

**A STUDY OF SAMUEL BECKETT'S PLAYS IN
RELATION TO THE THEATRE OF THE ABSURD**

THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE
UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT
FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH

T.M. THOMAS

RESEARCH CENTRE
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
ST. THOMAS COLLEGE
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APRIL, 2003

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Certificate

This is to certify that the thesis, entitled A Study of Samuel Beckett's Plays in Relation to the Theatre of the Absurd, submitted to the University of Calicut for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English is an original record of studies and research carried out by Shri. T.M. Thomas at the Research Centre, Department of English, St. Thomas College, Trichur, under my guidance, and that it has not been previously submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma.



Dr. C.J. Davees
08/04/23
Dr. C.J. Davees

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled A Study of Samuel Beckett's Plays in Relation to the Theatre of the Absurd submitted by me for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English at the University of Calicut, is the record of original and independent research carried out by me at the Research Centre, Department of English, St. Thomas College, Trichur, under the guidance of Dr. C.J. Davees, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any other degree or diploma.

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A Note in Documentation

For the preparation of this thesis, I have used MLA Hand book for Writers of Research Papers (Fifth Edition) by Joseph Gibaldi. For references to the Bible, I have made use of the King James Version, the Gideons International, 1979.

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Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction: Samuel Beckett and the Theatre of the Absurd.....	1
Chapter 2. Beckett's Vision of Life and Art	16
Chapter 3. Beckett as an Avant-garde: His Plots and Characters in Absurdity	90
Chapter 4. The Motif of Time in the Plays of Beckett.....	166
Chapter 5. Biblical Imagery and Echoes in the Plays of Beckett ..	190
Chapter 6. Conclusion.....	279
Select Bibliography	291

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Samuel Beckett and the Theatre of the Absurd

Samuel Beckett (1906 – 89) is probably the best known of the Absurd dramatists but like all other creative artists, he has his individuality and even idiosyncrasies. His ambivalent presentation of ‘Godot’, who has variously been identified as the Christian God, the son of God, a chaplinesque God and one Monsieur Godean from Balzac’s Le Fasseur, has indeed provoked criticism in spite of the somewhat disingenuous disclaimers from the author himself. It is an inadequate appreciation of the complexity that has led some critics to include him among a group of writers who simply do not subscribe to Christian values. Hugh Kenner holds the view that Cartesian ideas are current in Beckett’s oeuvre (80). Martin Esslin considers Beckett’s writing a literary exposition of Satre’s existentialism (60). According to Ruby Cohn, “Beckett mocks the whole classico – Christian tradition in Godot” (222). A.J Leventhal states: “Beckett has no strong views

on the existence of God” (qtd. in Calder 8). An investigation into Beckett’s plays reveals considerable echoes of Christian images, ideology and idiom in the author’s works. Accordingly, it is intended here to suggest an approach giving due consideration to the theological elements of the Christian culture in which Beckett grew up. The highly original sense in which this dramatist appeals to our modern feelings about the ‘absurdity’ of contemporary life will be analysed from the perspective of cross-currents generated by the ongoing transition away from dogmatic theology. Critics like Ronald Gray, Fred E. Luchs, Charles McCoy have dealt with Christian problems in Waiting for Godot (1955) but other major plays like Endgame (1958), Krapp’s Tape (1959), All That Fall (1967), Eh Joe (1967), Not I (1973) and Catastrophe (1984) have not been brought under the ambit of Christian interpretation. Moreover, no extensive study has been made to relate the study of Beckett’s plays to the Bible and to substantiate that there is a Biblical dimension to the dramatist’s view of the Absurd.

Absurdity has a long history. It can be traced as far back as the Ecclesiastes, the mime plays of antiquity and the commedia dell’arte.

Even Shakespeare, Goethe and Ibsen are regarded as harbingers of the Absurd. So the whole work of dramatic literature has been a prelude to the glorious emergence of the Theatre of the Absurd. But any discussion of Absurdity involves the collection of essays called The Myth of Sisyphus (1942) by Albert Camus who is still most widely known as the philosopher of the Absurd. A number foreign playwrights of the 1950's and early 60's living in France and agreeing to the view of Albert Camus that the human situation is essentially absurd, gave expression to the post war mood of the disillusionment and scepticism in their writings. These writers did not belong to any formal movement but it came to be called "the Theatre of the Absurd". The spirit of Absurdism is seen in Alfred Jarry's anarchic Ubu Roi produced in 1896. It is in the book The Theatre of the Absurd (1961) by Martin Esslin that the term and the philosophy of Absurdism were made familiar to the reading public. Some of the first plays of the Theatre of the Absurd are Eugene Ionesco's The Bald Prima Donna (1950), Arthur Adamov's The Invasion (1950) and Beckett's Waiting for Godot (1955). Later Absurd writers included Harold Pinter of Britain and Edward Albee of the United States. Their writings reflect

the influence of comic traditions drawn from such sources as commedia dell'arte, vaudeville and music hall combined with such theatre arts as mime and acrobatics. At the same time, the impact of ideas as expressed by the Surrealist, Existentialist and Expressionist Schools and the writings of Franz Kafka are evident in the movement. The Theatre of the Absurd declined by the 1960s. Still some of its innovations have been absorbed into the main stream of theatre while serving to inspire further experiments.

It is one of the general experiences of human beings to confront a world deprived of a comfortable and generally accepted vision of life. It turns out to be a disjointed, purposeless and absurd world. When we are cut off from religious, metaphysical and transcendental roots, a sense of loss is inevitable. This metaphysical anguish at the absurdity of human condition is understood to be the theme of the plays of the Absurd movement. Consequently the term 'Theatre of the Absurd' is applied to a group of the dramatists of the 1950's who, nevertheless did not regard themselves as a school. They merely share certain attitudes towards human predicament in the universe. "They have, moreover, two further distinguishing features: their tremendous

variety and patent unwillingness to fall neatly behind any one standard or one leader; and the fact that the great majority of them have working-class origins” (Taylor 11). The Theatre of the Absurd is not doctrinaire; it only strives to express diverse nuances of a common sense of the senselessness about the human condition. It also seeks to expose the inadequacy of the rational approach. By the abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought, Absurdism challenges conventional ways of looking at complex reality. It does not, however, argue about the absurdity of the human condition. It merely presents it in terms of concrete images. As a result, most of the Absurdist plays are incomprehensible to the uninitiated and they are part of a new and still developing stage-convention that has not been generally understood and defined properly. Yet, some defining characteristics can be identified and it is worth considering them.

When we think of a good play, we have in our mind a clearly constructed story, subtle characterisation, a fully explained theme, a spirit of the age, witty repartee and pointed dialogue but Absurd plays have no story or plot to speak of, no recognisable characters and no beginning or an end. On the contrary, the Absurd playwright tends to

paint an inner landscape instead of the outer world. No clear dichotomy between fantasy and fact is seen. The playwright develops a free attitude towards time and it is used according to his subjective requirements. The environment of the Absurd plays in which a series of images are presented to project mental conditions, very often remains fluid. We find the language very unnerving as it seems to get nowhere. Despite its patterns and cliches with its uncanny resemblance to 'real' speech and disorganised and pointless qualities, we may be able to find a greater reality. Moreover, they have a predilection for an iron precision of language and construction as it is considered a defense against the chaos of living experience.

The Absurd plays are conceived as something which the audience must experience even though they may not be able to offer a logical explanation of the details of that experience. We will be nearer to appreciating them than thinking. It is because such reactions are probably what the playwright intends. We are not expected to have explanations. There won't be any. We will get only the feeling of what the play is about in a broader sense. The Absurd plays very often frustrate our expectations. There will be elements of realism. The

settings may be detailed and domestic. The talk may be like ordinary conversation. So we tend to expect that the play will pose a problem that will eventually be resolved but only to be frustrated. There will be bizarre elements that prevent us from making sense of what we see.

Each of the Absurd dramatists is an individual who regards himself as a lone outsider, cut off and isolated in his private life. Each has his own personal approach to both subject matter and form, his own roots, sources and background. But they have a good deal in common. Their work most sensitively mirrors and reflects the preoccupations and anxieties, the emotions and thinking of many of their contemporaries in the Western world. Writers like Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Arthur Adamov, Jean Genet, Harold Pinter, Robert Pinget, N.F Simpson, Edward Albee, Fernando Arrabal and Gunter Grass exemplify in their works one form or another of the tradition of the Absurd. By incorporating devices from circus, mimes, clowning, verbal nonsense and the literature of dream and fantasy which often have a strong allegorical component, Absurdists have blazed new trails.

The hallmark of their attitude is that the certitudes and unshakable basic assumptions of former ages have to be swept away. These were tested, found wanting, discredited as cheap and childish illusions. The decline of religious faith was latent until the end of the Second World War; as a form of substitute religious faith in progress, nationalism and various totalitarian fallacies masked the subliminal agitation. All this was shattered by the war. By 1942, Albert Camus was putting the question why man should not seek escape in suicide since life had lost all meaning. "The Absurd, for Camus, is an absence of correspondence between the mind's need for unity and the chaos of the world the mind experiences, and the obvious response is either suicide or, in the opposite direction, a leap of faith" (Hinchliffe 36).

The Theatre of the Absurd is noted for its 'devaluation' of language though language is an important point in its conception. The concrete and objectified images of the stage tend towards a poetry couched in the transcendence and contradictions of the words spoken by the characters on the stage. "The theatre of Absurd is thus part of the anti-literary movement of our time which has found its expression in abstract painting with its rejection of literary elements in pictures"

(Esslin, Absurd 26). The success of the Theatre of the Absurd within a short span of time was phenomenal and it stimulated a large body of work in its convention.

The attitude of this kind of literature is a judgment on ourselves in a time of outrage and apocalypse. Moreover, it has adopted a new attitude towards itself accepting silence as its metaphor. Silence is the state towards which the entropy of language tends. The result is anti-literature. Therefore, anti-literature, the term used for the literature of Beckett, symbolises intimations of violence and revelations which lead to inversions of forms and content. But this silence in literature does not result in the drying up of spirit. Instead, it proclaims a new form of transcendental experience. The new literature very often evades the social, historical and aesthetic standards that used to render identity to literature in previous periods. Writers belonging to this genre of literature touch on the experiences that awe them. The outrage that one finds in their writings is the result of this metaphysical revolt. When human beings find their existence on the earth painful, their ire is turned against God and it amounts to metaphysical revolt. In certain situations, humans show their desire for

nothingness consequent in the exhaustion of the mind by its own rebellion. This is tantamount to metaphysical surrender.

In the outrage, the very being of man is put on trial. What follows is a language of violence, demonic action and reaction compressed into a terrible unity that ultimately becomes a nothingness as no meaning or value can be assigned to it. Its function is to turn human beings into things. Under its pressure the change of the human form is downward, towards the worms of Beckett, the insect people and sentient ooze of Burroughs. It is not temporal but spatial, not historical but ontological. In the landscape of violence, an inescapable part of this literature, both the attacker and the victim constitute an integral part. Even the motive is reversed in this type of literature. Old fashioned protests yield to modern outrage. Outrage is a response to the vacuum and it requires apocalyptic change. Apocalyptic violence can be conceived by the oppressed as retribution against their enemies and even the millennium can be understood by them as an idea of power rather than of love. Moreover, we come across the rejection of the self or human identity revealed through apocalyptic metaphors. The image of the man as the measure of all things is shattered when

the writers speak of the cripples, the satyrs and the junkies and sometimes such loathing of human identity reaches its consummation in orgiastic destruction.

Outrage and apocalypse are not the only main responses that find expression in the new literature. Other ideas also are central to the character of the literature of the Absurd. When the writer begins to write, he conceives anti-literature either as pure creation or futile play. The Absurd creator does not value his work highly. He spurns his activity. Thus the imagination gives up its ancient authority and it finds its glorified ideal in the ironic attitude of the wordless author. Literary obscenity also finds its place in the works of the Absurd authors. In a culture where there is sexual repression, protest may take the form of obscenity and the literature that exposes this motive becomes a literature of revolt. In their works we notice that the excremental obsessions parody themselves and deny all love. In the game of parody as in the act of obscenity, antilanguage rules.

The literature of the Absurd denies the old principles of causality, psychological analysis and symbolic relations. It presents characters convinced of universal irrelevance and things breaking

loose of words and of connection between subjects and objects. It refutes all ideas of pre-established order. If man wants to be alone and refuses communion with the universe, the fate is neither tragic nor comic, but absurd. This type of literature develops a new attitude challenging the assumptions of our civilisation and also the ancient excellence of literary discourse.

