy...happy...what do we do now that we’re happy...go on waiting...waiting...let me think...it’s coming...go on waiting...now that we’re happy...let me see...ah! The tree!” (439) Vladimir’s exuberant waiting as persistence is followed by his sudden illumination symbolized in sprouting of the leaves. The relationship notifies how productive the dwindling suffering of endurance is. The final promising signal for the rebirth occurs when the detaching binding of Lucky and Pozzo is in its most atrophied condition as they have been dumb and blind. They are falling on the ground helplessly exhausted under the huge burden of the sand bag. Here, Pozzo reveals the secret of the quest: “We wait till we can get up. Then we go on. On!”(469) It is after such a severe loss of practicality emblematic of the diminishing waiting of the tramps that the boy messenger reappears and promises Godot’s coming. The dominant motif of the reduction-rebirth is also manifest in the whole structure of the play as the two scenic directions of silence and pause are immediately followed by a fresh start after stillness.

In *Waiting for Godot*, waiting has repressed all kinds of action and in so doing the regressive process has intensified the death-wish which is manifest in the tramps’ gradual reference to suicide. The idea of hanging is not put in practice until late at the end of the second act where they each take an end of the cord and pull. They have progressively found that the more they shrink, the more certain

the coming of Godot will be. However, the constant deferral of suicide, even on the verge of doing it, demonstrates the tramps' particular strategy -- that is, waiting and the ongoing renunciation of life. This serves as a clearing of space so that there will be room for the possibility of transfiguring grace which, as Vladimir says, suddenly leads to the manifestation of a higher self. "It'll fall all of a sudden . . . (447). The process is parallel to the steady series of losses for Lucky and Pozzo who lose their mobility, sight and speech in the second act. It is followed by the second coming of the boy messenger, symbolizing a rebirth. In other words, the death-wish is the extension of suppressive nature of waiting which the tramps knowingly adhere to. Vladimir represents the ongoing process of loss this way: "We wait. We are bored. No, don't protest, we are bored to death, there's no denying it. Good. A diversion comes along and what do we do? We let it go to waste. Come, let's go to work! In an instant all will vanish and we'll be alone once more, in the midst of nothingness!" (459)

The symbolic disclosure of this kind of progressive regression which is meant to end in the manifestation of authentic self emerges in the recurrent juxtaposition of beginning and end in addition to womb and grave counterpoint images. Earlier in the play, Vladimir's bright idea has been to repent, which leads to Estragon's suggestion that they have been doing it from the moment they were born. Here, Estragon sees the secret of being in not-being. The setting itself pinpoints the mystic binary notion of renunciation and rebirth with its vast horizon against one vertical tree and four characters falling down while looking up at the sky. The scenery remarkably reinforces the possibility of ascent through falling.

Lacan's theory of death and desire proposes that "life and death are compounded in a polar relation at the very heart of phenomena related to life"

(qtd. in Kim 102-4). Lacan signifies that suicide cannot end in the manifestation of the true being as it transgresses the natural law, since being born is not a matter of choice. Thus, the reason why the tramps once more defer hanging themselves despite their final attempt towards physical loss is that the manifestation of the authentic self depends on the recurrent process of loss, not the sudden termination of life. In other words, the practical approach of committing suicide in the second act is the suggestive demonstration of the maturing process of waiting which symbolizes the continuous process of loss. Moreover, it is reminiscent of the ego's conscious attempt to connect to the spiritual world symbolized in Godot's figure. Goethe reveals the spiritual aspect of waiting when he states: "so waiting I have won from you the end: god's presence in each element" (qtd. in McCoy 24). The power of waiting is thus making relation between human beings and the unified whole. In fact, "waiting inveterate anticipation ascertains and appends value to reality where the totality of reality is realized in the maturity of the partnership" (Ghosh 317).

In a similar vein, Sufis recurrently suspend their egos in a state of non-being, annihilation or 'Fana' which simultaneously leads them to a 'permanent existence' or 'Baqa'. It is through this perpetual stripping of one's existence in time that the Sufi returns to the pre-existence or the essence. Describing Sufi stages of the quest, Al-Tirmadhi asserts that the turning point of the quester is when he is able to strip himself from all that rises from the ego. He adds that the Sufi cannot choose to terminate his unsatisfactory existence through physical death since to choose presupposes the involvement of the ego (104). Therefore, Sufis only keep stripping the ego which automatically, as they believe, leads to

the transference of condition bringing them to annihilation and its simultaneous perpetual existence.

In *waiting for Godot*, Estragon concludes that “nothing is certain” and among all the approaches the tramps have already tried, what is left certain is waiting, which they keep on doing. The general cyclical pattern of the play reinforces the idea as through repetition the characters renew their waiting as the only means of connection to the world of meaning. Specifically, the cyclical appearance of the boy messenger and the master-slave duo intensifies the motif of presence through waiting. It is what Robbe Grillet calls “metaphysic of presence” (65).

The fact that Beckett reduces the tramps to a limited state of movement doing very limited actions indicates how they have atrophied themselves in their longing to visit Godot. In fact, the active inaction of the tramps demonstrated in *Waiting for Godot* is a nullifying-filling process which is purposefully cyclical. The continuous reductive attempts of the tramps to reach the minimum threshold of being through waiting makes the questers attain a sense of union with the world of ultimate presence. Webner interprets waiting this way:

Busy actions do not achieve union with God, but only a *silent waiting* can. The importance of this ‘passive waiting’ cannot be stressed too strongly, ... but it must be emphasized that this kind of ‘passive waiting’ does not imply an ultimate futility, because beyond it there is always the Divine, and the soul is waiting to be seized or called by the Divine.(46)

Along with waiting, the process of transmutation is also manifest in the genius of the characters for forgetfulness. The characters' forgetting names leads to moments of epiphany. The Unnamable implicitly relates forgetfulness to the emergence of the true self: "my inability to absorb, my genius for forgetting, is more than they reckoned with. Dear incomprehension, it's thanks to you I'll be myself, in the end" (51). The lyrical cross-talk of Vladimir and Estragon is directed toward forgetting reality. Lucky's dance of the net in a similar vein, represents another attempt through which the characters try to transmute the ego to the spiritual world of unconscious.

The mystic's annihilation of the conscious ego is similar to the characters' forgetfulness in *Waiting for Godot*. In the process of annihilation, mystics do not mention their names even when addressing themselves. This practice leads to mystical experiences of seeing the spiritual master which can be interpreted as seeing the greater self. Annihilation of the mundane self makes room for apprehension of the alert master/ transcendent self.

The play of being and non-being recurs in *Endgame* where the cyclical process of annihilation and rebirth is more manifest. More reduced than *Waiting for Godot*, the world is utterly atrophied and the motif of annihilation is implied more severely in the way the characters are obsessed with the most possible degree of self-reduction: "I can no longer endure my presence" (21). In other words, ubiquitous reduction is the dominant motif of the play: "One day you'll be blind, like me. . . Infinite emptiness will be all around you, all the resurrected dead of all the ages wouldn't fill it, and there you'll be like a little bit of grit in the middle of the steppe" (*Endgame* 28). In a suggestive way, all the names of the play mean 'nail' in different languages. Even Hamm, which is very similar to the Latin

word Hamus, means 'hook'. Reflecting the idea of annihilation, all of these symbolic names suggest that the characters are similar to nails which should be hammered. Compared to the semi-detached scene of the barren country road of *Waiting for Godot*, the detachment is more severe in the prison-like confinement of the room in *Endgame*. The fact that Clov explicitly praises his ultimate self-confinement once more asserts the notion of perfection in reduction and loss. "I'll go now to my kitchen, ten feet by ten feet, and wait for him to whistle me. Nice dimension, nice proportions" (12). Such an emphatic focus is reminiscent of the recurrent motif of number ten in Beckett's *Quad* which reflects Pythagoras's idea of perfection symbolized in this number.

The scattered images of womb and tomb in *Waiting for Godot* develop to a more concrete play of death and life in *Endgame* through a severe self-reduction along with passive waiting. The characters are demonstrated in their struggle to limit their physical existence in order to live. The ubiquitous theme of reduction suggests that as humans atrophy themselves towards a complete annihilation of the self, a new life appears. They recurrently struggle to release themselves from the bondages of life and reach the free soul through atrophying themselves. The master figure of reduction is emphasized by the protagonist at the start. He appears with a face covered with a white, bloody handkerchief symbolically implying that he is corpse. The fact that the play's dialogue opens with the word 'finish' and ends with 'remain' can also be suggestive of the mystical dominant theme of annihilation and rebirth. In other words, it can be inferred that it is through finishing that you can remain. In Sufi tradition, likewise, reaching the unified whole is only possible through removing the barrier of physicality. Rumi refers to this mystical trend in *Diwan e Shams*:

Shams-e Tabriz, if you show not your face now
My earthly corpse, by God, I shall surely disown.
Between my beloved and I this is the only veil
It is time to unveil and disrobe the light that brightly
shone. (114)

It is along with the motif of deprivation and attainment that Murray refers to the importance of *Endgame* in its affinity with the story of Job. He believes that there is a spiritual affinity between Beckett's works and sections of the Old Testament. He suggests that the value of a play like *Endgame* "lies in its being nearer to the book of Job" (61). While *Waiting for Godot* implies the motif of annihilation and rebirth through symbolic images of suffering, reduction, endurance and detachment followed by images of hope, *Endgame* shows development towards a cyclical, ubiquitous reduction leading to rebirth, not unlike the reversal of Job's misfortunes: "Old endgame lost of old, play and lose and have done with losing"(51).