Samuel Beckett is a master of the avant-garde. He lives in “a universe where love has been frozen, then, an insidiously plausible universe, a universe that bubbles up into invisible grotesques and a universe that its creator did not happen upon until relatively later in life, after he was forty” (Kenner 16). For him, art is not art if it is not taken away from impossibility. Words can only demonstrate their emptiness. Certainty in knowledge is no longer possible. Religion and metaphysics have lost their traditional authority. Human relations are at bottom cruel. Therefore, love is a disguise of power and power is a disguise of solitude. Matter that undergoes decay remains alien to mind giving no chance for union between the two. But human consciousness is capable of reflecting upon itself and entertaining its own end. Thus literature becomes the inaudible game of a solipsist and

it tends to contract into silence or towards an entropic state. Yet his silence, despite its grim satiric note, has something in common with the silence of holy men who after knowing pain and suffering, reach for a peace beyond human understanding. "Beckett's view of life is basically a religious one: it is the view of a man who seeks some meaning beyond the trivial happenings of everyday life, a purpose beyond the physical needs of a specific time and place" (Pronko 54). Indeed, the emphasis in this thesis is on the religious echoes from the Christian Scripture in the plays of Beckett, as will be demonstrated particularly in chapter five.

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Through these chapters, an attempt will be made to introduce the main themes and motifs recurring in Beckett's plays. At the same time it is intended to highlight the ways in which Beckett's dramatic expression of some of the basic human philosophical problems are viewed against the background of the Biblical tenets and dogmas.

After a short introductory chapter highlighting the chief characteristics of the Theatre of the Absurd and Beckett's premier position among the Absurdist, attention focuses in the second

chapter, “Beckett’s Vision of Life and Art”, on his vision of life and art, the shaping of which has been the result of various influences. His early upbringing, education, influence of philosophers and writers like Descartes, Camus, Sartre, Proust, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, various literary moments, religion, society and art have contributed to his Absurdist view which is the hallmark of his vision. His pessimism, cynicism and his morbid despair are discussed in depth.

The third chapter, “Beckett as an Avant-garde: His Plots and Characters in Absurdity” concentrates on the salient features of Beckett as an Avant-garde playwright. His plots and characters demonstrate how they differ from those of the conventional plays and appeal to a particular section of people that embrace the tramp, the homeless outcast, the crippled and the deranged. The rejection of the sequential plot, disability, pathos and transitoriness of human life are analysed. The absurd elements in the plays are studied against the background of the Bible to substantiate that there is a religious aspect to Beckett’s Absurdism.

The fourth chapter, “The Motif of Time in the Plays of Beckett”, aims at the discussion of the idea of Time developed in the

plays. The linear and the static qualities of Time are analysed with their impact on human beings. Beckett's thesis that Time and space are voids, also is discussed. Moreover, his views on Time are examined in the Biblical context too.

The fifth chapter, "Biblical Imagery and Echoes in the Plays of Beckett", proposes to give a detailed picture of religious imagery and litotes in the plays. Beckett's intent to lean onto Biblical characters, stories and situations for cross-references is examined and how he has succeeded in creating a situation of humorous irreverence by irony, satire, paradox and sarcasm, also will be subjected to detailed study.

The sixth chapter, Conclusion, will have a recap of the conclusions of all the preceding chapters with an emphasis on the many-splendoured genius of Beckett. Over and above, efforts will be made to prove the thesis that Beckett by his attack and assault on God and religion has succeeded in formulating his philosophy of Absurdity, still with a religious dimension.

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Chapter Two

Beckett's Vision of Life and Art

In the introductory chapter we have seen the pre-eminent position of Beckett among the Absurdist and the complexity of his dramatic art. Along with the definition of 'Absurdism', salient features of the movement were discussed with special reference to the approach of Beckett. Now we may think of his vision of life and art, more deeply.

Vision motivates a person to understand and accomplish a mission in his life. The literary mission Beckett took up and its successful end secured him the Nobel Prize in 1969. When we try to make a study of the vision of Beckett, we have to take his comprehensive view of life into account. His early upbringing, the education he received, the persons he came in contact with, and the society in which he lived, are some of the factors that have contributed to the shaping of his vision.

Early life and education

Samuel Barclay Beckett was born at Cooldrinach in Foxrock County, Dublin on 13 April 1906. He was brought up in a middle class Protestant family and grew up in an atmosphere away from the rebellion nearby. Even as a small boy he was fond of the quiet of solitude. He had his learning first at Earlsfort House in Dublin and then at Portora Royal School in Enniskillen where he began to learn French, one of the two languages in which he could write.

At 17, he joined Trinity College choosing French and Italian as his subjects. Moreover, he was attracted towards the theatre scene of post-independence Dublin. The plays of J.M. Synge interested him. He also got the opportunity to watch American films and discover the silent comedies of Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplin. The influence of these actors later led to the creation of the vaudevillian tramps in his plays.

After graduation, Beckett went to France where he met James Joyce who became his seminal influence. Beckett assisted James Joyce in

his literary works. During his stay in Paris, he was inspired by the vibrant Parisian literary circle and he began writing. In 1930, his first poem “Whoroscope” was published and it was followed by the publication of an essay on Proust. This helped the fledgeling and unsure artist shape his own aesthetics. Then on his return to Dublin he became a lecturer at Trinity and it was at this time that his first collection of stories More Pricks Than Kicks (1934) was published.

He gave up his teaching post and again returned to Paris in 1932. Beckett’s unwillingness to settle down in a respectable career was a cause for worry to his family and he remained estranged from his mother for several years. While in Paris he wrote his first novel, Dream of Fair to Middling Women (1932), a highly autobiographical one with its digressive tendencies of Fielding and Sterne. With the publication of this novel, Beckett was emerging from Joyce’s shadow and developing his own voice. Faced with financial difficulties he returned to Dublin and then moved to London where he began to write his next novel Murphy (published in 1938). For the next few years he travelled from one place to

another and then in 1937, he settled down permanently in Paris. Once he was stabbed by a pimp and admitted in the hospital. James Joyce looked after him in the hospital. While he was recuperating, he was taken care of by a French acquaintance called Suzanne Deschevaux Dismernil who later became his wife.

In 1941 Paris was invaded and during the Occupation, Beckett and his wife joined the Resistance. Later they were forced to leave Paris as they feared arrest by the Gestapo. They went to Rousillon in the South of France and he worked on a farm for his livelihood. Side by side, he carried on the work of completing Watt (1953), a novel he had begun in Paris. After the defeat of the Germans, the couple came back to Paris in 1945. Beckett then travelled to Ireland to see his mother. He began to write in French and the period (1947 – 1950) was the most prolific and the finest. It was during this period that his first French novel Mercier at Camier, the famous novel trilogy, his first play Eleuthesia and Waiting for Godot were written. The 1950s and 1960s witnessed the publication of his master pieces and radio plays. During this period, he suffered from

health problems and he underwent operation on his eyes. The 1970s were a less prolific period but still he wrote television plays for the B.B.C and got involved in the productions of his theatrical works. In 1986, he suffered from the onset of emphysema and his deteriorating health prevented him from writing but took up the work of translating his books. His wife died on 17th July 1989 and Beckett breathed his last on 22nd December 1989. He was buried in Montparnasse Cemetery in Paris.

A study of Beckett's literary works will reveal that the themes of alienation and suffering are recurrent. The story of this torment that his characters are subjected to, has its roots in the life of loneliness, privations, diseases and decay that Beckett suffered. A glimpse into some of the events in the private life of the author will be illuminating.

At the age of 22, Beckett got the post of lecturer in Paris. On his way to Paris he travelled to Germany to visit his aunt who lived with her husband William and three children. Beckett fell in love with Peggy, one of their daughters. But their love did not find fulfilment. At the age of 18, she contracted tuberculosis and two years later died in Germany. She was

Beckett's first love and she became the original for the green-eyed heroines in his writings.

At the age of 24, he returned to Dublin and got appointment as a lecturer in French at Trinity College. In Dublin he suffered from serious depression. In 1933, when Hitler took power, he was in Dublin. This was a hard period for Beckett. His father suffered from a massive heart attack and this totally overwhelmed him. After spending several months in Ireland, he went to London where he spent two miserable years depressed and confused. It was during this period that he wrote Murphy (1938) with London as its background. Its protagonist is seen as projection of Beckett wandering about in London as a depressed person. Another incident that created a feeling of alienation was his long stay in the South of France caused by his hiding from the Nazis.

After the war, Beckett returned to Ireland to be with his ailing mother. She died of Parkinson's disease and throughout her final illness, he cared for her. He wrote about his mother's death in Krapp's Tape:

-bench by the weir from where I could see her window. There I sat in the biting wind, wishing she were gone (pause)... I was there when (...) the blind went down, one of these dirty brown roller affairs, throwing a ball for little white dog as chance would have it. I happened to look up and there it was. All over and done with at least. I sat on a few moments with the ball in my hand and the dog yelping and pawing at me. (pause). Moments. Her moments my moments. (pause). The dog's moments. (15)

Towards the end of his life, he lost his capacity to walk and finally lost his mobility completely.

When we try to discuss Beckett's vision, we tend to view it in terms of Absurdity because Absurdity is a key word in his literary writings. Before examining the various aspects of Absurdism, it will be appropriate if we think of the circumstances and other factors that led Beckett to hold this view of life. Critics are of the opinion that apart from the backdrop of his early life and the war torn world, certain free thinkers

like Friedrich Nietzsche, Albert Camus, Descartes, Schopenhauer and Geulincx were the main sources that influenced and formed Beckett's view of the world as well as his literary writings.

To add to it, I would like to maintain that his familiarity with the Bible, especially Book of Ecclesiastes, might have seminal influence on him in the shaping of the Absurdist view.

The Book of Ecclesiastes

Let us examine how the very idea of Absurdism has its genesis in this book. The name of this book "Ecclesiastes" means "The Teacher". It is generally believed that the book was written about the 10th century BC. The central problem in this book is "meaninglessness". The writer examines every aspects of human life – wealth, social position, professional success and pleasures. The teacher was a king over Israel in Jerusalem (10th cent. BC); he devoted himself to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven. He came to the realisation that God

laid a heavy burden on man, and all the things done under the sun were meaningless. His application to the understanding of even wisdom and madness was merely “a chasing after the wind” (Eccles. 1:4). Even pleasures and laughter were proved to be foolish. So he hated life because the work done under the sun proved to be grievous. For, a man may do his work with wisdom, knowledge and skill and then he must leave all that he owns to some one who has not worked for it. Moreover, he has to face misfortune also.

According to the Teacher, there is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven:

A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;

A time to kill and a time to heal; a time to break down and a time to build up (Eccles. 3:2-4).

The same fate waits for man and animals. All come from dust and all return to dust. Nobody knows what is good for a man in life during the few and meaningless days he passes through like a shadow. Nobody can tell him what happens after man is gone. He has seen that righteous man

perishing in his righteousness and a wicked man living long in his wickedness. He has also seen that sometimes the swift do not win the race or the strong lose the battle, the wise do not get food, the brilliant do not get wealth and the learned do not get the favour. Fools are put in many high positions while the rich occupy the low ones. He has learnt this also:

For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow (Eccles. 1:18).

The influence of various writers and movements

Among the thinkers who have influenced Beckett, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) has a pre-eminent place. Nietzsche was especially interested in the analysis and evaluation of the fundamental cultural values of western philosophy, religion and morality. He characterised them as expressions of the ideal that is ascetic in nature. The ascetic ideal comes into being when suffering is endowed with ultimate importance. According to the traditions of Judea-Christian faith, suffering was made

tolerable as it was a part of God's design and if, through it, the believers are given an opportunity for atonement. The doctrine of personal immortality and the belief that each individual's life and death have cosmic significance, were strong in the minds of the Jews and the Christians. Likewise, traditional philosophy lent credence to the fact that the soul is more important than the body; and the Christians attached more importance to mind, duty, reality and the timeless than to senses, desire, appearance and the temporal. Nietzsche's criticism of traditional morality was centred on the typology of master and slave morality. The good and evil contrast arose when slaves avenged themselves by converting attributes of mastery into vices. If the favoured were powerful, it was said that the meek would inherit the earth. Pride became sin. Charity, humility and obedience were considered virtues whereas competition, pride and autonomy were considered vices. The triumph of this slave morality led to the claim that it was the only true morality. 'Nihilism' was the term Nietzsche used to the devaluation of the highest values posited by the ascetic ideal. He maintained that religious and philosophical absolutes lost their sheen in the emergence of 19th century

positivism, a doctrine that man can have no knowledge of anything but phenomena and that the knowledge of phenomena is relative, not absolute. When metaphysical and theological foundations collapse, a sense of purposelessness and meaninglessness would pervade. Therefore, the triumph of meaninglessness is the triumph of nihilism: "God is dead". Nietzsche believed that most people would not accept the intrinsic meaninglessness of existence and they would create other surrogate gods like nationhood. Then again, slaughter will take place under banners of universal brotherhood, democracy and socialism. Nietzsche very often thought of his writings as struggles with nihilism. Apart from his critiques of religion, philosophy and morality, he developed original theses like perspectivism, will-to-power, eternal recurrence and the superman. We find that Beckett also got imbued with these ideas which found expression in many forms in his works.

Albert Camus (1913 – 1960) a French novelist and essayist worked out the theory of Absurdity and applied this thesis in his writings. The year 1942 saw the publication of an influential philosophical essay "The

myth of Sisyphus” in which Camus, with considerable sympathy analysed ‘nihilism’ and the sense of the “absurd”. His brilliant novel The Outsider is a study of 20th century alienation. Camus sees absurdity in the bilateral relationship between the human being and the world he lives in. The world of things is impenetrable and because of its impenetrability it is also alien to man. His plays Cross purpose (1944) and Caligula (1945) remain landmarks in the Theatre of the Absurd.

Descartes (1596 – 1650) a crucial figure in the history of philosophy combined the influences of the past into a synthesis that was original and yet congenial to the scientific temper of the age. He is reckoned as the progenitor of the modern spirit in philosophy. In his Principia (1644), Descartes defined philosophy as the study of wisdom. The chief utility is for the conduct of life, the conservation of health and the invention of all arts. His metaphysics in essence consisted of three principles of scepticism, mathematicism and subjectivism. From the indubitability of the self, Descartes deduced the existence of a perfect God and from that a perfect being, incapable of falsification or deception

and those ideas about the corporeal world within which man must be true. The achievement of certainty about the natural world also is guaranteed by the perfection of God and by the clear and distinct ideas that are His gift. The Cartesian philosophy suggests that clarity, distinctness and absence of contradiction among ideas are the ultimate test of meaningfulness and truth. The Cartesian self is just such a substance from which the idea of God originates and with which all deductive reasoning begins and in the question of truth in science only man's reason can ultimately decide. Cartesianism was to dominate the intellectual life of the continent till the end of the 17th century. One can see that Beckett's poem 'Whoroscope', his novels Murphy and Mercier at Camier mirror Descartes' ideas abundantly.

Arthur Schopenhauer (1788 – 1860), himself a German idealist, maintained that the irrational is the truly real. He waged a life long battle against academic philosophy and constructed his own system of philosophy. Schopenhauer was in agreement with Kant that the world of appearances of phenomena is governed by the conditions of space, time

and casualty. But he held that science which investigates this world cannot itself penetrate the world behind appearances and this world is dominated by a strong, blind, striving, universal cosmic will. This will expresses itself in the vagaries of human instinct, in sexual striving, and in the wild uncertainties of all animal behaviour. Everywhere in nature one sees strife, conflict and inarticulate impulse and these, rather than rational processes or intellectual clarity, are man's true contacts with ultimate reality. Mind is an instrument of instinct to be used in the service of life and power. Illusion is as necessary to man as truth. He provided Beckett with a new, nonrational conception of human nature which views the mind not with rational clarity but as something dark, obscure, hidden and deep.

Arnold Geulincx (1624 – 1669) tried to resolve a specific problem in Cartesian metaphysics. A version of Cartesian metaphysics was that all interaction between mind and body is mediated by God. This assumed that unextended mind and the extended body do not interact directly. The appearance of direct interaction is maintained by God. It is God who

moves the body on the occasion of the mind's willing and who puts ideas in the mind on the occasion of the body's encountering other material objects. Occasionalism was primarily developed by Arnold Geulincx and Nicolas Malebranche. For Descartes, mind is active and unextended thinking. Body is passive and unthinking extension but these two created substances are combined as a third compound substance – living man. With regard to the problem of interaction between mind and body, the answer to the question by the occasionalist was that it was mediated by God, the fourth uncreated Cartesian substance. Many thinkers have criticized occasionalism on the ground that how God, a mental substance can himself interact with the material substance, body. An answer to this problem is that God created it. It is argued by some philosophers like Leibniz, that the units of reality do not interact but only appear to do so because God has created them in pre-established harmony. The apparent interaction of mind and body would also be pre-established. This was then seen to be a logical outcome of occasionalism. Beckett's novels Murphy and The Unnamable appear to reflect the views of Geulincx, to a great extent.

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905 – 1980), a French novelist, playwright and exponent of existentialism – a theory acclaiming that man is a unique and isolated individual in a hostile world, responsible for his own actions and free to choose his destiny – also influenced the thinking and writings of Beckett. Sartre’s famous novel Nausea written in the form of a diary narrates the feelings of revulsion that a certain Roquentin experiences from the very awareness of his body. It is an original, fiercely individualistic, antisocial piece of work containing many of the philosophical themes Sartre later developed. He later took over the phenomenological method from the German philosopher Edmund Husserl and used it with great skill in his successive publications like Imagination (1936), Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions (1962) and the Psychology of Imagination (1950). But it was in Being and Nothingness (1956) that Sartre revealed himself as a master of outstanding talent. He places human consciousness or nothingness in opposition to being or thingness. Consciousness is not matter and by the same token escapes all determinism.

Phenomenology is a 20th century philosophical movement. Its primary objective is the direct investigation and description of phenomena. It is opposed to positivism and concerned with the experiences of the self. In other words, it is the description of the phenomena consciously experienced without theories about their casual explanation and unexamined preconceptions and presuppositions. Johann Heinrich Lambert, the Swiss–German mathematician and philosopher, used this term when he dealt with the part of his theory of knowledge that distinguishes truth from illusion and error. In the 19th century, Hegel traced the development of human spirit from sense experience to absolute knowledge in his book Phenomenology of Mind (1807). Then it was only in the early period of the 20th century, that the movement of phenomenology gathered momentum with many varieties. In the growth and development of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl has rendered signal services. He wrote The Idea of Phenomenology in 1964. Even for Husserl the conception of phenomenology developed only gradually and kept changing to the end of his career. But the basic concept in phenomenology is the concept of intentionality, the directedness of

consciousness toward an object. So one can define psychic phenomena as phenomena which, precisely as intentional contain an object in themselves. Husserl's investigation into the concept of numbers is noteworthy. Numbers are not found readymade in nature but result from mental achievement. His preoccupation with the question of how the numbers are constituted, brought out the concept of reflection, constitution, description and founding constitution of meaning that later played a predominant role in his philosophy.

A philosopher usually is to examine the relationship between consciousness and being and he must realise that being is accessible to him as a correlate of conscious acts. This is possible only by a science that tries to understand the very essence of consciousness and this is the task that phenomenology has set for itself. The objects of phenomenology are absolute data grasped in pure, immanent intuition and its goal is to discover the essential structures of the acts and the objective entities that correspond to them. When history is connected with facts, phenomenology deals with the knowledge of essences.

Following upon the work of Edmund Husserl (1859 - 1938), phenomenology spread into a worldwide movement. Emmanuel Levinas, a French author combined ideas from Husserl and Heidegger in a very personal way. Sartre, the leading existentialist of France took this point of departure from the philosophies of Husserl and Heidegger. Maurice Merleau-ponty, though an important representative of French existentialism was also an important French phenomenologist. His works Structure of Behaviour (1963) and Phenomenology of Perception (1962) were the further developments and applications of phenomenology. Merleau-ponty gave a new interpretation of the meaning of human body and of man's perception of space, the natural world, temporality and freedom. He anchored the phenomena of perception in the phenomenology of the lived body in which the perceiving subject is incarnated as the mediating link to the phenomenal world. Such a phenomenology of human presence in the world was also to offer a system in which consciousness and world could be reciprocally related in the place of the rigid dichotomy between idealism and realism. Thus phenomenology became a way of showing the essential involvement of

human existence in the world starting with everyday perception. Paul Ricoeur, in his Philosophy of the Will (1950) deals with the problems involved in the theological concept of guilt as a part of phenomenology. Jacques Derrida (1930 -) an 'original' French thinker on the limits of thought and language has combined phenomenology with structuralism in his interpretation of literature. It is obvious that a considerable part of Beckett's vision of life and art, was influenced by phenomenology.

A proper study of the works of Beckett will definitely unfold the story of a formidable talent leading us to his vision of life that sounds, in the first instance, incongruous and unintelligible. With the performance of Waiting for Godot (1955), the name of Beckett has been heard everywhere. He has emerged as a supreme artist who is capable of turning art against itself and as a visionary comedian who knows that human consciousness must be stripped to naught. Beckett states, "When Heidegger and Sartre speak of a contrast between being and existence, they may be right, I do not know but their language is too philosophical for me. I am not a philosopher. One can only speak of what is in front of

him and that is simply a mess” (Esslin, Samuel Beckett 169). When Beckett acknowledges that he is not a philosopher, he is concerned about the ‘mess’ that is in front of him. His concerns and anxieties about the confused state or the disorder around him reveal the mind of a philosopher in him. Moreover, Beckett used to examine the philosophical questions on the self, the world and God. In conformity with the ‘absurd’ view he maintains that life is not worth living and but at the same time he used to believe that the life unexamined was not worth living.

Beckett believes that there is a cleavage between the mind and the body on the Cartesian line. Beckett writes about the protagonist of his first novel Murphy : “Thus Murphy felt himself split in two, a body and a mind. They had intercourse apparently. Otherwise he could not have known that they had anything in common. But he felt his mind to be body tight and did not understand through what channel the intercourse was effected or how the two experiences came to overlap” (qtd. in Esslin, Samuel Beckett 170).

Similarly in his novel Mercier at Camier (1946) there is a cleavage between Mercier representing the mind and Camier, representing the body. In their life, they tend to move apart and in the end they part each other. Physical Camier enters a hospital for skin ailments and mental Mercier enters the hospital to observe the growing shadows.

In Waiting for Godot the relationship between Didi and Gogo gives us the impression that they are the two sides of the same character. Didi acts as mind and Gogo as body. When Didi thinks about spiritual matters, Gogo is interested in eating and sleeping. Didi is rhetorical whereas Gogo is pantomime. Though they represent polarity, the polarity moves in the direction of unity towards the end of the play where they try to move away but fail. In Beckett's trilogy of novels, mind is precariously fastened to bodies in successive stages of decay. Moran, though energetic and healthy initially gets affected with paralysis and becomes dependent on crutches. Molloy, though handicapped at first, ends up with crawling and rolling. The Unnamable ends in headless thought, mouthless speech and earless listening to words that may or may

not be his. All these ‘heroes’ are seen in frenzies of philosophical meditation, too.

A bleak view of life

Beckett has, so to say, a mordant view of the human condition with restricts limits of freedom. In Happy Days (1963), we do not see Willie crawling until the final moments of the play but his wife Winnie can see him and encourage his motions – “What a curse, mobility”! (35). In How It Is (1964), the narrator – protagonist meticulously describes his own crawling at frequent intervals throughout the book. In Endgame (1958), we find the parents of Hamm in ashbins, as legless, because of a cycle accident. Hamm himself is in the armchair incapable of walking. All these characters give us the picture of the human condition where freedom is restricted and Beckett presents this pathetic state of human beings in almost all of his works.

Beckett is a writer using the medium to translate his unique vision of life. According to him suffering is a part of human life and his works convey this message. Density, spareness and desolation are associated with his work. Even when his literary compositions play the role of entertainers, they belong to social and cultural worlds also. A reading of his plays may apparently lead us to believe that the characters of his plays require food and other articles, wait for better days to come and think that something meaningful will happen in their meaningless world. But the fact remains that everything is meaningless. Beckett's heroes have no purpose, no meaning in their lives. Reasons are unknown. They are in some occupation, role or relationship. They are unaccommodated men. Space and time find them though space is empty except a mound and a tree. Time is no longer the measure of motion but arbitrary imposition through which they crawl to a death they can never know. They do not take advantage of the time but they try to pass the time. They are men of diminished respectability in a no man's land of despair and emptiness. Even though they aspire to stasis and silence, their efforts prove futile.

Suffering is another hallmark of Beckett's characters. From the contrasting worlds of static figures of Vladimir and Estragon or Pozzo and Lucky we are driven to the world of Hamm, "finished, almost finished" (Endgame 12). Krapp appears before us within a world of old misery, with no fire left, with addiction to bananas and drink. The picture of Mrs. Rooney, as a lone suffering woman in a world of decay presents to us a condition of frustration, impotence and absurdity. Henry in Embers (1959) is subjected to face a situation of emptiness, isolation and loneliness. He is haunted by a sense of guilt because of his involvement in the death of his father. In Cascando (1963) both Woburn and the Voice are in travail and moving deeper into degradation. Joe in Eh Joe (1967) also is in a state of desperation and not free from the noises that haunt, taunt and paralyse him. All emotions are of the cold terror and anguish of a man trapped in a world of anguish and near to death. Even this state is no consolation to him in his hallucination as he is open to the miseries of other people's death which seems to have released him from here in life. Winnie in Happy Days (1963) presents the pathetic life of a woman that is enigmatic and frightening. It seems that she is afflicted with some

terror which she cannot articulate or put in words. So we find that all the characters in Beckett's work are subjected to torments or live in a world of decay and deprivation. Even when Beckett's work is concerned primarily with the sordid side of human existence, it does not mean that he was interested in the sordid and diseased aspects of life but it may be said that he focused only on the 'essential' aspects of human experience.