Endgame's conscious approach of loss is revealed in how the central character, Hamm intentionally announces "me to play" for a game that is already lost. Like waiting, the recurrent play of loss acts as the central paralyzing agent of the play. Hamm's fanciful mind which is manifest in composing brief passages of a tale every day throws light to the dominant motif of evasion from the conscious ego to the ascending world of the unconscious. He demonstrates the overall perspective in being completely motionless and blind with a suggestive name as abbreviated form of Hamlet connoting melancholy and irrationality. From the very beginning, the ironic direct relationship of loss and gain is manifest in Hamm's character. Despite his sheer immobility, lack of sight and memory,

Hamm is the master king of the play centralizing himself physically and influentially. His recurrent emphasis on the words like 'end' or 'suffer' indicates how obsessed he is with the idea of reduction. In a parallel way, Clov demonstrates his idea about suffering as a liberating factor: "I say to myself sometimes, Clov, you must learn to suffer better than that if you want them to weary of punishing you -- one day" (51). Mobility is explicitly rejected when Hamm addresses Clov as condemned to pollute the air when he moves a little. In a more negative action, Hamm starts the day by going to bed, signifying the grave or death. More violently he insists that all the signs of life should be destroyed, as when he urges Clov to kill the fly.

Mystically, through cyclical reduction of the self, Hamm is already saving himself from the endangering material life. The way Hamm tries to unpeople the earth is a symbolic attempt to lessen existence and thereby get nearer to the source of being in his non-being. Ruby Cohn refers to this matter and asserts: "to in-exist is divine" (156). She adds that through not-being, individuals can gain relief. More intensely than the tramps in *Waiting for Godot*, Hamm tries to falter towards the end. The fact that everything in *Endgame* is being destroyed progressively while the end is continuously deferred indicates the maturing nature of waiting. Cohn states "this faltering is not energetic and life giving, it is towards taking life" (156). Here, faltering is a kind of annihilation done through creating more opportunities for loss and demolition. While in *Waiting for Godot*, the sudden idea of being tied to Godot [waiting] converts the absurd existence to a meaningful, fruitful mission through reaffirming promise of the child messenger, the recurrent faltering of the end in *Endgame* leads to the appearance of a manifest rebirth. In other words, while the child messenger promises that Godot, the longed for

identity, will come tomorrow, out of the recurrent faltering of Hamm, a manifest rebirth occurs in the concrete image of a child born among the ashes of non-existence.

The appearance of the little boy (a potential procreator as Clov calls him) who suggests a resurrected life is immediately followed by Hamm's sudden illumination: "It's the end, Clov, we've come to the end, I don't need you any more" (49). In an action which is reminiscent of the Buddha, the little boy contemplates his navel, symbolizing meaningful nothingness. His contemplating presence convinces Hamm about the appearance of a new life. The fact that Hamm does not need Clov any more indicates Hamm's ability to witness his own longed-for spiritual stasis and does not need anybody else to validate his existence. If we consider the appearance of the little boy as Hamm's spiritual self, we can conclude that Hamm is finally present to his being and no longer needs Clov to witness his presence.

The fact that in the French original version of the play, the little boy is called "potential procreator" throws light on the mystic philosophy of the attainment of the non-being state before creation. The comparative study Metman presents regarding the similarity between the emergence of the small child in *Endgame* and the Indian story of Markandeya reflects the mystic idea of returning to the primal state of non-being through continual loss. In the Indian story, in the world which is completely devoid of all beings, a playing child appears who says to the saint: "I am thy procreator, child, am thy Father and Elder" (36). Passing through a long time of conscious deprivation and loss, the individuals can finally reach the primal state of being, the Non-existence which means the absolute annihilation of the self to the unified whole.

Despite the sudden self-recognition, the reason why Hamm still insists on continuing to play the game of loss indicates the persistent desire of the character to keep the experience of loss, which means the recurrent loss of the ego. Stopping the cyclical process of loss makes the questers return to the conscious ego they have been already looking for. Hamm's frequent refrain, "something is taking its course", can be considered as the emergence of a new life.

The recurrent process of loss is reminiscent of Hegel's relationship between "empty nothingness" and "pure being". He describes the challenging condition of the "beautiful soul" which lacks an actual existence. The soul is thus "entangled in the contradiction between its pure self and the necessity of that self to externalize itself and change itself into an actual existence" (483). Leeland refers to a similar condition in Taoist term of 'Wu', which is roughly translated as non-being or nothingness. He states that, "the non-being is in fact ontologically prior to Being. It is the ultimate source of all things" and concludes that "the void, or non-being, is in effect plenary rather than empty" (13). Evaluating Beckett's void, Webner (1973) particularly refers to such a paradoxical state:

Thus the "nothing" or "void" as Otto also calls it, so far from being the despairing nihilism which secular critics see in works of Beckett's, may be the very ground of Being. To quote Otto, again, "or void is like darkness and silence, a negation, but a negation that does away with every 'this' and 'here' in order that the 'wholly other' may become actual. (25)

Instead of committing suicide, Beckett's characters cling to the recurrent play of loss and gain. This can be justified under the light of the mystical notion of self and nothing. Buri argues:

The mystics speak of being dead not in the biological sense as an irreversible occurrence but in a figurative sense as an extraordinary experience from which they again return into conscious world of objects. Yet, here again, the experienced nothing becomes something. (189)

He adds that "here, this nothing can perhaps even open us for transcendence" (189). Mystically, Buri relates this phase of nothingness to Nirvana in Buddhism and says that this absolute nothing or the not-self or the sudden enlightenment happens after numerous rebirths "in the experience of becoming empty" (196). Finally, he concludes that "I would claim that the true self is creation out of nothing" (203).

Endgame is "certainly a play about loss" as McDonald also observes (51). From the very beginning the greatest transgression is considered to be reproduction and its source is confined to rubbish bins. The world they live is demonstrated in the most depleted and belated condition. The landscape is desolate and what is left outside is 'all corpse' on the verge of expiration and lifelessness. Inside the room, there is a picture facing the wall representing a perfect withdrawal. The characters confess that they don't mean anything as Hamm says: 'We are not beginning to ... to ... mean something? Clov: Mean something? You are I, mean something! Ah that is a good one!'(27) Such a lack

of desire reflects the complete expelling of the ego which connects it to the spiritual world of meaning.

While in *Waiting for Godot* relative relief appears in the idea of being constantly tied to Godot, implying reduction and partial detachment from any action, *Endgame* exhibits a conscious process of loss and the incessant active inaction to take everything to an end. Referring to this fact, Metman remarks that in *Endgame* Hamm “turns the process of dying into an act of dying” (134). The characters’ progressive obsession with recurrent deprivation and loss is manifest in Cohn’s evaluation of Beckett’s three major dramas: “The tramps keep waiting, Hamm keeps finishing, and here [*Act Sans Parole*], the clown leans through movement to reflect, and through reflection to stop moving” (156). Hamm’s attempt to keep finishing reflects the mystic endeavor of losing the ego and its gradual transmutation to the spiritual world. Cohn evaluates this idea this way:

Becket’s hero is engaged in “the old Greek quest for the metaphysical meanings of the self, the world, and God.” Negatively, we would show that the regressive state that fascinate the hero are not negations of being, and that negation of being is not his goal. Positively, we would offer evidence that this goal is realizing self-identity, discovering the essence of the self by comprehending its source and meaning. (qtd. in Barge1008)

The very selection of endgame for the motif of loss is significantly similar to the motif of the game loser in Sufism. In *Amorous gamble* the author sees mystic gambling as one of the basic teachings of Islamic mysticism through which

the gambler loses continually in his way to reach the longed-for unified whole. (Soroush 14) Such a game of loss is praised in Sufi poem of Rumi: ‘Happy the gambler who lost what he gained, / Nothing left for him, but a passion to lose again.’ (*Divan e Shams* 429. 1085)

The course of progression from *Waiting for Godot* to *Endgame* is revealed through the characters’ process of continual loss which leads to the appearance of the quintessential self in the image of the child-God. In fact, the latent emergence of the new birth symbolized in the sprouting of the leaves and the boy messenger in *Waiting for Godot*, is manifest in explicit image of the little boy in *Endgame* which according to Metman “may be regarded as an image of the self”(25). The sprouting tree in *Waiting for Godot* reflects Beckett’s idea: “Man is ... a tree whose stem and leafage are an expression of an inward sap” (*Proust* 25). This idea sheds light to the growing illumination of the inward essence. Such a growing illumination bears fruit in the image of a new life in a barren world of *Endgame*.

Metman’s idea about the progressive course of development in *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* offers the possibility to interpret these plays in the light of Sufism. She writes that the ultimate inner liberation is a prelude to the emergence of a new birth in *Endgame*. Such an explicit manifestation is belated in *Waiting for Godot* as inner release is continually interrupted. The complete transmutation of the conscious ego to unconscious world is revealed in Hamm’s confession: “I was never there, Clov! ...I was never there ...Absent, always. It all happened without me” (47). Here, Hamm’s absence delineates the perfect dissolution of his ego which has gained through continual physical deprivation and increasing loss.