Religion

When we examine Beckett's attitude towards religion, we find that he lost his faith in religion by the time he entered college and he continued to live without belief. James Joyce with whom he had friendship was highly critical of Catholicism. Beckett who worked as an assistant to him must have come under his influence. So some kind of struggle was going on in Beckett also against religion. His attitude to religion and his opinion about the religious significance of his plays are expressed in an interview given to Tom. F. Driver from the Union Theological Seminary in New York. Beckett states:

‘Well, really there is none at all. I have no religious feeling. Once I had religious emotion. It was at my first communion. No more. My mother was deeply religious. So was my brother. He knelt down his bed as long as he could kneel. My father had none. The family was protestant but for me it was only irksome and I let it go. My brother and mother got no value from their religion when they died. At the moment of crisis it had no more depth than an old school tie. Irish Catholicism is not attractive but it is deeper. When you pass a church on an Irish bus, all the hands flurry in the sign of the cross. One day, the dogs of Ireland will do that too and perhaps also the pigs’. (Doherty 15)

Another influence that led to the loss of Beckett’s religious convictions was that of Nietzsche. Nietzsche’s Zarathustra published in 1883 increased the number of people for whom God is dead. After the horrors of two terrible wars, there were many trying to come to terms with the implications of Zarathustra’s message. They were in search for a way in which they can, with dignity, confront a universe deprived of a

generally accepted principle. They were reluctant to accept art forms based on the continuation of standards and concepts that have lost their validity. As an answer to it, the Theatre of the Absurd formed part of the unceasing efforts of the true artists of our time to breach this dead wall of complacency and automatism. Beckett thus became of such artists making

‘an effort however timid and tentative, to sing, to laugh, to weep and to growl – if not in praise of God (whose name, in Adamov’s phrase, has so long been degraded by usage that it has lost its meaning), at least in search of a dimension of the ineffable; an effort to make man aware of the ultimate realities of his condition, to instill in him again the lost sense of comic wonder and primeval anguish, to shock him out of an existence that has become trite, mechanical, complacent and deprived of the dignity that comes of awareness. For God is dead, above all to the masses who live from day to day and have lost all contact with the basic facts and mysteries of human condition with which, in former times,

they were kept in touch through the living ritual of their religion which made them parts of a real community and not just atoms in an atomized society'. (qtd. in Esslin, Absurd 390)

In his novel Watt (1953) Beckett makes Mr. Case speak at the end of it "And they say there is no God," (245). Moreover, we find that the novel is a parody of Leibnizianism. Watt entered the house of Mr. Knott for his service with premonitions of harmony and he believed that he was entering Leibniz's city of God "the most perfect state formed and governed by the greatest and the best of monarchs. Here there is no crime without punishment, no good action without a proper reward and finally as much virtue and happiness as is possible" (Hesla 80). But in the case of Watt at the house of Mr. Knott, he goes unpunished even in the face of violating Mr. Knott's orders evidenced by the words: "no punishment fell on Watt, no thunderbolt" (113). Beckett is of the view that our attempts to decipher the unutterable or the ineffable are bound to fail. This idea finds expression in the following passage in the novel,

for here we all seem to end by being good natured men and of good will and indulgent towards the dreams of middle

age, which were our dreams, whatever may escape us now and then in the way of bitter and I blush to say even blasphemous words and expressions and perhaps also because what we know partakes in no small measure of the nature of what has happily been called the unutterable or ineffable. So that any attempt to utter or if it is doomed to fail, doomed, doomed to fail. (61)

David H. Hesla writes:

Having entered the domain of Knott, the domain of the absurd, Beckett will not leave it even though it seems that Watt does. From this item forward, Beckett must and will conduct the art of narrative fiction on premises which will not permit him to escape from the asceticism imposed by the irrationality of existence. These premises are two. The first is that, if God is not dead, he is at any rate unavailable to man and has abdicated from responsibility for the universe. He can be no longer be counted on to work the appropriate miracle on the occasion of my unextended etc.; nor does the

empirical evidence prove or even suggest that there is a pre-established harmony within the monad which I am (or Watt is) or among the infinite number of monads which constitute the world. The second premise is actually a corollary of the first: in the absence of the absolute (and in the presence of spinoza's principle of negation), knowledge is impossible.

(Hesla 84)

Over and above, Beckett's attitude towards the concept of God comes to light from the words of Sam, in Watt

The only way one can speak of nothing is to speak of is as though it were something, just as the only way one can speak of god is to speak of him as though he were a man, which to be sure he was, in a sense, for a time and as the only way one can speak of man, even our anthropologists have realised that, is to speak of him as though he were a termite. (74)

We know that Beckett is very often satirical of religion. Sometimes, it goes even beyond that. Beckett tends to regard the sufferings of others as his own; this feeling emerges in the form of bitter irony that leads to the linkage of the mystery of evil with the mystery of divinity. A reading of Watt reveals this aspect of Beckett's religious irony. One such instance is the case of the news agent destined to suffer from unremitting mental, moral and perhaps even physical pain, and who is short and limps dreadfully. "When he got started he moved rapidly, in a series of aborted genuflexions" (24). The handing over of the kennel of famished dogs to the case of the Lynch family consisting of crippled and disabled members who enter the service of Mr. Knott or in other words men with free will cursed to eat Mr. Knott's leftovers, is another example of bitter irony of the blend of evil with divinity. Moreover, the activities of Sam and Watt in the mental asylum like killing birds, grinding the eggs of larks, feeding the rats with frogs and baby thrushes and placing rats in their bosom, delight them. Sam speaks, "It was on these occasions, we agreed, after an exchange of views, that we came nearest to God" (153).

In Waiting for Godot, we come across a deity – “a personal god qua qua qua qua with white beard qua qua qua qua outside time without extension who from the heights of divine apathia divine athambia divine aphasia loves us dearly with some exceptions for reasons unknown” (43). The deity is characterised by negative attributes. The triple qualities make it the Trinitarian God but the three qualities i.e. the absence of feeling, brilliance and speech remain opposed to the qualities of power, wisdom and love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit that compose the Trinity. In the vision of Beckett, God seems to be indifferent, darkly mysterious and uncommunicative as revealed by the three terms referred to in the quote. In Happy Days (1963), Winnie describes the mode of magnifying the Almighty in the following words: “How can one better magnify the Almighty than by sniggering with him at his little jokes, particularly the poorer ones?” (24). Viewed in the background in the misery and helplessness, the quote expresses strong irony coupled with sarcasm.

Nagg’s story of the English man and his tailor in Endgame (1958) casts bitter reflections on God’s created world. The Hamm-Clov colloquy

about the flea in Clov's trousers and the being called "The bastard", (27) and Nagg being cursed as "Accursed progenitor!" (15) in the context of generative process reveal the hostile and derisive attitude towards God. So we can find that the Beckettian God with the above attributes is one who is sealed off from the comfortable and orderly world of men.

Views on art and art criticism

Beckett's views on art merit consideration in the context of understanding his vision. Proust is Beckett's main contribution to literary criticism and it was published in 1931. It deals with a dualistic vision based on the division between an intuitive, discontinuous and sensuous evocation of reality and the abstract, logical, continua created by conceptual reason. In the intellectual formation of Beckett, Proust was equally important as Descartes. Our life in this world has an illusory nature and the motion of surface and depth recurs throughout Proust. Our physical being that inhabits the outer world is termed as a shell and the essence of our many selves dwell in it. It is an important opinion of Beckett that an artist finds it difficult to communicate with another being

on the surface or in depth. Friendship, a phenomenon of the surface world, is only a social expedient. The artist who realises that there are no vehicles of communication knows that art is the apotheosis of solitude, and for him, the only possible spiritual development is in the sense of depth. The only fertile research is excavatory, immersive, a contraction of the spirit, a descent. The artist is active but negatively shrinking from the nullity of extra circumferential phenomena, drawn into the core of an eddy.

Beckett opines that art is a better link to the ultimate. It does not mean that it can give answers to our doubts about the ultimate. Art keeps a man in a state of awareness of his deepest nature when diversions of the surface world turn him away. Beckett is not the man of science and theology nor is he the artist in any triumphant sense. He does not bring reason and order but unreason and chaos. For Beckett, man needs to be in a state of need or privation. At the same time, he desires to be out of it. This is because, Beckett does not hold any philosophical point of view of fulfilment or rather holds the belief in a sense of fulfilment through

privation or in the feeling for the unreality of the world of senses. Every man is not an artist and very few understand art. The life of an artist is solitary and difficult but the overall unity of all is in the quest towards a common end or horizon. He devotes himself to this even when he sees nothing. Even if worst comes to worst, he may end in lucidity. The motives of an artist in creating the work are mysterious and even absurd. He has a desire to express himself and rid himself of his inner tension. It is these impulses that urge him toward creating the work. The desire to communicate with one's fellow beings is of secondary importance. An examination of Beckett's novels and plays reveals the nature of the artist as one who needs privation, who needs fulfilment in creation. The impossibility of fulfilment leads to the end of the need for fulfilment. Art finally points to man's deepest nature and in itself it is wholly meaningless and futile. Beckett is of the view that this is the expression of the ineffable and he tears down the barrier between art and life. Usually the activity of an artist is considered more or less positive. He is interested in the discovery of order or creating something new. But for Beckett, to be an artist is to fail and failure is the artist's world. Even the

form of the work of art in such a situation of aesthetics will be in danger. Beckett maintains that in the economy of art what is not said is the light of what is said and the very absence presupposes a presence. Language belongs to the practical world of surfaces and intellect but it is poorly adapted to the exigencies of art. He describes his own language as a veil which must be torn asunder to get at things. Grammar and style are out of use for him and hopes for the time when language can be best used where it is most zealously misused. Art, traditionally possessive and triumphant, is in conflict with being which is weakness and chaos. He speaks of the difficulty experienced by an artist given to making with words that there is no form that does not violate the nature of being. In other words Being puts form in Jeopardy.

Beckett expresses the view that words cannot create meaningful order or mirror experience. Man longs for knowledge but he has only the words of his speech to use and these are inadequate. There can be little or no communication between man and man, for words are the names of memories and no two men can have the same memories. Moreover,

words are little suited to knowledge, since each word is surrounded by the undertones of its own history. Finally, words are inadequate for piercing the essence of reality since they are only the indicators of our memories and the things we used to express our thoughts and these being merely contingent can no more get at true reality than a spider that has puts its nest in a corner of a place can get at the total reality of the place. Beckett tends to draw a parallel between God and the artist. He compares the macrocosm to the little world of the work of art. His preference is always for the microcosm of the mind and its artistic issue. His interest lies in the unreality of things in the world outside, things hidden by surfaces, immersed in flux, subject to the condition of space. We experience isolation from things as well as man. We live in a world where communication is impossible, short of gross distortion. Severed from the outside, we find ourselves in a state of ignorance. We become disenchanted with surfaces and no longer the dupe of the phantom accident but substance still evades us. And a new void gives rise to a new need to know but the results are despair and persistence.

From the world of surfaces, certain things are hostile to art. One is the intellect in all its many forms that very often include language also. Art is concerned with the unique and the elementary. The intellect attempts the impossible when it tries to meddle with it. The other is social existence. To the solitary nature of an art that strives to 'see', the blindness of society is an obstacle. Art has its origin in man's temporal condition. Beckett suggests that it is high time for the artist to represent the metamorphosed objects of the mind instead of the representations of the exterior world:

'Paradoxically, the daylight world, according to Beckett, is a realm of blindness where the myriad masks of temporal succession hide the permanent reality (if it exists) of the essential object. Concealed beneath the veil of its accidental surfaces, caught up in becoming, the ultimate being escapes man. Space and time conceal – from a being whose deepest need is to see'. (qtd. in Harvey 427)

Beckett has his opinions about art criticism also. He is opposed to traditional scholarship and criticism. The explanation of art in terms of its

origin and as a product is rejected by him. The reason is that the world of consciousness is divided into the upper zone of light and the lower zone of darkness. In the upper zone of light, forms correspond to those in the physical world outside and the zone of darkness is devoid of any correspondence. Therefore, any interpretation of the new art in terms of the upper zone of intellect or its macrocosmic correlatives makes no sense in the words of Beckett. "It is like explaining the nature of a waterlily by studying the composition of the desert soil out of which it does not grow" (qtd. in Harvey 436). Beckett does not accept the psychological analysis of the author as a form of criticism because of the obscure inner tensions that give rise to a work of art which are unavailable and a critic has no access to them. Any form of scientific criticism is also rejected on the ground that the artistic instinct of a person is an absurd and mysterious compulsion about which he himself most often knows nothing. The urges of artist, very often being irrational, and the activities of the critic, being intellectual, do not always agree. Similarly there is always a gap between the work and its social context as a superficial society which hides from itself the eternal

conditions of human existence with which art is concerned. Beckett is of the view that the nature of true art is free from the influences of race, moment or milieu and the dates, periods, schools and influences of literary history are so many intellectual constructions usually without any reference to individual works of art. Thus being opposed to such prescriptive criticism, he vigorously defends the absolute freedom of the artist.