The idea is confirmed when Hamm's final enduring loss is followed by his erect and dignified posture of sitting on the chair until the fall of the curtain. The fact that the board is finally empty, no bicycle wheels, no coffin, no sugar-plums-pain-killer, no pap, no tide, navigator or rug implies how Hamm has been successful in the play of loss. It recalls us of the second act of *Waiting for Godot* where Pozzo's belongings are lost. As Robinson asserts: "In this game: to win is to lose". He adds that:

...Until near the end Hamm succeeds. Everything living like the rat and the flea is quickly exterminated, one of his pawns, Nell appears to have died and each successive end adds another grain to the heap. When the child appears in the midst of destruction, Clov demands the gaff, intending to go out and kill the child, but now that his fear is confirmed Hamm is curiously possessed and tranquil. The child's appearance seems a miracle, a birth from nothing that cannot be exterminated like the rat in Clov's chicken. (264)

Robinson also signifies that a part has been omitted from the play's English version when the child is referred to as a Christ figure. Still in earlier recollection of the play Beckett includes this sentence: "Moses gazing at the Promised Land: "il regarde la maison sans doute, avec les yeux de moie mourant" (qtd. in Robinson 264). More importantly, he remarks that "when Nell appears to die there is no grief" (269). Such tranquility is parallel to the feeling after the appearance of the little boy. Despite Clov's intention to go and kill the child with

the gaff, Hamm is surprisingly seen “possessed and tranquil” (264). The tranquility gained after the birth of an existence which cannot be exterminated signifies the symbolic emergence of the authentic self after the annihilation of the ego. Likewise, the stage setting itself is set to connote the sudden emergence of some fruitful result. “The stillness of the sea and the barren earth” according to Worth “suggest the hushed expectancy of a universe waiting for creation” (190). The fact that Hamm asks Clov to see if there is any probable change reveals his expectation for something new to happen out of his self-made deprivation:

HAMM. Have you looked?

CLOV. Yes

HAMM. Well?

CLOV. Zero.

HAMM. It’d need to rain. (13)

Worth also refers to the similar expectation of rebirth in Clov when she says: “later, he gets a comical shock seeing through the wrong window which shows his expected desire” (190). He is wondering if there is greenery there beyond the hill, invoking Flora, Pomona and Ceres. In a similar vein, Hamm has his own dreams of Flora, and Ceres which bring the idea of sun, rain, and sea connoting to the manifestation of life. Worth thus concludes:

These are hints towards the kind of interpretation I have been suggesting, but we don’t need to have that kind of evidence to feel in *Endgame*, very largely through the great impact of the setting, a struggle into life that is somehow bound up with dying, with the presence of the old parents inside and the boy

outside, with all the business of looking out of the
windows for signs of water and the dread of it, with
the slow compulsion towards the narrow door. (192)

The motif of annihilation and rebirth which obviously manifests itself in Hamm's final victory after his continual loss is reminiscent of the Sufi story of the king and the handmaiden in the first book of Rumi's *Mathnavi*. Rumi explicitly maintains that the imposed impurities of the self are removed after undertaking continual loss. In other words, it is only through the continual abolishment of the ego that the authentic self can be retrieved. At the end of the story, Rumi concludes that:

Such a harsh treatment and rough process has a meaning...
It is so that the dross and muck from the silver is leaving.
The good... and also the bad are tested in such a way that
Gold is brought to boil and scum rises to the top of the vat (I.17)

The fact that Hamm restarts the game of loss even after the symbolic appearance of the little boy can be considered to be a redefinition of the mystic notion of being which naturally needs to be annihilated in order to be. Sartre's idea concerning the relation between being and not-being is a proper interpretation of Hamm's conscious endeavor towards not-being. He argues:

Consciousness, [*self consciousness*] therefore, is the
imposing of a negative on a positive — a process of
“neantisation.” It follows that the cosmos is a dual
character: all that massively exists (L'etre” or “L'en-
soi”) is positive, while consciousness, which organizes
that which exists, is negative (“Le neant,” or “le pour-

soi”). Logically therefore, the pour-soi (the negation which is consciousness) must lie outside all being; only that “which is not” is able to understand that which is. The pour-soi is not Being; the pour-soi is its own Not-Being. (59)

After continual divestiture, Hamm is now completely beyond the knowledge of being. He doesn't risk turning back to his ego which is a meaningless being. Robinson even affirms that: “they [the characters] cannot endure to start again now that is almost ‘beyond knowing’ (268). Now that Hamm is symbolically reunited to the self that exists outside time in the timeless void, he tries to keep this union through keeping that timelessness obtained through continual process of loss. Like Keats' frozen picture of the lovers on the Grecian Urn, Hamm is trying to freeze the emergence of the reborn self through the repetition of the process which created it. In *Proust*, Beckett himself refers to habit and repetition as “the agent of security” (21). In a more suggestive way, Clov's seeking refuge in his kitchen reinforces the idea of protecting habit. “Habit is compared to a “cook [...] who knows what has to be done, and will slave all day and all night rather than tolerate any redundant activity in the kitchen” (*Proust* 20). Therefore, Clov's retirement to Hamm and his kitchen reveals how he feels secure in such repetitious behaviors. At the end of the play, Clov justifies his desire to remain inside: “But I feel too old, and too far, to form new habits” (1959). He feels secure through a regular pace of losing the ego and constant deprivation. In other words, it is through conscious clinging to losing and deprivation that both Hamm and Clov find security.

Endgame's central motif of the quest for the authentic self is once more revealed in Hamm's symbolic posture in the attainment of the womb-like condition. The behavior remarkably suggests the possibility of birth passing through the atrophied stage of the embryonic existence. In this regard, Duckworth evaluates similar attempts to be born again through shrinking in Beckett's characters. He states that: "Mahood is stuffed up to the neck in the *Unnamable* and Winnie is sinking in the ground which is the archetypal image of the uterus of the Great Mother World devouring life and bestowing it" (89).

The round womb-like symbolic posture of Hamm within the cyclical closure of the overall pattern of the play is reminiscent of Jung's Mandala. Focusing the centering of personality, Jung sees individuals facing a cycle as symbolic protection of their wholeness by their repetitious reversion to the centre and producing walls around themselves. In *Endgame*, Hamm insists on being right in the centre but repeatedly displaces himself. In Jungian terms, his wholeness is insecure. In *Proust*, Beckett himself refers to the paralyzing power of habit through which the attention is more focused on the inner world, leading thereby to the protection of the essential faculty that is human essence. He says: "Habit paralyses our attention, drugs those handmaidens of perception whose co-operation is not absolutely essential (8-9). As reflected in *Proust*, habit thus looks behind the surface of the ego, behind voluntary to involuntary memory.

Nearly the same aspect is revealed in Doll's designation of the ritual in *Endgame* as psychic rebirth. She refers to Jung's theory of rituals functioning through creating a kind of insight to let the human be. Here, the paralysis of perception recalls the idea of 'deprivation and death' in Sufism. According to Attar "the essence is forgetfulness, dumbness, and distraction. Humans at first

experience humiliation and overthrow; but when he emerges from this state he will understand it as creation” (*Conference of Birds* vii).

Such a paralysis which is mystically considered as a kind of creation is “the dull inertia which in the end becomes a comfortable, living death” (Copeland 39). In fact, it is through repetition that one can exhaust the vital energy and simulate death in life. Regarding this, Wollheim observes that “the compulsion to repeat can be seen as the effort to restore a state that is both historically primitive and also marked by the total draining of energy that is death” (qtd. in Copeland 130).

Evaluating the problem of self-realization in *The Unnamable*, Coe reflects Jung’s idea in equating infinite unconscious to the wished-for self: “if it fails, it is because it must necessarily fail. Knowledge, which is the province of the “I” of consciousness, is positive and finite; the self, in Beckett’s view, is infinite and void” (69). The recurrent game of loss in *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, in a similar vein, represents the characters’ continuous struggle to reach an infinite void in Beckett’s dramas. It can be inferred that basically the notion of the self as infinite void is reminiscent of the seemingly negative mystic notions of the void either in Nirvana of Buddhism or annihilation of Sufism. Analyzing the idea of the void in *The Unnamable* Coe finally states: “If I have hesitated from the start to insist upon any mystic interpretation of Beckett’s doctrine of the Void, it is because other, more rationalist philosophers have reached identical conclusions without the need to entangle themselves in the minor absurdities of the Tao and Za-Zen” (73).

The way Hamm recurrently switches to ritualistic story-telling is in the same way along with losing his ego and reaching the infinite void of the self. The

maddening repletion of certain words or recurrent story telling creates three important moments in Beckett's characters, as Doll observes:

The first moment is Regression . . . the second key moment in the rite of story telling is Encounter. Words, emptied of precise denotation by an act of eternal (infernally) repetition, evoke other presences. The third moment seldom reached in the drama and only fleetingly reached in recent plays is the ritual moment of Reawakening. (74)

Doll's analysis remarkably confirms the Jungian interpretation of Beckett's dramas where the moment of repetition is the complete turning back to the world beyond consciousness, a place where spiritual rebirth takes place:

Mircea Eliade, in his work on ritual, describes repetition in ways that relate strikingly with Beckett's drama of the storytelling old man. According to Eliade certain dance and song rites satisfy a basic human need to return to the roots of being. Repetitious movement and repeated syllables provide the means by which a celebrant can propel him or herself out of "this time" into that time, in ill temper. As Eliade writes, "sacred time appears under the paradoxical aspect of circular time, reversible and recoverable, a sort of eternal mythical present time that is periodically reintegrated by means of rites. (74)

This threefold function is remarkably comparable to what Arberry believes about the function of repetition in Sufism. Evaluating Rumi's basic elements of mystical trends, he argues that denial, intrusion and divine presence are the three parts of repetition. Within this context, Doll's notion of 'regression' is very similar to Arberry's definition of 'denial'. Encountering, in a similar vein, echoes what Arberry explains as intrusion and divine presence (27). In *Endgame* Hamm demonstrates such a regressive process where the conscious ego is cyclically denied. Pilling also assumes that Hamm's cyclical struggle is to perfect the process of selflessness:

Hamm begins to perfect his own willlessness, to reveal the power of absence. He is resigned to the triumph of losing this endgame with very considerable verve. Hamm's delight in finding himself at the end at last issues in the throwing away of gaff and dog and whistle and the need to utter "reckoning closed and story ended" , " let's play it that way ... and speak no more" all that remains is St Veronica's handkerchief bearing the impression of his own features. Only wordless gestures remain. (72)

After Hamm's continual regressive exercises, what is left for him is his blood-stained handkerchief which implies his complete self-renunciation and a mystic-like abolition of any desire which is also manifest in the image of closed eyes. His restful position indicates the complete inner will-less repose represents self-annihilation. As Hayman says: "One of the reasons for the frequent

recurrence of blindness in Beckett's work is that it forces the victim to look inwards, and seeing nothing he may see Nothing" (40).