With regard to the views of the audience of the work of art, he thinks that its uses for them are not of much pertinence as they do not affect the genesis of the work. Art is concerned with the human condition in its more universal aspects. Since art is not intended to impart precepts or make a person better, ethical criticism also is beside the point. He is not friendly towards art that is socially engaged. He turns his ire against the bourgeois blindness and complacency that stifles goodness, truth and beauty. Moreover, he warns that a materialistic society is likely to disapprove of art that is solitary and productive of painful visions. Beckett regards art as a sound independent domain of human activity for

which no substitute exists and points out the dangers in interposing considerations alien to the nature of art between the spectator and the work. The best of criticism is a gross operation that kills the capacity of the work to radiate its magic to its lovers. The mania for evaluation is one of the most dangerous aberrations of criticism. Painting is neither good nor bad but the categorizers insist on putting them into pigeonholes under various labels. The ultimate result of such obsessive judgment is the destruction of the individual work. While all true art lays bare the human condition, each work is unique and one cannot reason about the unique. Art is usually meant to give only the pleasurable insight but criticism is useful in preparing the ground for intuition, insight and in elucidating the nature, varieties, and goals of art and in illuminating artistic procedures.

Music

Beckett very frequently appears concerned with the movement behind words in disregard of their meanings. This is because of his inclination toward music. Music plays an important role in his writing, which renders it easier to listen to than to understand. It has its effect on

the structure of the plays, his characters, their movements and their sounds. Beckett was a lover of music. He himself was a musician and had a deep knowledge of music. As a child, he was fond of playing piano and later used to spend much of his time listening to music and attending concerts. He came under the influence of composers like Beethoven, Chopin and Schubert. The aspirations, pauses, and the tempo with which his dialogues are spoken reveal rhythm and balance in the overall structure of his plays. Beckett has used the medium of radio for certain plays to express his particular concerns in a language that resembles the imageless language of music. In radio, Beckett is able to exclude the visual dimension altogether and create characters with voices alone. His language is usually simple revealing its own limits. His characters can only discover and comprehend by means of perception and intuition. They state what they see. Beckett's initial idea for his radio play All That Fall (1957) was that of an atmosphere and landscape wherein we can hear the sounds of cartwheels and dragging feet and puffing and panting.

Beckett's taste in music was primarily romantic. He was attracted towards Beethoven who was noted for tempo and sonority with pauses

and intensity of feeling. He used to listen to Beethoven's chamber music and Schubert in particular. Chamber music is, of course, music for a smaller room rather than a large hall. The intimate presentation required for this music with a few performers each treated as soloists on equal terms seems to correspond to Beckett's plays as his stage is a small one for its few characters. The significance of silence in All That Fall can be felt because pauses and silences give the play a rhythm and the magnitude of the inexpressible compared to the limitation of words. Sound and silence are dependent on each other in the play.

Beckett claims that "music is the idea itself unaware of the world of phenomena, existing ideally outside the universe apprehended not in Space but in Time only and consequently untouched by the teleological hypothesis" (Proust 92). The nature of radio dispenses with a concrete visual field for the audience to perceive and it takes the audience towards the imageless universal language. In his radio play, Words and Music (1962) Beckett presents the different materials for artistic expression separating the voice from the music. He has made the innovative use of music as a

protagonist in drama. In this play, two characters, Words and Music, are asked by Creak to express given theme like 'love', 'age' and 'the face'. Words by means of the conceptual language of reason and music by the immediate and direct nonrepresentative language of music are depicted as making efforts to express on various themes. We usually view music as a substitute for speech. It is an expression of itself. When Music is seen making suggestions for the shape of word's expression or using words into the right tracks and Words imitates them, the balance between their phrases again allows us to perceive the incongruity.

On radio, Beckett could control the tempo, the rhythm, the pitch and the timbre or every sound. His stage directions do not permit free play and chance. Notwithstanding the simple words, inconclusive narratives and unintelligible babble, Beckett is capable of keeping the rhythm of the plays with due attention given to the details of setting, pace and sonority. From the fact that his plays That Time (1976), Not I (1973), and Come and Go (1967) were all set to music, it is evident that Beckett was all the more willing to let his work set to music to express the mental

and physical pain of the characters without resorting to emotional padding.

Attitude towards Nature

The place of Nature and her vital role in English literature are ineffable. Especially the spectrum of Romantic literature is formed mainly of the colours through the prism of Nature. A study of English poetry from the very beginning to the present day will reveal that Nature has been treated in various ways by various writers. It has appealed to poets in different ways. Every one responds to Nature according to the peculiar qualities of his temperament.

Nature is treated in Chaucer's poetry to provide simple delight. In the poetry of Thomas Gray and Goldsmith we find that Nature is used as a background or setting to human emotion. For Wordsworth it has a source of joy, quietude and communion. His happiness came from living close to Nature. Coleridge treated Nature as a fitting counterpart to his

dreamy psychological perception of the human soul. He conjures up supernatural and mysterious atmosphere in his poems. For Byron, Nature has no gospel and he gives expression to the wilder aspects of Nature. Shelly identifies himself with the elemental forces of Nature. Keats stands for the sensuous beauty in Nature. Nature is depicted by Hardy as cruel and unsympathetic towards human sufferings. T.S. Eliot's view presents Nature as unfriendly to man. His famous poem 'Waste Land' begins on this note:

April is the cruellest month breeding Lilac out of the dead land,
Lilac out of the dead land mixing memory and desire stirring
Dull roots with spring pain.

Against the backdrop of the views and attitudes of the aforesaid poets, we may examine how Beckett has treated Nature in his poems and plays. Beckett's early writings include poems and criticisms. Though not as well known as his plays, his poems are powerful thematically and rich in imagery and descriptions of Nature. For the exploration of inner space through the medium of poetry, Nature also has come to his aid. A study

of his early poems will provide us important keys to the ways in which he has handled Nature to produce the results he wanted to. The real world outside also exerted great influence on his mind. His poems are liberally sprinkled with description of nature. As we are aware, Beckett is a poet noted for his strong subjectivity and literariness but at the same time he is conscious of the fact that the objective and the concrete are of great importance to poetry. With the result, he makes use of the materials in his immediate surrounding for his poetic ends. It was during the period (1931- 43) that the poems of Echo's Bones were written. In most of the poems of Echo's Bones, the literal landscape has been turned to artistic assets. Most of the poems are concerned with the need and impossibility of love's fulfilment and a whole series of themes from absence to sterility show this unresolved tension. The change of the lover through suffering caused by frustration of desire and the thwarting of his love through love's cruelty towards the beloved are the main themes in these poems. Sickness, ageing, death are the real culprits. Therefore, the lover withdraws partially and he is reluctant to engage himself further and

invite further suffering. From concern with the other, the focus moves to the self.

Some of the poems especially “Enueq I” and “Sanies I” depict landscape which Beckett uses for his purposes. The opening lines of “Enueq I” indicate how Nature is handled by Beckett to describe the mental state of the solitary walker:

Exeo is a spasm
tired of my darling’s red sputum
from the Portobello Private Nursing Home its secret things
and toil to the crest of the surge of the steep perilous bridge
and lapse down blanky under the scream of the boarding
round the bright still banner of the boarding
into a black west
throtilled with clouds.

Above the mansions the algum-trees
the mountains

my skull sullenly

clot of anger

skewered aloft strangled in the cang of the wind

bites like a dog against its chastisement.

I trundle along rapidly now on my ruined feet

flush with the livid canal,

at Parmell Bridge a dying barge

carrying a cargo of nails and timber

rocks itself softly in the foaming cloister of the lock;

on the far bank a gang of down and outs would seem to be
mending a beam.

Then for miles only the wind

and the weals creeping alongside on the water

and the world opening up to the south

a cross a travesty or champaign to the mountains

and the still born evening turning a filthy green

manuring the night fungus

and the mind annulled

wrecked in the wind. (ll 1-29)

There is a reference to 'Parnel Bridge' that stands for peril and the foaming water symbolizing the surge of emotions; 'the algum-trees', the 'mountains', 'the cang of the winds', 'a filthy green manuring the night fungus' express somber and powerful images. Apart from reflecting the mental state of the protagonist, the image of the metamorphosis of an artist is also seen emerging. Just as the night feeds on the defunct day, the nocturnal bard feeds on the dead past. The poet is similar to the vigilant gulls in the gray spew of the sewer or to the evening vulture. In this poem, the narrator begins walking from Dublin and after a circle to the South and the West it brings him back along the quays to the city. The circle is symbolic of frustration. His exit from the Portobello Nursing Home is an attempt to escape decline and death but the signs of decline are everywhere. Nature is important to him not as a source of mere materials but as a reality that is autonomous though related to man.

Beckett is of the view that society is not only hypocrite, but Nature too masquerades under false colours.

An examination of his mature plays will reveal that Nature and the various objects of Nature are used to depict the mental states of the protagonists. In Waiting for Godot we find that the two tramps are seen by the side of a tree without leaves. They are on a deserted road. It is evening. The action of the first scene is set in this background of Nature. The tree without leaves is a symbol of life that is devoid of hope. The deserted road may refer to a way of life, marked by desolation and solitude. The time 'evening' implies that darkness is going to envelop the lives of the people basking in the glory of hope and waiting like the tramps. Vladimir's words, "We will hang ourselves tomorrow (Pause) unless Godot comes" (94) indicate that the tree also will facilitate their hanging. In the second Act, the tree is seen with four or five leaves. It denotes change or ray of hope for the persons caught in the act of waiting for something or someone.

Beckett makes use of description of Nature to fill up time. The tramps are waiting for Godot but Godot does not come. In the meantime they try and converse calmly since they are incapable of keeping silent:

- ESTRAGON. All the dead voices.
- VLADIMIR. They make a noise like wings
- ESTRAGON. Like leaves
- VLADIMIR. Like sands
silence
- VLADIMIR. They all speak together
- ESTRAGON. Each one to itself
Silence
- VLADIMIR. They make a noise like feathers.
- ESTRAGON. Like leaves
- VLADIMIR. Like ashes
- ESTRAGON. Like leaves. (62-63)

All That Fall (1957) abounds in rural sounds and other pictures of natural scenery. At the very outset of the play, we hear the sounds made

by sheep, bird, cow and cock severally and then together. By these sounds, the dramatist has no intention of creating any rustic atmosphere for the play but wants to provide a rhythm to it. Sounds and silences in the play indicate the magnitude of the inexpressible especially the suffering and the pain. In Mrs. Rooney's monologue after the departure of Mr. Tyler on his bicycle is seen her mental agony. The cooing birds immediately after that bring to our mind the real suffering of the protagonist:

You'll tear you tube to ribbons! (Mr. Tyler rides off.
 Receding sound of bumping bicycle, silence, cooing) Venus
 Birds! Billing in the woods all the long summer long (Pause)
 on cursed corset if I could let it out, without indecent
 exposure. Mr. Tyler! Mr. Tyler! come back and unlace me
 behind the edge! (She laughs wildly, ceases) what's wrong
 with me, What's wrong with me, never tranquil, seething
 out, of my dirty old pelt, out of my skull, oh to be in atoms,
 in atoms! (Frienziedly) ATOMS! (13)

Beckett bends Nature and its silence to project the isolation and the oppressive solitude the protagonist experiences. Mrs. Rooney is presented as a woman who is mourning her lost life. The lonely state of her mind is expressed in the following words:

Mrs. Rooney: All is still. No living soul in sight. There is no one to ask. The world is feeding. The wind – (brief wind) – scarcely stirs the leaves and the birds – (brief chirps) – are tired singing – The cows- (brief moo) – and sheep – (brief baa) – ruminates in silence – The dogs – (brief bark) – are hushed and the hens – (brief cackle) – sprawl torpid in the dust. We are alone. There is no one to ask. Silence. (32)

In Embers (1959) also, Beckett employs landscape to suit the disposition of the protagonists. The play opens with the sound of the sea and ends with it also. We hear the horse's hooves. We see the beach. Henry the protagonist describes the sound of the sea:

HENRY. I say that sound you hear is the sea, we are sitting on the strand. (pause.) I mention it because the

sound is so strange, so unlike the sound of the sea, that if you didn't see what it was you wouldn't know what it was. (pause.) (21)

The sound of the sea represents so many things in the play. It is a threat to him. Still he is attracted towards it. It is associated with drowning of his father and it provides him an opportunity for an insight into his self. The sound is dreadful but it is permanently with him. He wants to escape it but he cannot.

HENRY. I once went to Switzerland to get away from the cursed thing and never stopped all the time I was there. (pause.) (22)

Thus the sound is strange. He listens to it. Its a source of light.

HENRY. Listen to the light now, you always loved light, not long past noon and all the shore in the shadow and the sea out as far as the island. (pause.) (22)

Moreover, the boredom of existence has been given an audible dimension from the constant rhythm of the waves on the shore. The

tedious emptiness of the landscape expresses the inner emptiness of life. This is evident from Henry's words towards the close of the play: "...very unhappy and uneasy, hangs round a bit, not a soul about, cold wind coming in off sea, goes back down path and takes from home" (38).

In short, we find that Beckett, unlike other writers, transforms Nature and natural phenomena to suit the emotional beats of the protagonists. In other words, his concern is with the vivid depiction of the emotional states of the protagonists in the plays. In exploiting Nature for his creative work, he reduces the living landscape to its moribund state and proves that beneath the surface of life lies the sure signing of death and decay.