Considering the restful gesture of repose Hamm demonstrates in his closed eyes, Hayman's evaluation might be interpreted in the light of the mystic notion of Non-being that means the dissolution of the ego and illumination of the quintessential self. Cornwell maintains that "the Beckett hero attempts to reverse the process of birth and speed his return to the state of pre-conscious non-being from which he came; that is his lost Eden" (41). He refers to Hamm's taking pain-killer as a way of deadening awareness and lessening the agony of consciousness. The Nothing which Hamm might see is the annihilation of the ego or the Non-existence which is mystically the prelude to the manifestation of the whole Being. Hamm's ability to see Nothing after seeing nothing reflects Beckett's belief in Bruno's mystic notion of the contraries which emphasize that "Maximal negation is minimal affirmation" (qtd. in Fletcher 126).

Hamm's static position at the end of the play which coincides with the announcement of playing again implies the simultaneous cancellation and commencement. In Sufism, likewise, the spiritual self-realization depends on penetrating beyond the exterior multiplicity of phenomena to a unified whole. Attaining this kind of self-unification, as Ibn al-'Arabî believes, entails the abolition of the ego or passing away from self. What Ibn al-'Arabî then calls "perpetual effusion" is actually the process of effusing the borrowed feature of being to reach the state on non-being that is the essence (I. 150). Such a mystical paradox is also manifest in *Waiting for Godot* and *Happy Days* where waiting and being buried, which represent passive non-being, ironically witness a meaningful being.

In line with ongoing self-cancellation followed by spiritual repose which symbolically signifies the annihilation of the ego to attain authentic self, *Happy Days* exhibits the maximum possible annulment of the ego. What Winnie is completely doing in *Happy Days* is completely demolishing the body members, which means the ultimate disappearance of corporeal existence implying the final rescue of the self. Alpaugh evaluates the complete extinction of the self in *Happy Days* as the attainment of Eden. He argues that: “This Eden stands at the end of Beckettian time cycle. At that point where an originally energy-charged creation has atrophied to a state of maximum sterility. . . .” (202). It is through such a release from corporeality which Mrs. Rooney in *All that Falls* wants to be transformed into a “big fat jelly” or even disappear into her comfortable bed. Iser sees Winnie’s attempt towards annihilation and says: “Winnie’s gradual sinking into the sand, while apparently not her fondest wish, is nevertheless representative of the theme of fusion with inert matter, of a final repose that has already been accepted by her body” (qtd. in Bloom 121).

In this context, Winnie has consciously put herself into the minimal degree of corporeal existence which mystically makes her obtain maximal being. In other words, through minimizing mortality and severe limitation, she has made the self move only inwardly. According to Hoffman, after internalizing of the self “the self is itself correspondingly reduced and demeaned, an obstacle to self-assertion” (43). Such abasement is even more severe than Hamm’s self-confinement to his skull-like room and wheelchair. The symbolic fastidious demand of Hamm to be put in the centre of the room is toward obtaining the maximum internalization of the self which Winnie has created for herself through minimizing her mortality. Winnie buries herself to be born again. Evaluating the similar disembodiment of

the protagonist in *Not I* Campbell asserts that: "...the hero goes inward, to be born again....."(15).

The fact that Winnie is happy after her conscious burial of her body can be justified considering the Kierkegaardian philosophy of eternal happiness. Kierkegaard states: "The conception of an eternal happiness transforms the individual's entire existence and is a process of dying away from the immediate" (qtd. in Bretall 4). Winnie's indifference about the worldly life and her happiness in the extirpation of corporeal life make her completely free from the bondages of physicality and give her a liberated self. Bretall refers to this kind of freedom in Winnie and remarks that:

For a while she busies herself with numerous things
that are all about her in bag and bodice, her mind
desires to be free even of her body which is
imprisoned in the large pocket of the earth. She can
call the day a happy day and yet long for the moment
when flesh melts at so many degrees and the night of
the moon has so many hundred hours. (100)

On her first happy day, Winnie predicts the happy day to come that she will sink farther into the earth.

It can be inferred that Winnie's obsession with her things symbolically demonstrates her unending efforts to ignore corporeal life. Winnie finally concludes that if her body melts completely, it will be the happiest time. In *Happy Days*, the central character has successfully annihilated her ego through complete discarding of physicality. Winnie says: "and if for some strange reason no further pains are possible, why then just close the eyes -- (she does so) and wait for the

day to come -- the happy day to come when flesh melts at so many hundred hours" (40). Winnie's desire is reminiscent of Mr. Rooney in *All that Falls* where already blind, he wishes to be deaf and dumb. Barge justifies such desire positively: "Although the hero is continually drawn toward a lessening of the burden of existence, he is searching for, not fleeing from, the essence of the self, the ground of being, which is the essence of truth, at the core of human existence" (276).

Winnie even adds that "the heat is much greater, the perspiration much less. That is what I find so wonderful" (41). This kind of happy resignation to suffering proves to be fruitful in the way Robinson ascribes it to the recreation of the paradise the characters believe to have lost at birth. He states that, "They (the characters) connected suffering to the paradise that had been lost at birth and sought to suffer more for in those moments when the mortal microcosm is open to the suffering of being it is most deeply aware of its existence and perhaps closer to the hidden reality of the self"(290). In addition, to emphasize the issue of suffering, the monotonous shining of the sun adheres to a kind of timelessness which can suggest the infinity that Winnie's microcosm has created. Through violent self-abolishment, Winnie tries to annihilate her ego and creates a timeless microcosm implying the manifestation of the wished-for self. The shining sun is comparable to Milton's holy uncreated light which connotes the Non-being that is the very essence of humans before the birth.

The fact that Winnie has "no zest — for anything- no interest — in life-poor dear Willie-sleep for ever-marvelous gift" (46) once more reveals the abolition of desire and complete annulment of the ego. *Happy Days*, then, is the extension of annihilating process that actually started with *Waiting for Godot*. The

violent conscious renunciation from the outside world which Winnie's self burial symbolizes is also manifest in her long monologue covering the whole play. The fact that brief antiphonal exchanges of the tramps turn into the great stretches of Hamm's soliloquies and finally to Winnie's longish monologue verify the developing process of self-paralysis which is the argument in this chapter. These three plays demonstrate a process of progressive release from spatial and temporal consciousness. They experience such a release through progressive process of self-reduction. The death wish, as Mercier believes, is the result of such complete renouncement. He asserts that, "In the long run, Winnie awaits annihilation and regards the day of its coming as a happy day" (176).

Along with the burial of her body, Winnie's poetic alienation, which is manifest in her soliloquies, signifies the creation of a microcosm. Winnie's penetration to deeper levels of her memories through composing stories, prayers, songs and verses reflects Jung's idea of transmuting the ego to the spiritual world of unconscious. Winnie's transmutation to the world of memory can be considered as the emergence of an explosive moment of "encountering when the soul comes to life" (Doll 74). She draws twice upon Hamlet and his birds of dawning. She also recites passages of Keats' "Ode to the Nightingale" and Milton's greeting of the holy light. In a more indirect way, she is evoking Khayyam's paradise as well. Through recurrent whispering of such verses Winnie is doing what Keats once tried to do in his "Ode to the Nightingale", when Keats the man withdraws his worldly self through dissolving his ego into the hypnotic chant of the nightingale. What Winnie possesses more than Keats the poet is that she has already denied and withdrawn the ego through the conscious burial of her corporeal existence and now is trying to bring her soul into life through continual

practice of remembering in a mystic manner. Winnie's murmuring of Yeats' and Gray's lines reflects the process of her annihilation. Yeats' "A well long choked up and dry" thematically demonstrates the complete denial of the corporeality. Gray's "moody madness within the wilderness" likewise emphasizes the spiritualization of the self through clinging to the maddening repetitious remembering.

It might be due to such reawakening power of remembrance that Winnie's signs of change appear after her final retreating to the old fortress of the old dream of happy days. The complete freedom of the self Winnie is searching for is finally obtained through remembering the old happy days. Finally, it is through remaining in the old memories that Winnie's worldly existence dies and the sign of solemnity appears in what she says: "will have been a happy day, after all, happy day"(46). Winnie even explicitly reveals her internal satisfaction which connotes a kind of inward peace. She even implies her happiness in the final silent scene:

WINNIE. Though I say not

What I may not

Let you hear,

Yet the swaying

Dance is saying, (47)

Winnie finally reveals her spiritual peace this way: "Eyes float up that seem to close in peace ... to see ...in peace. Not mine, not now... no, no" (51). Like the tramps and Hamm, she defers arrival to continue staying the process of self-emptying as a sign of the potentiality of the ineffable transcendent. Similar to

Hamm's final repose symbolized in sitting silently on his chair, the inward spiritual satisfaction is implied in Winnie's final expression of peace.

The long pause which follows Winnie's smile after her happy expression at the end of the play demonstrates the inward peace which she has obtained through the complete abolition of her sensual existence. This peaceful moment is reminiscent of the stillness of the stage tape recorder in the final scene of the *Krapp's Last Tape* which connotes the annulment of every remaining desire in the old man. Suggestively, Krapp's lips stop moving first and after a long pause he reveals the manifestation of his internal illumination in the symbolic form of a fire that is now flaming within him:

KRAPP. Here I end this reel. Box- (pause) - three,
spool- (pause) - five. (pause) Perhaps my
best years are gone. When there was a
chance of happiness. But I wouldn't want
them back. Not with the fire in me now. No,
I wouldn't want them back. (499)

Followed by his peaceful submission, Krapp motionlessly stares before himself and the tape runs on in silence which more likely suggests the quiet stillness of annihilation. Such a long silence symbolizes the inward peace resulted from the abolition of the sensual life and its worldly desires. Thus, the way the tramps don't move in the final scene of *Godot* in spite of their announcement that they are leaving indicates the beginning of the progressive line of self quest in Beckett's plays which starts from waiting and leads to decisive self-denial. Beckett's *Act Without Words* demonstrates such a certainty in the character's sinking into complete immobility. Although the whistle still sounds, the character

no longer heeds it. He does not move toward the dangling water in front of him. The palm tree he has been sitting in the shade of is also whisked off stage. He finally remains immobile, looking at his hands. The situation symbolically reveals the ultimate recognition of the mystery of nothingness which Beckett's characters progressively reach. Clov in *Endgame* also implies such recognition: "... A world where all would be silent and still and each thing in its last place, under the last dust" (57).

The final symbolic peace Winnie gains at the end of the play demonstrates the conscious burial of her sensual life. The outset of self-renunciation which starts through waiting in *Godot* continues by excessive exercises of ending in *Endgame* and finally culminates in the attainment of peace and the ultimate dissolution of the sensual self in *Happy Days*. The peaceful condition which is finally achieved at the end of conscious self-annihilation of the characters in Beckett's major plays is very similar to rapturous annihilation or the conscious perdition of the sensual life which leads to the manifestation of transcendental self in Sufism. In *Divan e Shams*, Rumi clearly refers to this kind of spiritual happiness which lies on cancellation of the sensual organ:

How joyous the time that I silence my voice
Spirit's voice my soul with joy inflate.
I shall pack my bags, leave this world for that
Witness the order that Thou will create. (90)

This recurrent motif is the manifestation of Beckett's mystic idea reflected in *Three Dialogues*. Here, the nearness of the two phrases of "the ultimate penury" and "al-Haqq" coming shortly one after another, as Gibson asserts, conveys the Sufi motif of self-renunciation:

Beckett has argued for the importance of ‘the ultimate penury,’ as the state of being not merely ‘short’ of world and ‘self,’ but ‘without these esteemed commodities’. Duthuit appears to hear this ascetic valuation of renunciation as close to the Sufi insistence on a discipline in which the ‘wayfarer’ loosens and, at length, altogether severs the worldly bonds of his lower self. It is this, more than anything else that is the immediate occasion for the reference to *al-Haqq*. (49)

He also postulates that Beckett was really influenced by Sufism through the French Sufi scholar Loui Massignon who was a major source for Western knowledge of Sufism via his *Passion of Hallaj* and his interest in the Sufi heresy of al-Haqq. Gibson thus explains the Sufi moment of revelation (al-Haqq) where the questers can attain the authentic self after being purified enough to attain total renunciation. Trying to remain “empty and bare”, it can be recognized that Beckett’s dramatic characters are involved in a process of self- stripping actions which can be considered as the Sufi process of self-annihilation and self-realization. The idea is also reminiscent of mystic Eckhartian soul which prepares the ground for giving birth to spirituality (Almond 176). Such a paradoxical motif is once more reflected in Robinson’s *The Long Sonata of the Dead*:

Beckett’s nothing in fact designates a transcendent fullness opposed to the material world..... the nothing signifies an ultimate transcendencemaking Beckett into a Gnostic. All concur that Beckett is

attempting an ascetic disengagement from temporal reality in the name of an essence beyond it. ... such that to attain essence is to be unable to express it. Language is accordingly considered a barrier between man and knowledge, since the truth beyond words is unreachable” beyond the web of words lies nothing: language does not express reality. All speech is lying. Truth is silent. (qtd. in Wolosky 225)

Indeed, to complete the readings that unravel the transcendent moment of nothingness in Beckett’s play, I should add that it is the continuous undoing of the characters which leads them to where “there is only a pinhole that remains; the essence as void and non-presence” (Schweiger 153). Beckett’s non-heroes thus verify that “the only way to ‘have done’ is not to be there in the sense of not being present in the normalized ego-state” (Davies 401).

In line with such a perspective, Pinter’s major plays are the extension of Beckett’s process of loss through which the characters try to attain the authentic self. The confinement of small rooms is the focal image and the recurring motif of Pinter’s dramas. Pinter’s small refuges symbolize a kind of self-protection against the external assault and threats of true selfhood. The conscious detachment of Pinter’s characters from the outside world and their self-atrophying confinement to different kinds of enclosure which are like “sealed containers” or “virtual coffins” demonstrate a quasi-mystic line of the quest which aims to self-realization. Demonstrating the moments of confrontation in Pinter’s plays, Cohn refers to the idea of “virtual annihilation” which can throw light to the motif of the quest for the authentic self in Pinter’s dramas. She states that:

In Pinter's first play, *The Room*, after a blind Negro is kicked into inertness, the heroine, Rose, is suddenly stricken with blindness. In *The Dumb Waiter*, the curtain falls as Gus and his prospective murder stare at each other. Stanley Webber, the hero of *The Birthday Party*, is taken from his refuge for "special treatment." In *The Caretaker*, the final curtain falls on an old man's fragmentary (and unheeded) pleas to remain in his refuge. (56)

In such moments, the characters remain in a kind of non-presence where they are purified from any falsification and can discover the buried self within themselves. In *The Room*, Rose explicitly refers to the relationship between self-confinement and self-realization: ".... This room's all right for me. I mean, you know where you are ... you have got the chance in a place like this" (8). She unconsciously feels a sense of self-recognition while detached from the outside world. More importantly, Rose considers such recognition possible immediately as she leaves the outside world: "It's not far up when you come in from outside" (11). Although the room is not a comfortable place as it is sparsely furnished, it gives her a sense of self-protection. Conveying the motif of protection, the rooms offer a state of inaction which "involves the denial of some aspect of existence. They lead a safe but limited existence in a sheltered but confined area" (Ganz 178).

In her confinement, Rose is constantly trying to reveal the sort of the self she looks for through nursing, cooking or fantasizing. She tries to escape from the present meaningless self through fantasizing a greater image of the self as a

mother-figure for Bert: “I’d have pulled you through” (9). Rose’s inward inclination towards a greater self is symbolically manifest in her repulsive rejection of the basement: “. . . the room keeps warm. It’s better than the basement, anyway”, or “I wouldn’t like to live in that basement. Did you ever see the walls? They were running” (7-8).

Although Rose mentions that the basement is ugly and uninhabitable, her repulsive description reveals her obsession with that dark place: “I wonder who has got it now. I’ve never seen them, or heard of them. But I think someone’s down there” (11). In her conversations, she recurrently refers to “downstairs” as the essential topic:

ROSE. It must get a bit damp downstairs.

KIDD. Not as bad as upstairs.

ROSE. What about downstairs?

KIDD. Eh?

ROSE. What about Downstairs? (14)

Rose’s obsession either with the cozy nature of the room or the ugliness of the basement demonstrates her internal conflict. Psychologically, Rose is trying to transmute her ego to the spiritual world of unconscious while the id is still alluring. The room symbolizes the ego located between the id of the basement and the superego which she unconsciously wishes to attain. Although the room protects her against the destructive elements of the outside world, it is still unable to satisfy her needs as the drives of the id are still with her. The room is, as Walter Kerr suggests, a “solid-inside-a-void environment” (qtd. in Quigley). Rose’s self-withdrawal from the outside world to the confinement of the room is actually a

step toward her ultimate self-nullification which is symbolized in her returning home: "Come home now, Sal" (31).