The identity of man

The question concerning the identity of man has baffled many philosophers and thinkers for centuries. Pythagoras, the celebrated Greek philosopher (6th century BC) taught that human being possessed souls

and all souls were equal before eternity. His doctrines of the transmigration of the soul and its immortality were widely known and attracted many. The followers of Pythagoras respected numbers and mathematical relations which were dispassionate and immaterial. God and the entire surrounding world were reflected in the symbolic correlation of certain numbers which promoted a mathematical approach to the world and the development of the exact sciences. The Pythagorean doctrine showed man the righteous path to immortality. Socrates (5th century BC) believed and argued that the existence of God could be discerned in the providential order of nature and God was the ruler of the world. He too held that man has soul and it partook of the Divine. Moreover, he believed in the immortality of the soul.

Plato (427-348 BC) developed thesis concerning eternal and immutable ideas amid the transience of existence. His theory is that ideas are independently existing higher forms of being that determine material reality. They are the eternal patterns or paradigms by which all things are constructed from formless, dark, transient and endless material. The world of ideas is outside time. It abides or reposes in eternity. The

highest idea is 'God' which is identical to absolute beauty. 'God' is the highest principle that underlies everything. The creator created this visible celestial and earthly world according to the wisest eternal laws of beauty and all parts of the cosmos were carefully planned and made it perfect. The demiurge planned to create people the same way. But there was only a little of the former mixture left. After mixing another portion, the purity was lost. Therefore, the inhabitants of the universe turned out to be mortal and thus subject to evil as well as good. With the result he was prone to woes and sufferings. Man's innate abilities are valued by Plato and he would like change the imperfect nature of man. Here man lives in the midst of mud and mire like fish at the bottom of the sea having a vague notion of the Sun and sky but unable to lift himself into its endless vastness. Plato wishes that man could see the celestial heights and the true world that exists in the true heaven.

Aristotle (384-322 BC) too concurred with Plato with regard to the fact that the thing does not exist without the Idea but does not agree to the premise that Idea can exist in isolation from things. According to Aristotle, the idea of the thing is located within the thing itself. The idea,

the matter, the cause and the aim are the four principles of the structure of anything as an organism and everything is the result of creative activity. All the diversity of the material world is based on varying correlations of idea and matter in their casual – purposive – embodiment. Aristotle views the soul as nothing other than the principle of a living body and this principle is an organizing, directing and even commanding one. The idea of a living body is its life principle, i.e. its soul. But any soul moving a body also has its own idea which Aristotle calls mind. So the soul is nothing but the energy or actuality of mind or thought. Mind is the idea of all ideas and in existence there is nothing higher than the ideas or mind. Whereas the individual human soul moves here and there in different direction, the mind of the whole cosmos which comprehends absolutely everything cannot itself move since it has already embraced everything. It is out of the identity of idea and matter that life is born and life is a work of art. This human work of art is a tragic one. Thus we find that Aristotle was a man who looked for the meaning of reality and formulated the truths he discovered. Reality is full of contradictions and these contradictions seem perpetual. Though Aristotle represents a

courageous answer to the question of the meaning of life, we cannot say that it can be considered the best. As for the route to search the truth and surmount life's contradictions, everyone must figure it out for himself.

One of the important shifts in the history of western thought came about when, instead of talking about mind and thinking substance or about pure reasons and judgment, Hegel (1770-1831) began talking about consciousness and self-consciousness. Freud's concept of the 'subconscious' called attention to the fact of consciousness. In the same period, consciousness was being tentatively explored through one of the special forms appropriate to the age – the form of the novel. One thinks of Dostoevsky, Virginia Woolf, Proust, Joyce and Faulkner. In this context one thinks as well of Samuel Beckett.

Beckett insisted that art must admit into itself what he calls "the mess" or the "confusion". The confusion is not the natural intention of conversation. We cannot listen to a conversation for five minutes without being acutely aware of the confusion. It is all around us and our only

chance of renovation was to open our eyes and see the mess though it is not a mess we could make sense of. One could only speak of what is in front of him.

If the relation between form and chaos is the technical problem which the artist must solve, the chaos itself is Beckett's continuing theme. By the word "the chaos", he means absurdity of human condition. By the word 'absurd' we mean ridiculous or funny or ugly or unpleasant. The word comes from the Latin 'surdus' meaning deaf. But it is also used of musical sounds, where it means 'unharmonious'. A person may be 'absurd' if he is so stupid as to be unable to hear or understand what is being said. A thing or situation may be absurd if it is not understood by a person of normal intelligence. Of more relevance is the fact that the Latin 'surdus' was used to translate Euclid's 'alogos', the term for irrational numbers. It can also mean "without a name" or "having no name" or briefly "The Unnamable", which is, of course, the title of the third volume of Beckett's trilogy. So the word means unnamable or unintelligible. The absurd is impressive to the human logos, to human

speech and reason. Hence the writer's dilemma. His task is to discourse upon the intelligible, to name the unnamable. What is absurd in human existence? Why is it absurd? Because being human and existing are mutually contradictory. One can be a human being if one does not have to exist and one can not exist though not as a human being. But one cannot exist and be a human being in the same place, at the same time. There are a number of reasons for this. To be a human being is to be body and mind but what one needs and wants a body for is what, as mind, one neither needs nor wants and vice versa. To be a human being is to want to know and to love, that is to say, to become one with the other, but the other is precisely that which one cannot become one. To be a human being is to want to say who one is, but who one is precisely is what one cannot say. To be a human being is to want to be self-grounded which is precisely what a human being is not and cannot be. In other words, man is not congruous with the conditions provided for the existence. He and his world do not suit with each other, do not make a fit.

There is, of course, a tradition in the West that holds that whatever problems man has, they result from the fact he does not use his head. If

he used his head, he would see that this world is the best of all possible worlds and is exactly adjusted to the support of human existence. This tradition runs from contemporary Marxist and Christian thinkers back through Hegel and the rationalists of the eighteenth and seventeenth centuries to the medieval school, to Aristotle and Plato, and to its source in Parmenides. This tradition acknowledges that there are more or less serious flaws in the system but holds that these can be corrected either now or in the future by the application of reason or faith or science or technology. The ground of this tradition is the principle that cosmos and logos are congruent with each other. If 'non being' cannot either be expressed or recognized, 'being' can be both recognized and expressed. According to Parmenides, it is the same thing to think and to be. But according to Democritus, Naught exists just as much as Aught. In reality, both atoms and the void exist; but since man can have knowledge only of the ways in which the atoms impinge upon the senses, he can have no knowledge of the void. Truth is matter merely of human customs and conventions. We know nothing in reality, for truth lies in an abyss. This means that the cosmos and human logos are incongruent, incompatible,

unharmonious and their relations can properly be spoken of only as absurd.

The Greeks dealt with the cosmos in terms of being and non-being, truth and ignorance. The Hebrews dealt with it in terms of life and death, justice and injustice, happiness and misery. As the Bible says,

Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not. For there is hope of tree, if it is be cut down, that it will sprout again and the tender branch thereof will not cease. But man dieth and wasteth away, yea, man giveth up the ghost and where is he?
(Job 14: 1-2, 7,10).

This too is absurd; for man would live and be happy but existence gives him suffering and death. So the idea of the absurd is not a new idea. It goes back in the west from Sartre and Camus and the Christian ascetic and pietistic traditions to Roman stoicism and Greek skepticism and cynicism or Oriental wisdom Literature such as the Book of Job and

Ecclesiastes. The idea is implicit in every event that merits the adjective 'tragic'. The question arises as to how to deal with the despair and anguish of the person for whom 'the mess' is an existential fact. Only a very few alternatives have been found capable of dealing adequately with this fact. Human reason is not one of these. For reason, once it finds itself confronted by both being and non-being, is capable only of asking the question, not of supplying the answer. But love has been celebrated in the romantic tradition as conquerer of all, even of the last foe, death. In the stoic tradition, courage has sometimes been found adequate to carry man through the tribulations of his world. Love, courage and God; these three have been what western man has turned to for the strength to endure what otherwise has seemed unendurable.

Yet, there also has been a fourth way of dealing with the mess: laughter. It lacks the dignity, the pathos, the heroism, the nobility of the other ways; but it too has worked impressively. Man does not fit to his world. The world is like an overcoat that is much too long or a pair of boots that are too small. But the sight of a man tripling over his own

overcoat is funny. Incongruity is the basis of the comic, and a metaphysical incongruity is the basis of metaphysical laughter. Yet laughter is not the final word either, for in Beckett's world there is no final word. His world is a syzygy and for every laugh, there is a tear, for every position, an opposition, for every thesis, there is an antithesis, for every affirmation a negation. His art is a Democritean art, energized precisely by the dialectical interplay of opposites – body and mind, the self and the other, speech and silence, life and death, hope and despair, being and non-being, yes and no. each of his major works is built upon such contraries and oppositions. Murphy is built on the opposition of mind and body; Watt on the relation between the knower and the known, lover and the beloved; Waiting for Godot is built on the contrast between the actuality of the contingent, inauthentic self and the possibility of the self-grounded, authentic self. In the trilogy Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable the effort to be and say what one is, gets opposed by the inadequacy of languages, the annihilating effect of time and the reflexive structure of consciousness.

Waiting for Godot explores a static situation. Vladimir and Estragon have complementary personalities. The opposition of their temperaments is the cause of endless bickering between them and often leads to the suggestion that they should part; yet, being complementary natures, they are also dependent on each other and have to stay together. Pozzo and Lucky represent the relationship between the body and mind, the material and the spiritual sides of man with the intellect subordinate to the appetites of the body. Godot has become the objective of a quest for identity. It has been suggested that it is a weakened form of God. It suggests the interventions of a supernatural agency capable of altering the situation. The subject of the play is not Godot but waiting. The act of waiting is an essential condition of life, and in our life we wait for something. It is in the act of waiting, we experience the flow of time in its purest, most evident form. As Beckett points out in his analysis of Proust,

There is no escape from the hours and the days. Neither from tomorrow nor from yesterday, because yesterday has deformed us or been deformed by us. Yesterday is not a

milestone that has been passed but a daystone on the beaten tracks of the years and irremediable part of us, within us, heavy and dangerous. We are no longer what we were before the calamity of yesterday. The flow of time confronts us with the basic problem of being – the problems of nature of the self, which being subject to constant change in time, is in constant flux and therefore even outside our grasp – personality whose permanent reality can only be apprehended as retrospective hypothesis. The individual is the seat of constant process of decantation, sluggish, pale and monochrome, to the vessel containing the fluid of the past time, agitated and multicoloured by the phenomena of its hours. (4-5)

We are subject to the process of time flowing through us and it changes us. In doing so, we are at no single moment in our lives identical with ourselves. Hence we are disappointed at the nullity of what we are pleased to call attainment. Attainment is the identification of the subject with the object of the desire. The subject has died and perhaps many

times on the way. If Godot is the object of Vladimir's and Estragon's desire (waiting), he seems naturally beyond their reach. It is significant that the boy who acts as go-between fails to recognize the pair from day to another day. We can never be sure that the human beings we meet are the same today as they were yesterday.

Waiting is to experience the action of time, which is constant change. As nothing real ever happens, that change is in itself an illusion. The ceaseless activity of time is self defeating, purposeless, and therefore, null and void. "The tears of the world are a constant quantity. For each one who begins to weep, somewhere else another stops" (Godot 33). One day is like another and when we die, we might never have existed. Pozzo exclaims,

... have you not done tormenting me with accursed time?
One day, is that not enough for you, like any other day, he
went dumb. One day I went blind, one day we will go deaf,
one day we were born, one day we will die, that same day,

the same second. They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams as instant then it's night once more (89).

Vladimir and Estragon live in hope. They wait for Godot. His coming will stop the flow of time. It will bring them peace of rest from waiting. They are hoping to be saved from the evanescence and instability of the illusion of time and to find peace and permanence outside it. The routine of waiting for Godot stands for habit. The habit presents us from reaching the painful but fruitful awareness of the full reality of being. In his work on Proust, Beckett comments,

Habit is the ballast that chains the dog to his vomit. Breathing is habit, life is habit or rather life is a succession of habits, since the individual is a succession of individuals. Habit then is the generic term for the countless treaties concluded between the countless subjects that constitute the individual and their countless correlative objects. The periods of transition that separate consecutive adaptation represents the perilous zones in the life of the individual, dangerous, precarious painful, mysterious and fertile when

for a moment the boredom of living is replaced by the suffering of being. (qtd. in Esslin, Absurd 58)

The suffering of being is the free play of every faculty. The pernicious devotion of habit paralyses our attention and drugs our senses of perception. As Esslin remarks, “Waiting for Godot opens vistas on so many different perspectives. It is open to philosophical, religious and psychological interpretation; yet above all, it is a poem on time, evanescence and the mysteriousness of existence, the paradox of change and stability, necessity and absurdity” (Esslin, Absurd 60). Endgame is a drama that reflects the constituent part of one’s ego, the different aspects of a simple personality. It is a monodrama depicting the dissolution of a personality in the hour of death. It has become a shaft driven deep down into the core of being. The short mime play Act Without Words is a commentary on Beckett’s views about the inter-relation between material wants and a feeling of restlessness and futility.