Although Rose's father seems an earthly figure in the beginning, as Pesta asserts, "He takes on the character of a symbol for the divine." He adds that "going home has traditionally represented the act of finding final peace, after a life of trials and anxieties" (124). Detached from the intruding nature of the outside world, Rose has finally been able to transmute her conscious ego to the buried side of the self or her spiritual unconscious. Osterwalder offers a psychological criticism and indicates that Rose has successfully risen from the id of the basement to the symbolic displaced father figure as her superego. The symbolic appearance of the father which ends in Rose's blindness suggests her annihilation and spiritual relief. The final scene of the play demonstrates Rose's inward insight when she suddenly clutches her eyes: "Can't see. I can't see. I can't see" (32). The relationship between the symbolic image of the closed eyes and the notion of inward quest for self-recognition is manifest in how Berensmeyer evaluates Beckett's idea of the concept of sight in *Film*:

In mystic tradition, the eye, an organ of sense perception, is also an organ of the intellect. In Neoplatonism, as in ancient Egypt, the eye is correlated with the sun; in the Old Testament, it is an image of divine presence and omniscience. In Greece, the words for "seeing" and "knowing" are etymologically related. (cf. Wagner-Egelhaaf: 1989.10). Hence, perhaps, the denigrating references in Beckett to the "eye of flesh", even "this filthy eye

of flesh”, eyes that are safer closed, like those of protagonists in *Film* -- because then they can open themselves to an inner light, an “illumination” that would abolish all “trace” of exterior “always the same place. (487)

Although the critique evaluates the notion of physical sight and inward insight in one of Beckett’s works, the idea is also applicable to all of Beckett’s and Pinter’s characters. Closely related to the paradox of blindness and inward insight is the motif of silence in Pinter’s plays, as Hollis also argues:

It is comparable to the central ineffability of the mystical experience in which the character attains the consciousness of unity with the “Other.” It is the outward manifestation of the inner kenosis, the emptying of the self into the larger non-self. It is the occasion of emptiness but the experience of fullness. (102)

Although Hollis evaluates the silence of Pinter’s characters as the attainment of “supra-personal reality”, he does not consider this as the final stage of the process of self-nullification in Pinter’s characters. The spiritual repose that Rose symbolically attains through accepting the suggestive name of Sal and her subsequent blindness can be inferred as the manifestation of the inner kenosis which she attains after being exposed to a process of self-reduction and detachment leading to the final stage of silence.

In *The Slight Ache*, the match seller symbolizes the authentic self of Edward that is revealed when he is physically diminished. The emergence of the match seller, symbolizing light, implies the appearance of a new birth that is

evident in Flora's description: "You look younger. You look extraordinarily . . . youthful" (38-9). Such a rebirth occurs after the detaching annihilation that Edward refers to: "Sometimes, of course, I would take shelter, shelter to compose myself" (32). Similar to this particular drama, in Pinter's plays "the protagonists encounter with a double initiate, an inward journey which brings them face to face both with their mortality and with previously unknown aspects of themselves" (Burkman 131). A similar moment of self-recognition happens in *The Dumb Waiter* when Gus finally realizes he must stop his contacts with the outside world. Gus ultimately stops responding to the allure of the outside world: "why did you send him up all that stuff?" (Thoughtfully) "Why did I send it up?" (113). Echoing the final rejection of the character in Beckett's *Act Without Word*, Gus no longer responds to the whistle of the dumb waiter, conveying complete self-possession. By no longer responding to them, Gus symbolizes self-nullification. Gus's ignorant waiting thus turns to a complete nothingness represented in complete stripping off of his jacket, waistcoat, tie, holster and revolver. His final posture, with stooping body and hands at his sides in front of Ben directing the gun at him, signifies the complete annihilation of his ego. The ending long silence portrays an inward recognition which recalls for us Shaw's idea in another similar context: "You have learnt something. That always feels at first as if you had lost something" (*Major Barbara* 128).

Viewed from this angle, Aston in *The Caretaker* tries to detach himself from the crushing power of society and is reduced to seeking his authentic self in the confinement of his room. Being out of his poetic life, Aston tries to attain his wished-for self: ". . . so I decided to have a go at decorating it, so I came into this room . . ." (60). Aston sees Davies, the old visitor of the night, as a father-figure

connoting his lost authentic self. This notion is verified when Mick in his first meeting with Davies calls him his uncle's brother:

MICK. You remind me of my uncle's brother...

To be honest, I've never made out how he came to be my uncle's brother. I've often thought that maybe it was the other way round. I mean that my uncle was his brother and he was my uncle. But I never called him uncle. As a matter of fact I called him Sid. . . . (31)

In a similar way, Davies himself tries to discover his wished-for identity through withdrawing from the false social self society imposed on him. Here, both Aston and Davies dispossess themselves from all the false identities of the outside world through confining themselves to the detaching seclusion of the room. Davies' coming home makes Aston, who has come to him as a protecting father-figure, come home too. Such a relationship is reminiscent of Ruth's coming home in *The Homecoming* which as Hollis asserts, makes those who have come to her come home (131). As 'waiting' gives meaning to the meaningless existence of the tramps in *Waiting for Godot* and protects them against any abolishing element outside its circle, Davies' immediate acceptance of Aston's invitation to have a place in his room can be symbolically considered as a protecting device which simultaneously detaches him from the outside world. In this regard, the room is full of the images of disconnection like the shoes without laces or the futile attempts of Aston to fix the plug. The predominant symbol of confinement and will-lessness manifests itself in the Buddha statue which Aston loves and puts in

the room. The fact that the Buddha statue is destroyed conveys Davies' failure to detach from the alluring impulses of his false self and all its desires manifest in his attempts to wrest possession of the place from Aston. Such possession actually takes from him the care and protection he was supposed to reach in the confinement of the place. In other words, the room which was the symbol of detachment from the outside alluring impulses of the self has turned into the object of desire and willfulness by Davies.

However, the final scene of the play demonstrates a sudden turning point where a long silence overshadows the whole scene, with Aston turning his back to Davies. The final silence indicates the "speechlessness of annihilation" where "the gradual inevitable dissolution of human personality" takes place (Esslin 222). Davies finally considers the shoes to be good enough to make him get down to Sidcup and bring his identity papers: "I'll tell you what though ...them shoes ...them shoes you give me ...*they're working out all right ... they're all right. Maybe I could ... get down* [to Sidcup and get my papers] (78)." The fact that Davies suddenly reveals the fitness of his shoes exactly when he is on the verge of total dispossession signifies that the sudden illumination or the discovery of the wished-for identity presupposes one's complete annihilation or total dispossession. The final silence of *The Caretaker* which implies the hero's final annihilation is similar to the long silence which occurs in the final scene of *The Room*.

In *The Birthday Party*, Stanley's retreating into the infantile and inactive confinement of a boarding house demonstrates his immobile detachment from the society that spoiled his identity:

STANLEY. I went down there to play. Then,
when I got there, the hall was closed; the
place was shuttered up, not even a
caretaker. They'd locked it up. A fast
one. They pulled a fast one. I'd like to
know who was responsible for that...
They want me to crawl down on my
bended knees. (33)

Faced with such a change in the outside world, Stanley takes refuge in a private life to regain his wished-for self. With Meg as a mother-figure, the confinement of the boarding-house symbolizes a womb where he is taking refuge to looking for his authentic self. In the boarding-house, he simulates the quietness of his own home and his private room where he could only be himself, protected from any outside intruding elements.

The fact that Meg's memories indicate her desire for comfort and security, in a similar vein, emphasizes the idea of protection manifest in the womb-like confinement of the place. Psychologically, the collective man is taking refuge where a collective woman is taking care of him. In the confinement of the boarding-house that is like a living-womb, with Meg as the collective woman, Stanley is gradually reduced to a child-figure, connoting the attainment of calmness, security, and the mental comfort he wishes for: "I've got a small private income, you see. I think I'll give it up. Don't like being away from home, you see. I used to live very quietly — played records that are about all" (50). Katie Mitchell who directed a couple of Pinter's plays at the Royal Court in London in 2001 reveals the focal point of inaction in Pinter's play and explains the relation

of Pinter's plays to a Stanislavskian style of inaction. In a more exaggerated evaluation, Harry Burton, who is one of Pinter's actors, refers to the style of action that Pinter himself wanted him to present for *Party Time* playing the role of Jimmy. In an interview made by Catherin Itzin and Simon Trussler in *Theatre Quarterly* (1974), Burton explains that he had been instructed to take on a tremendous physical stillness, which according to Pinter, had been a discipline.

The announcement of Stanley's birthday by Meg as a mother-figure and the way the two new guests suggest they celebrate it foreshadow Stanley's rebirth that is the recapturing of the quiet soul he had lost for a long time. In a similar vein, the game which is played at his birthday party is suggestive. Stanley is touched by the blind McCann in the game of blind man's buff. McCann's movement towards Stanley and taking his glasses which leads his eyes to be tied up by Meg is reminiscent of Rose's blindness when touching Riley's eyes. Stanley's fastened eyes and broken glasses at the end of a long period of self-renunciation demonstrate a kind of self-annihilation (Almond 185). Almond then relates the idea to Neo-Platonism this way:

Certain motifs of Neoplatonism occur frequently in the writings of Dionysius and Eckhart: the progressive return of the fallen soul to the One, a return from multiplicity to unicity, from the impure to pure, from sense to non-sense, and from discourse and vision to silence and darkness. In order for the soul to be reunited with the original oneness or *epekeina tes ousia*, it first has to undergo a series of progressive stages, what Eckhart calls 'process of

becoming nothingness'. We will now examine how Stanley himself becomes nothingness. The five stages he has to undergo before being assimilated back into organization: the recognition of one's sinful individuality, the breaking down of reason, blindness, silence and, finality, the ecstasy. (181)

McCann's singing Paddy's song immediately before the game starts symbolizes his role as a father-figure bringing Stanley home:

Oh, the Garden of Eden has vanished, they say,
But I know the lie of it still.
Just turn to the left at the foot of Ben Clay
And stop when halfway to Coote Hill.
It's there you will find it, I know sure enough,
And it's whispering over to me:
Come back, Paddy Reilly, to Bally-James-Duff,
Come home, Paddy Reilly, to me! (55)

McCann then acts as Riley whose blindness is transferred to Rose and through her transfers her into Sal. The sudden turning off of the light and the breaking of glasses which follow Stanley's blindfolded eyes in the game signify the complete dissolution of his self.

Considering such a symbolic moment and the following clustering round of the torch, Carpenter states: "After the gradual building up in Act II, the climax reached, metaphorically viewed, is Stanley's simultaneous death and rebirth" (qtd. in Bold 96). Stanley's life generally reveals a process towards his gradual self-renunciation. He is snatched away from his home, then from the care of Meg to

ultimate nothingness. While taking him to Monty, Stanley's appearance conveys his funeral dress; he is clean-shaven, wearing a black jacket with a bowler hat in his hands. Most importantly, Stanley cannot speak any more and just makes inarticulate sounds implying his complete self-renunciation. Referring back to the symbol of the torch with its light immediately following the darkness that occurred after Stanley's blindness, his annihilation foreshadows a rebirth. The wiping clean of Stanley's slate as Almond asserts, preludes the rebirth of Eckhartian soul. (184). Almond refers to Goldberg's remark about Stanley and states that when he says "We'll bring him out of himself" Pinter's audience hears this echo: "to bring Stanley out of himself would mean to rob Stanley of any sense of self, to un-selve him, as it were" (179). He then recalls Eckhartian philosophy and says:

Eckhartian soul we will recall is 'empty of self and freed from the knowledge of objects, emptied to prepare a space for the birth of the Word in the ground of the soul. *The Birthday Party* is the story of such birth -- the story of the 'emptying of a human being (or as Ruby Cohn would say, 'the annihilation of the individual'). 184

Hollis believes that Goldberg can symbolically suggest prophet Nathan who has "come to call Stanley to his real home" (41). Stanley's retreating then "involves as much spiritual destruction as illumination" (Ganz 161). The final silent scene of Pinter's plays demonstrates a state which is beyond death. Interpreting the final silence in *Betrayal*, Rayner postulates that "the silence at the end functions as absolute" (496). Pinter leaves the final scenes with immobile,

dumb, or blind characters whose silence signifies a spiritual peace foreshadowing the attainment of an authentic self. The characters neither die nor commit suicide. The final silence symbolically demonstrates how willingly they are transmuted to the spiritual world of unconscious, in a senseless void which indicates their complete dissolution of sensual faculties.

Comparatively, the emphatic focus of Sufism on breaking sensual relations is meant to lead the questers to self-liberation. In the story of 'The Merchant and his Parrot' Rumi demonstrates how Indian parrots teach the merchant's parrot to be released from its cage. They only feign death and secretly convey to the merchant's parrot that the freedom is only captured through breaking all sensual bondages. As the merchant's parrot also feigns death, the merchant puts him out from his cage and the parrot reaches self-liberation. By using the parable of the Parrot, Rumi conveys the basic Sufi trend of annihilation and self-rebirth. He has likened the spirit of humans to a caged parrot which seeks to break out of the cage of body. He believes that so long as the soul of mankind is attached to the sensual attachment it is caged. However, it can reach eternal essence when it is set free from such a barrier (*Mathnavi* I.4).

The ending silence thus completes the recurrent process of transmuting the conscious ego to the world of unconscious both in Pinter's and Beckett's plays. Concerning the attainment of the phase of silence, Stewart reveals the mystic influence of Silesius on Beckett:

If one takes the final quotation, the resonances between Beckett and Silesius begin to be heard. The goal would seem to be a state of peace beyond language. The goal is expressed by Silesius by the

word God (which hence stands for a name for the unnamable, no less than the unnamable in Beckett's novel) in such epigrams as: Go where you cannot go; see where you cannot see. Hear where there is no sound; you are where God does speak. (1:199)

In Pinter's plays, similarly, the process of self-reduction ends in a silent annihilation which can lead the characters to a level of self-recognition.

The last moments of silence in Beckett's and Pinter's dramas reflect Schopenhauer's idea about the power of silence in self-liberation. In *World as Will* Schopenhauer writes:

Let us transport ourselves to a very lonely region of boundless horizons, under a perfectly cloudless sky, trees and plants in a perfectly motionless air; no animals, no human beings, no moving masses of water, *the profoundest silence* (my italics). Such surroundings are as it were a summons to seriousness, to contemplation, with complete emancipation from all willing and its cravings. But it is just this that gives to such a scene of mere solitude and profound peace a touch of the sublime. (204)

These silent moments thus complete the ongoing course of self-nullification in Beckett's and Pinter's characters. In other words, the developmental course of reduction leads the characters to the climactic release from the conscious ego. Such transference then demonstrates "a progression- or regression from the first zone to the third zone" of being and non-being (Cornwell 44).

It can be finally recognized that the psychological theory of transmuting the ego to the spiritual world of unconscious in the twentieth century thought appears in the shape of quasi-mystic self-tantalizing actions of the absurd characters which transcend the conscious ego without destroying it. In line with such transmutation, the absurd dramatic characters are mysteriously impelled by the anarchy of language toward a Nirvana-like state of inner awareness. Such a nirvana-like void which is the result of self-nullification in absurd plays is thus different from the nothingness that the active self-assertion of Renaissance tragic characters finally acknowledge. The ending scenes of the absurd plays then measure the degree of success the characters finally reveal. The final implied happiness of Becket's and Pinter's characters along with the explicit promise of peace and salvation remarkably demonstrate a comprehensive degree of success compared to the catastrophic fall of Renaissance tragic heroes or the transitory self-suspension of nineteenth century-dramatic characters.

In the light of such a degree of success, the apparently negative quest of the absurd dramatic characters is approved to be ironically fruitful in nullifying the alluring ego and transmuting it to the spiritual world of unconscious. Although the conscious choice of the absurd dramatic characters in complete withdrawal from the ego makes them engage in a recurrent, cyclical self-nullification that is apparently a vicious, tragic project, such dramas reveal the positive nature of tragedy in leading "consciousness away from life to an alleged better consciousness, a will-less world" (Trigg 176). In other words, although the continuous self-renunciation of Beckett's and Pinter's characters makes them recurrently lose the sense of everyday life and produce a tragic annihilating effect, the end result of such a reductive process is one of transcendence.

Central to the unique argument of this thesis, then, is the continuity in the process of self-reduction which leads to a level of self-realization leading up to and ending in Beckett's and Pinter's plays. Unlike the number of criticisms already available concerning the characters' grappling with the problems of the self which deal in a scattered way with separate playwrights, this study demonstrates that as representatives of the absurd dramas, both Beckett's and Pinter's plays reveal a similar self-annihilating strategy in the quest for an authentic self. Such an annihilating approach is uniquely interwoven with the psychological understanding of the present and can also be understood as part of a mystical tradition consistent with the Sufi notion of continuous loss and gain. Within this context, the overall pattern of self-reduction which includes the loss of mobility, sight, and speech is demonstrated to end in a complete self-renunciation that in turn reveals a comprehensive degree of self-realization. In the end, what Yang Zhu once observed in Daoism serves as an inclusive conclusion for the recurrent tradition of the quest for the authentic self in three major dramatic eras of Western tragedy. He believes that "purposeful action should be avoided, not because it is a hindrance to reaching the goal, but because it is always an act of falsification" (qtd. in Slingerland 57). While the final catastrophic failure of the Renaissance active questers proved that pragmatic action was wrong, the final spiritual peace of the inactive non-heroes of the absurd plays proves that "non-action is the best means to retain what you already have" (qtd. in Slingerland 57).

Conclusion

The changing manifestation of the quest for self-realization from violent outward action in Renaissance tragedy to inwardness in modern plays and the twentieth-century Theatre of the Absurd, reveals a continuous though mutating theme in Western theatre tradition. The form of expression depends on how culture moves from Aristotle's emphasis on a world of action to admitting moments of less rational insight. Riding the wheel of fortune, the active rationalists try to ascend; but they crave more as they rise and ironically end in a catastrophic fall. However, whenever these characters disconnect from pragmatic action, a short moment of insight appears. Although the life-long involvement of Renaissance tragic heroes is in ambitious strife for a higher self, the passing moments of suffering which occur as a result of their tragic flaws help them gain a kind of inward recognition.

Pretending madness is one of the manifestations of these characters' inclination toward inwardness which aims at liberating the authentic self. Hamlet's world advocates the logic of irrationality and provides an opportunity to evaluate the idea of the quest for self-realization from another perspective. *Hamlet's* ghost creates a sensational vision in its hero and shifts the point of emphasis from outward practicality to seclusion and inwardness through which he tries to attain his authentic self.

Although the present study focused on the analysis of three major dramatic eras and key texts of the West, elements of the quest for a higher self may also be found in other works and periods as well, though perhaps not as centrally developed as set out in this thesis. For instance, there are still traces of the Machiavellian superman in Johnson's tragic heroes (like Catiline, whose thirst for bloodshed reflects his passion for self-grandeur). If Renaissance heroic tragedies

lean towards a kind of stoicism which sees superman not in Machiavellian ideas but in spiritual values, then in Chapman's *Caesar and Pompey*, Pompey's suicide can be recognized not just as stemming from disappointment at outward defeat, but also as heralding a new approach to the quest in which pragmatic failure becomes a means of attaining an everlasting spiritual peace. This anticipates Nietzsche's idea of Dionysian self-loss through which the tragic hero can reach a higher self.