Krapp’s Last Tape deals with the flow of time and the instability of the self. All That Fall and Embers deal with waiting, guilt and futility of pinning our hopes on things or human beings. Beckett’s plays reveal the

experience of temporality and evanescence. His sense of the tragic difficulty of becoming aware of one's own self in the merciless process of renovation and destruction that occurs with change in time is expressed. The difficulty of communication between human beings, the unending quest for reality in a world in which everything is uncertain and the tragic nature of all live relationships and the self deception of friendships also find expression in his plays.

Reality, he argued, is a perpetuum, a random continuum of phenomena, devoid of any meaningful design. Human beings usually obscure this fact, for to accept that reality is without order, would be to acknowledge that human existence is without purpose or meaning. This would cause us to experience existential anguish, what Beckett calls 'the suffering of being'. (Counsell 113)

Everything beyond the subjective consciousness of the individual is illusory. Even the consciousness itself may be illusory. It may not be possible to know anything beyond that illusion. For him, the self is not stable but a continually shifting phenomenon.

**A STUDY OF SAMUEL BECKETT'S PLAYS IN
RELATION TO THE THEATRE OF THE ABSURD**

THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE
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Chapter Three /

Beckett as an Avant-garde: His Plots and Characters in Absurdity

In chapter two, Beckett's early life, his education, early influences in life and his indebtedness to various writers have been dwelt at length. Moreover, light has been thrown on his attitude to art, music, nature and religion. In fact it seems that in his vision, Beckett is revealing his own struggle to find a way to express the dilemma of man's inexplicable mortality in the face of the universe and a 'non-existent' God. We may now look at the plots and characters of Beckett.

The drama is considered a specific form of compound literary art. Its very existence owes to the interest of the people in it. To rouse the interest of the people, it should express human passion and action. The events and action in the drama constitute its plot. Therefore, the success of a play depends upon the clear and effective disposition of

the raw material. The nature and the quality of the material should have universal applicability also. The themes must possess a substantial value and a genuine human meaning. But in the case of Beckett, his plots do not fulfil any of these conditions. Instead, his stories are incomplete. The subjects of his plots may be a situation, a condition of human life, the sound of the sea or the movement of a tape etc. A glance into the plots of Beckett's plays will reveal the various features and contours of his thematic treatment, especially in juxtaposition with the themes in the Scriptures.

The term 'Absurd' has been popularised by Martin Esslin. In his book The Theatre of the Absurd (1991) he makes a full study of the drama of Ionesco, Beckett, Jean Genet, Arthur Adamov and others. He traces the intellectual and philosophical backgrounds to this type of drama. We do not find any deliberate literary movement or any intellectual argument behind Beckett's plays but a modernist feeling widely diffused in our time is noticed. The notion that God is dead, is especially significant in this context. This feeling deprives man of the sense of a transcendental purpose in life. It inculcates a sense of the futility of life whose only object seems to be death. Man has only his

own puny resources to attempt to give significance to the void left by the 'disappearance' of God.

The American dramatist Eugene O'Neil (1888-1953) locates the root of the sickness of our time in "the death of the old god and the incapacity of science and materialism to give a new god to the still living instinct. The dramatist's task is to find a new meaning of life with which to allay man's fear of death" (Esslin 117). Beckett is a dramatist who asserts that the duty of an artist is to express the totality and complexity of his experience regardless of the public's lazy demand for easy comprehensibility. He states:

'And if you don't understand it, Ladies and Gentleman it is because you are too decadent to receive it. You are not satisfied unless form is so strictly divorced from content that you can comprehend the one almost without bothering to read the other. This rapid skimming and absorption of the scant cream of sense is made possible by what I may call a continuous process of copious intellectual salivation. The form that is an arbitrary and independent phenomenon can fulfil no higher function

than that of stimulus for a tertiary or quartary conditioned reflect of dribbling comprehension' (qtd. in Esslin 31).

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of Beckett's dramatic craft is its utilisation of the theatrical medium. His plays effect their signification using little more than the basic resources of theatre itself. All his works employ bare or sparsely furnished stages, the fictional loci consist only of their spatial dimension, which are represented by the real height, breadth and depth of the playing area, the space contained by wings, flies and rear flat or wall. Often, space is further shaped with light. Beckett's instructions for the set of Waiting for Godot are minimalist for it requires the depiction of only a country road, a tree, or an evening. The play is to be enacted on a stage representing place. Apart from a leafless tree, the only sign that is used to indicate the play's hypothetical other place, is the real place for stage. In Krapp's Last Tape, Rockaby (1981) and Footfalls (1976), the action occurs in an illuminated area on a darkened stage. The 'known' world of the play is sculpted out of obscuring darkness with directional theatrical lighting. Even spot lights are employed in this fashion.

The locus of That Time (1976) is comprised of an old man's spotlighted face hanging in the air in a pitch dark void while in Not I (1973) the scene is further reduced to that of an illuminated mouth. When we examine the play Waiting for Godot we come to know some of the dramatic methods Beckett uses. The play's setting is vague and unlocalised. Vladimir, a Russian name, Estragon, a French name, Pozzo, Italian and Lucky, English, or American stand in favour of the general rather than the local. By creating the two tramps in the play he strips them of jobs, a social role, a family, all of a paraphernalia of existence. They are even deprived of their memory. They are not sure of their identity, or others' identity, even place or time. In the opinion of Esslin, "An artist like Beckett does not concern himself with abstract and general varieties even if there is room for them in this view of the world" (Esslin 4).

The theatre of Samuel Beckett can be described as a theatre of absence. The sacred and the rationalistic paradigms impute a purposeful design to the universe. They assume that the material world conforms to an immaterial order and outcome. It is on this basis that they credit reality with meaning. When we ascribe to objects and

events a place in their design, such paradigms grant them a higher conceptual significance. This effects a transcendence of their identity as mere material things. But Beckett challenged these principles. In his view, we do not see the world objectively but annex it, make sense of experience to manufacture the illusion of a knowable universe. For this purpose we use religion and science and effect a comparable ordering of our world in our day-to-day actions. Thus we organise existence in the very process of living. It is this proposition that lies at the core of Beckett's theatre. His stage, therefore, offers a vision of reality which is composed of brute things. It depicts a universe in which all supposed meaning is manufactured in the eyes of its beholders.

It is not that Beckett's stage is meaningless. It offers, as its meaning, that there is no meaning. He depicts a realm composed solely of the material one without a conceptual dimension. This absence is literalised in Beckett's dramatic craft. Each of his works lacks several of the elements we expect of theatre. With minimal sets or none at all, his plays lack defined place. None has a narrative in the usual sense. Dimensions of movement are often missing from his

stage. Dialogue may be similarly lacking for words, may be severed from any tangible speaker by being recorded by tape, which is denied response in Beckett's actual monologues. Even the most basic component of the live medium, the human figure, appears in partial form. His plays deal less in plots than in situations because they entail placing characters in situations, in markedly restricted circumstances. The fictional lives of Beckett's protagonists are dictated by the circumstances in which they are depicted. We generally assume that our lives have a meaning or purpose; they transcend mere physical survival because they are part of a higher order. But the lives of Beckett's characters are determined by the brute material circumstances of their dramatic situation which dramatises human kind's encounter with extraordinary physical limits. Beckett illustrates the earth-boundness of human existence, the merely material level at which life is lived.

In some of his plays, disability takes more abstract forms with characters reduced to faces or mouths, immobilised or shown maniacally speaking or pacing the stage. Such images figure an existence shaped by privation, the lack, loss, or the absence of some

fundamental faculty or dimension of human experience. Such images function in an oblique way. Darkness, silence, disability, immobility, scarcity – each of these is negative. We understand the significance of darkness as the lack of light, read immobility as a loss of free movement, perceive physical impairment in reference to an ideal of the able body and so on. Our experience of interpreting Beckett's work, therefore, entails an implicit comparison in which it is found lacking the cultural situation in which we have placed ourselves. Thus reading his stage itself involves the recognition of an absence, his loci as worlds of the negative.

Beckett rejects the use of the sequential plot, the idea of telling a story. Waiting for Godot is a play in which nothing happens twice. It presents only a basic condition or situation where temporal notions like beginning, middle and end inextricably linked with the concept of story, have no place. Similarly Beckett has a wonderful gift for creating vivid dialogue but he is not interested in the subtleties of characterisation and motivation. He lays emphasis on the need for relationship rather than on psychological individuation. Beckett reveals man's helplessness even in his delusion that some power

outside him exists that would give meaning to his life. In other words, it is the hopeful hopeless fiction that ties him to an inauthentic existence. For instance in Waiting for Godot each time Pozzo enters he is temporarily mistaken for Godot himself. It is not that Godot is Pozzo but rather that Godot might, if he exists, be very much like Pozzo. We must remember that Pozzo has not enslaved Lucky or at least that is not the whole truth. Lucky may have chosen his enslavement. The Pozzo-Lucky relationship may then be seen as a parallel to the Vladimir-Estragon relationship with the illusory Godot. It indicates Beckett's idea of the Christian relationship of man with his arbitrary and illusory God.

Beckett is of the view that we always find something to give us the impression that we exist. Beckett implies that there is no Godot to give purpose and point to the 'immense confusion'. Waiting for Godot, therefore, is an empty and sterile activity. Its main purpose seems to disguise from the tramps the void and the nothingness in which their lives are lived out, which is the reality. It is in the various and unceasing strategies that the two old men adopt to hide from themselves the awareness of the encompassing void. As Esslin

remarks, “This dread of the void behind the feelings of doubt and bitterness alternating with the resignation is the realm of existence where the suffering of being might lead to transition” (Esslin 127). Estragon sums up the point of all this: “We always find something, eh Didi, to give us the impression we exist?” To this, Vladimir retorts “Yes, yes, we’re magicians!”(P 69). If their game gives them the illusion of purpose and activity their very words serve to blot out the awful silence.

The relationship between the habit and the void is very often dealt with in his plays. Habit is seen as a sort of shield which protects one from reality conceived as nothingness but there are moments in the life of every individual when the protective habits break down and he becomes aware of true reality. Beckett clearly implied that such moments should be cherished, so that one may be able to begin living authentically or genuinely (being) instead of merely existing in the boredom of living. This is painful because giving up any habit is painful.

Another point central to Beckett’s dramatic proposition is that with no possibility of purpose or a future goal, human action cannot

move forward in time. Habit therefore lacks development. It merely repeats. In a world without purpose, time becomes a dimension of pure decline. We face that inevitable descent into deterioration and death that begin as soon as we are born. Beckett's work is filled with testaments to time as a corrosive force. With no possibility of meaningful development, time in Beckett's theatre describes a path of circularity, a continual present without the potential for change. For Beckett, the sense we make of our world, the order we project upon it, is illusory; all supposed meanings are constructs fostered by habit. Thus we find that the world of Samuel Beckett is full of paradoxes – deliberate contradictions which negate every possibility of movement, knowledge, rationality, understanding and coherence on the part of the creatures that inhabit that curious world.

Thematic Curves in Beckett's Plays

Waiting for Godot is a tragi-comedy in two Acts. Two men, Vladimir and Estragon dressed as tramps remain on a blasted heath and they are waiting to keep an appointment with somebody called

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Godot. All on a sudden, two men appear. They are Pozzo, a master and Lucky, his servant. Lucky has a rope tied round his neck and driven with a whip. At last, the master and the servant move towards a fair where Lucky is to be sold. Soon afterwards, a boy comes with a message from Godot. He will not come that night but surely come the next day. The boy disappears. The two old men talk for a while, consider hanging themselves, decide to move on but motionless near the tree as the curtain falls. The same situation with slight variations is repeated in Act II. The tree has sprouted four or five leaves overnight. Pozzo and Lucky re-appear but now Pozzo is blind and Lucky is dumb. Godot's messenger, apparently the same boy insists that this is the first time that he has come. The message remains the same. Vladimir and Estragon talk for a time, consider hanging themselves, decide to move on but are still sitting motionless near the tree as the curtain falls.