Following such a transition at the end of the Renaissance, the appearance of the motif of love in eighteenth-century heroic tragedies demonstrates a shift of emphasis from outward action to inwardness and feeling. The real greatness of Antony in Dryden's *All for Love* lies in his fall following the hero's love for Cleopatra. The greatness of Antony's social self prevents him from attaining his authentic self. To liberate such a higher self, Antony must experience a tragic life that develops his inward faculty. Similar to Hamlet's feigned madness, Antony keeps aloof from his unreal social self and lives totally in the dreamy world of his golden love. It is in line with such a shift of emphasis that madness becomes the favorite subject of Nathaniel Lee's heroic tragedies.

The symbolist plays of nineteenth-century Europe echo the psychological aspiration of the dramatic characters to answer their inward call to liberate the buried self within. The mysterious call of the ideal in Ibsen's characters demonstrates their preoccupation with the inward search of the authentic self. Shaw's plays are usually discussed in terms of the social ideas, but their emphasis on human inward strength to discover the "life-force" and reach the self-perfection of a new human, a superman or a philosophic being manifests the shift of emphasis from active manliness to a Dionysian spirit of womanhood. Shaw's

emphasis on heroines can be seen as part of the shift from an Apollonian aspect of the quest for self-perfection to the constructive power of love and Dionysian spiritualism.

While acknowledging these wider echoes of the quest for self-realization, this thesis argues that the theme is most concentrated and its central modes of expression most clearly defined in the Renaissance, the nineteenth century and modern absurd plays. Although each era has its own focus (pragmatic action, the escape into fantasy, self-erasure) and has been generally discussed as a distinct unit, we have seen how there is a continuity of questing for a higher self across all three periods of tragic play. Moreover, we have argued that, unlike Esslin's notion about the nihilistic nature of inactive characters in theatre of the absurd, according to Justice such passivity is "constructive and ennobling" (qtd. in Esslin 3) where the characters completely and consciously play the ending part of a tragedy focusing on the motif of loss. While in Renaissance tragedy characters like King Lear or Macbeth find spiritual peace within themselves at the moment of loss, modern absurd characters consciously try to remain in their inward world wishing to attain the authentic self. In these plays whenever there is negation of any outward action, there are images of ambiguous dream. In a similar vein, sad voices positively convey stoic spiritualism or "the virtue of endurance" (Gilman 217) which leads to the "metaphysic of presence" (Grillet 65). Although a number of critics consider the characters' withdrawal from action to be an escape from realizing the self, the non-doers of modern absurd dramas "possess freedom of imagination" which as Federman believes "allows them special entry to the core of significance (15) connoting a greater realization of the wished-for self. The psychological aspect of Pinter's characters which actually emanate from

Chekhov's dramatic style, focusing on implication and imageries rather than action and talk, demonstrates the characters' aspiration for super-reality which once more reveals the inward quest for self-realization in the modern era.

The changing manifestation of the quest for self-realization from outward action to inwardness and inaction in major dramatic eras of the West makes it possible to consider an ongoing process of mysticism as part of the quest. The perpetual dissolution of these characters which is manifest in their silence and inaction is reminiscent of Nietzsche's Dionysian spirit which presides over the process of generation, making forms possible through formlessness. While Nuttall remarks "Nietzsche ought to have argued that tragedy dramatizes the death of Apollo" (qtd. in Peel 64), it can be recognized that from Ibsen onwards, tragedy leans towards a Dionysian spirit of joyful loss. If Nietzsche's thrust is towards celebration of Dionysian principle and the spirit of pain is welcomed as the essential part of Greek culture leading to human rebirth, the increasing process of modern characters' withdrawal from the outside world and their self-reducing attempts demonstrate a positive return to Dionysius as the original tragic hero. If Wagner's *Tristram and Isolde* well demonstrates Nietzsche's introduction of the idea of self-loss, so too in Ibsen's plays we can see the heroine soars aloft and disappears but attains the highest pleasure in her self-loss. This is an ecstatic fulfilment of the direction taken by Hamlet's melancholic quest for self-realization.

The celebration of pain and loss, along with the shift of emphasis from Renaissance outward action to modern inwardness, well demonstrates the increasing inclination towards a mystic approach in the quest for self-realization. Self-forgetfulness and an underlying spirit of denial is reminiscent of the mystic

philosophy of ‘via-negativa’ where the soul remains empty and bare in order to spiritually give birth to a higher entity.

That increasing motif of inaction and negation in modern drama reflects the mystic apophatic tradition allows a critic from a different cultural tradition to connect with Western theatre. Commonalities between Eckhart, for example, Jung and Sufism allow me to read the seemingly absurd self-nullification of modern characters and their conscious withdrawal from worldly participation in a positive light. From the Sufi point of view, the increasing insistence of the characters on discarding physicality signifies a kind of becoming which is to achieve formlessness. The close alignment of the key motifs of non-presence, nothingness or withoutness that the absurd dramatists use makes it possible to offer a new orientation of the seemingly negative motifs and inactive dramatic style of twentieth-century dramas which echo the underlying Sufi notion of negation (*Salb*) regarding the attainment of a higher self, spirit or the essence.

The similarity of modern absurd dramatic characters’ insistence on physical dissociation to Sufi trend of annihilation is implied in Uhlman’s remarks where he considers such disjunction to be a quasi-religious experience where the body is emptied of all conscious thought and perception. Such “renunciation, then, involves the abandonment of all possible relation, dissolving one’s own identity with all Being” (Uhlman 76). The discarding of the characters from the surrounding world is another manifestation of Sufi philosophy present in Ibn Arabi’s idea where the completely detached seeker is described in his *Futuhāt* as a mirror reflecting the Absolute: “He is we and we are He” ... (82).

The idea of non-relation and the fruitful univocity as its gift similarly appears in how Beckett describes its function in Bram Van’ Velde’s painting: “If I

say that he paints the impossibility of painting, the deprivation of relation, of object, of subject, I appear to put him in relation with this impossibility, with this deprivation, in front of them. He is inside them, is this the same thing? He is them, rather, and they are he” (qtd. in Uhlman 82). The experience of such disjunction then focuses on discarding the unnecessary action and dissolving one’s identity to the unified whole and echoes the focal theme of the Sufi motif of annihilation of the ego (*fana*). In this regard, dissolution of physicality is a kind of movement towards becoming death that recalls us of Sufi motif of annihilation. This is not negative, but allows the questers’ merging with the Truth. Such an increasing progression towards physical exhaustion, which runs parallel to the exhaustion of action, language, mentality, images and spaces in modern tragedy especially in the Theatre of the Absurd, is the continuation of a process of negation which aims at the characters’ univocity of being through a “process of inclusive disjunction whereby the modes are at one and the same time finite or individuated and merging with everything emerges” (Uhlman 13).

The dominant motif of loss from Ibsen’s dramas onwards demonstrates a tentative calmness in tragic characters which seems to attach them to the ‘non-space’ or the ‘void’ reflecting the paradoxical Neo-Platonic idea of the Essence where the soul surrenders all its individuality in order to return to the wished-for unification with the Abyss of the whole. The motif of ‘fidelity to failure’ which is Beckett’s favorite motif of *Thee Dialogues* appears in all modern tragedies and conveys the Sufi motif of self-renouncement. Dutuit sees such a renunciation in Beckett’s works close to “the Sufi insistence on a discipline which the wayfarer loosens and at length, altogether severs worldly bonds of his lower self” (qtd. in Bunning 46). The self-renouncing modern characters reflect Hallaj’s claim in

Sufism wherein the solution to the oceans of divinity and unity “two spirits in one single body dwelling/ and seest them Him, then seest thou us” (Nasr 135).

The seemingly negative inaction of modern and twentieth-century tragic characters is then positively justifiable in the light of Sufi motif of annihilation and rebirth. In other words, the Sufi thought. The claim even sounds more reasonable after we have considered the way Beckett, as the representative of the absurd school of drama, has been under the influence of Sufi ideas of ‘nothingness’, ‘self-nullification’, and ‘annihilation’ leading him to focus on the motifs of failure and ultimate penury. The similarity of the modern and twentieth-century tragic characters’ quest in their denial of the outside, material world and ultimately their own physical faculties with the way Sufis withdraw themselves from the ineffective outside world makes it possible to offer a new reading of modern drama regarding the recurrent tradition of the quest for self-realization. Considering the symbolic meaning of darkness in Sufism which connotes knowledge and insight, the modern characters’ blindness connotes the sudden moment of revelation that is the ultimate moment of self-transcendence in Sufism.

The points posited earlier defend a central theory that the course of development of the quest for self-realization is not towards absurdity and nihilism, and the characters’ inaction or inwardness is not, as Esslin believes, a way of escaping from self-realization but a regressive progression towards attaining a higher degree of self-realization. If Bunning considers Beckett’s plays to be “neither absurdist nor nihilist” but, if anything, belonging to “that mode of meditative discourse that attempts to articulate the unsayable” (49), we can say with reasonable certitude that the process of development throughout the three major dramatic eras of the West is a progression towards a mystic approach of the

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quest starting with Nietzsche's quasi-mystic paradoxical idea of the Dionysian creative self-destruction to a particular self-denunciating approach which is reminiscent of Sufi idea of self-annihilation and self-realization. Although the present study only focused on the three major dramatic eras of the West, the central theory seems to be applicable to Western tragedy as a whole. As briefly referred to other periods earlier where drama has been declined, the underlying motif of the quest for self-realization makes a general inclination towards a meaningful inwardness. From another point of view, then, while the present study merely revealed the progressive course of the quest for self-realization through demonstrating three different manifestations of action, imagination, and inaction, it is also possible to evaluate the series of development in Western drama through the lens of Sufi philosophy of self-realization.

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