This play crystallizes inaction into a dramatic action. Vivian Mercier opines that in this play, "Nothing happens twice" (Hayman 4). It does not tell a story. It explores a static situation. Waiting is to experience the action of time which is constant change. And yet as

nothing real ever happens, change is in itself an illusion. The ceaseless activity of time is self defeating, purposeless and, therefore, null and void. The more things change, the more they are the same. Everyone knows that this is the play about waiting for one who does not come. The play constructs about its two actors the conditions and the quality of waiting so much so that no one blames the dramatist's perverse whim for the withholding of Godot and the disappointment of their expectations. According to Hugh Kenner the world of this play resembles France occupied by the Germans in which its author spent the war years (Kenner 30). A ravaged and blasted landscape, a man of property and his servant in flight and the anxiety of the two who wait are pointers in this direction. The substance of the play is waiting amid uncertainty. It is a common human experience. We have all waited perhaps not by a tree at evening or on a country road for someone, but merely waited. Each of us has had his Godot if only in someone from whom for several days, we have expected a letter. Beckett makes the audience share the waiting and explicates the quality of the waiting not with a plot but with an event. He fills the time with beautifully symmetrical structures. The two Acts are symmetrically constructed, a

Pozzo-Lucky incident and the appearance of the boy whose report is that Godot will not come that day, but surely the next day. The stage is divided into two halves by the tree, while the human race is divided into two, Didi and Gogo, and then into four, Didi-Gogo and Pozzo-Lucky, when with the boy's arrival into two again, 'our sort' and Godot's sort. The play converges on certain stark statements, as that of Pozzo:

Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time! It is abominable! When! When! One day, is that not enough for you one day he went dumb, one day I went blind, one day we will go deaf, one day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you? They give astride of a grave, the gleams an instant, then it is night once more (89).

We are not sure that the play's two days are successive. There are many days like these, that all waiting and all journeying are endless.

Let us examine how the theme of Waiting for Godot has bearing on the Bible. When we try to establish the identity of Godot who is

pictured as a saviour, we cannot put turn to the Scriptures for further clarifications.

The play essentially is a prolonged and sustained metaphor which makes a particular appeal to the mood of liberal uncertainty prevailing in the modern world. It is a modern morality play on certain established Christian themes. The total effect of this play is not to lower but to raise our idea of human dignity.

The purpose of human life is a question that requires our answer. Since we do not know where to look for an answer, it may appear to be a difficult question. Some unknown force has imposed on us this existence. We suffer as a result of this. We try to impose meaning on our existence even when our situation is hopeless and the world appears chaotic. It is in this context that Waiting for Godot captures our imagination and leads us to the view of the world with its archetypes that represent humanity. Efforts are made to prove that a human being's life is dependent on chance and, by extension time is meaningless; but at the same time, there is an affirmation of the fulfilment of hope.

Hopelessness and hope are juxtaposed in the play. The title of

the play itself is a declaration of the faith from which hope emanates. Waiting is the result of hope. Hope is to be reposed in someone or something. At the very outset of the play, there is the mention of the savior and the parables of the two thieves from the Bible. Therefore, the title itself, among other things may have its roots in the Biblical verse: "Looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2). Christ is here pictured as the author and the fulfilment of the believer's faith. The dramatist by alluding to the salvation of a thief and the role of the Saviour in this episode weaves into the texture of the play biblical threads. Salvation and damnation are the two basic tenets of the Christian faith. It will be appropriate to relate the context when Christ revealed himself as the Saviour of the world.

The time was noon and Christ was wearied with his journey. He sat down at Jacob's well. But along with his weakness, there appeared his omniscience and He read the heart of a Samaritan woman. In the long conversation between the two, there was a progression of spiritual development. It finally ended in her coming

to the knowledge of Christ, the Saviour. With his master-skill, the Lord exposed her whole wanton career and like a lightning flash, fastened guilt upon her conscience, which resulted in her honest confession. The Lord vindicated the Jews by saying, "It is from the Jews that salvation comes" (John 4:22). Indeed the Messiah, the son of God and Saviour would rise from among them. Salvation is equivalent to the saviour. Many Samaritans of that town came to believe in him because of the woman's testimony. It was no longer because of what she said but because they had heard him and they knew that he was in truth, the Saviour of the world. This was the first time the phrase "Saviour of the World" was used in the Bible to describe the Lord.

There is a theory that the play is about the second coming of Christ. This claim is to be looked into on the strength of the clues and the evidences available in the play. Even when we are told by Beckett not to read anything into his work, we are not prevented from it. If the play is an existential piece, there will be an implied aspect of religion and the questioning thereof because this is a facet of human society and it helps us deal with existential dilemma.

To find an answer to the question ‘Who is Godot?’, we may subject the following lines to scrutiny:

VLADIMIR. (softly) Has he a beard, Mr. Godot?

BOY. Yes Sir.

VLADIMIR. Fair or ... (He hesitates) ... or black?

BOY. I think it’s white, Sir. (92)

When we think of God or Christ, very often the portrait of Jehovah / Christ as a Caucasian male with a long flowing beard comes to our mind. The boy has seen Godot and his report sheds ample light on the identity of Godot leading to the picture of Christ.

On one occasion, Godot is pictured as one who is capable of punishment. This reflects the character of the Judeo-Christian-Islam God:

ESTRAGON. And if we dropped him? (pause) If we dropped him?

VLADIMIR. He’d punish us. (93)

At the same time, we notice the redemptive power of Godot in the following lines:

VLADIMIR. We'll hang ourselves tomorrow (pause)
 unless Godot comes.

ESTRAGON. And if he comes?

VLADIMIR. We'll be saved. (94)

Godot will be a source of relief to them from this empty and boring stage. The stage represents life. We always fill in the time waiting and hoping for something. This is the subject of the play. If life has no meaning this play also has no meaning.

The word 'God' as a part of the word 'Godot' has some significance. Waiting for Godot seems to assume meaning. Further, the title in French includes the pronoun 'En' which has the connotation of meaning 'people'. Therefore, humans are waiting for Godot i.e. we are waiting for God. In the play, Vladimir is the one who consistently remembers who they are waiting for. Estragon always wants to leave although he never does. Vladimir always tries to bolster up the lagging faith of Estragon like a preacher. He tries to equip us to face Judgement Day. In this context, it is worth examining the following quote.

ESTRAGON. Give me a carrot ... It's a turnip!

VLADIMIR. Oh pardon! I could have sworn it was a
carrot. (2)

‘Carrot’ figuratively means a reward or advantage promised to somebody to persuade him to do something. If Estragon waits until he meets Godot, it will definitely be a reward or advantage for him to get salvation or in other words, Vladimir makes a carrot and stick approach.

The boy being the harbinger of the advent of Godot, represents the angel sent from heaven to inform us about what is going to take place. The time of the Second Coming is marked by the presence of the Arch Angel: “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of Arch Angel and dead in Christ shall rise first” (1 Thess. 4:16). The background before the arrival of the messenger boy is described by the following words:

VLADIMIR. Was I sleeping, while the others
suffered? Am I sleeping now?
Tomorrow when I wake or think I do,
what shall I say of today? (...) Astride of
a grave and a difficult birth. Down in the

hole, lingeringly, the grave-digger puts on the forceps. We have time to grow old. The air is full of our cries. (He listens) But habit is a great deadener. (He looks again at Estragon). At me too someone is looking, of me too someone is saying, he is sleeping, he knows nothing, let him sleep on. (pause) I can't go on! (Pause) what I have said? He goes feverishly to and fro, halts finally at extreme left, broods. Enter Boy right. He halts, silence. (90-91)

This quote gives us sufficient clues to the signs of Christ's second coming. 'Sleep', 'birth from the grave' (resurrection), cries in the air, are pointers to this.

Moreover, Beckett has created a character called Lucky whose sufferings resemble the sufferings of Christ. Lucky's actions amount to a criticism of Christianity to the effect that Christianity does not serve the purpose it was intended for. Lucky is in chains and he is

humiliated. Estragon beats, curses and even spits on him. Jesus also was subjected to the same type of humiliation at the hands of the Roman soldiers. The picture of Lucky carrying the burden of Pozzo's bag and being led to a public fair for sale is similar to the parading of Christ on the hill for public scorn. Estragon wipes Lucky's eyes and Pozzo's words: "wipe away his tears, he'll feel less forsaken" (32), can allude to Jesus' cry from the cross: "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me"? (Mark 15:34). When rope cuts into Lucky's neck he chokes. Jesus, too, suffocates as a result of crucifixion.

Pozzo's words: "Why he doesn't make himself comfortable?" (31) is similar to the taunt, the spectators hurled at Jesus, "Save yourself, why don't you? Come down off the cross if you're God's son" (Matt. 26:40). Pozzo states that Lucky always carries the luggage because "he wants to mollify me, so that I will give up the idea of parting with him" and Lucky "imagines that when I see how well he carries I'll be tempted to keep him on in that capacity" (31). In the same manner, Jesus carried his burden of crucifixion to awaken man's faith in God for time to come. His apostles were entrusted with the mission to "make disciples of all nations ...

teaching them to carry out everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always” (Matt. 28:18-20).

Jesus also desired that humanity should accept him as a teacher, a comforter and a deliverer of sinners. In the same vein, Pozzo wanted that Lucky should “understand beauty, grace, truth of the first water” (33). But Pozzo feels that both Lucky and Christianity have outlived their usefulness:

VLADIMIR. After having sucked all the good out of him, you chuck him away like a ... like a banana skin. Really ...

POZZO. (Groaning, clutching his head) I can't bear it ... any longer ... the way he goes on ... you've no idea ... It's terrible ... he must go ... (he waves his arms) ... I'm going mad ... (he collapses, his head in his hands) ... I can't bear it ... any longer ...

POZZO. (Sobbing) He used to be so kind ... so helpful ... and entertaining ... my good angel ... and now ... he's killing me (34).

In the past Pozzo got benefit from Lucky. Now the benefits are gone. Something that occurred in the time between the past and the present has led to the reduction of Lucky's capabilities and their overall effect. Lucky can no longer soothe or satisfy Pozzo's spirit. Instead he torments it. The acts on the part of Lucky constitute spiritual abuse. He has become a liability to Pozzo. Therefore, he considers him a banana peel, a mere trash. If Lucky is considered a parallel to dying Christ, this dialogue reveals two things. First the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus is no longer worth what it was once. Second, this failure has led to spiritual failure. Just as the value of Jesus' sacrifice has diminished, the actions and words of Lucky have also degenerated: "He used to dance the farandole, the fling, the brawl, the jig, fandango, the horn pipe. He capered. For joy. Now that's the best he can do" (40).

The sacrifice of an articulate Christ as a suffering man is now a mechanised action for amusing bored men. Further, it will be tossed like a banana peel. Like the dance, the religion also has changed in its character. Lucky "used to think prettily once" (39). But now he speaks in a running babble and his verbal tirade conceals meaning:

“Given the existence as uttered forth in the public works of Puncher and Wattman of a personal God qua qua qua qua with a white beard ... who from the heights of divine apathia divine athambia divine aphaisa loves us dearly...” (42).

The complexity of Lucky’s talk in the scientific style, though incoherent, gives rise to the subject of his discourse: Christ, the personal God. The belief of the Christian is that Christ is God as well as human. He is literally God as a person and he lives among heights away from humanity’s shortcomings. The words ‘divine apathia’ ‘divine athambia’ and ‘divine aphasia’ can allude to the verse, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17). A God with divine unconcern and apathy does not mean that He is callous or cruel but he is a provider of gifts and lights and not prone to variableness and turning. It can also mean that Christ was introduced into a world of apathia, athambia and aphasia and he with his words and miracles was forced to fill man’s hollow.

All That Fall is a play for Radio. Beckett states that it is a text written to come out of the dark. There is nothing to see. It offers us mental pictures. An old woman Maddy Rooney is on her way to Boghill, a country station, to meet her blind husband, Dan, returning from his office in the city. She passes a ruined house in which a woman is playing an old record of "Death and the Maiden". Then she is overtaken first by Christy, a local carter who wants to sell her some dung, next by Mr. Tyler, a retired bill-server whom she sends away so that she may mourn her dead daughter. Then she comes across her old admirer Mr. Slocum, clerk of the local race course. He is driving in his car. He offers her a lift and after great exertions by both of them, the fat and garrulous lady is hoisted into the car and they get off for the station, killing a chicken on the way. When they arrive, there is the same trouble in getting Mrs. Rooney out of the vehicle but now Mr. Slocum is helped by a porter.

Mrs. Rooney is reluctantly assisted up the steps to the station by the sanctimonious Miss. Fitt. A conversation ensues with the station master Mr. Barrell who cannot explain why the train should be so late. The train arrives fifteen minutes late. Rooney finds her husband. They

start off home. When she tries to find out what delayed the train, he is at first evasive. Then he gives a dramatised but quite uninformative account of the journey. This is interspersed with all kinds of talk about his possible retirement, the number of steps from the station to the road, etc. At one point Dan admits to a desire to murder a child, confessing that he has often considered attacking Jerry, the boy who usually leads him home from the station. Presently Jerry comes running after them with an object like a ball which Mr. Barrell says Dan has dropped. At first Dan denies this, then he violently takes it and offers no explanation beyond the phrase, "It is a thing which I carry about with me". Jerry starts back for the station but is recalled by Maddy who wants to know why the train was so late. Jerry tells her that a child had fallen from it under the wheels and had been killed. He then runs off and Mrs. Rooney trudges on home through a tempest of wind and rain.

The play ends ambiguously according to the daytime logic but it ends logically according to the laws of a world where all reality is merely audible. Dan Rooney has pondered how it would be to murder a child – 'nip some young doom in the bud' – and his train came in late

because a child, as we learn at the end, slipped down under the wheels, and yet it seems meaningless to ask whether he pushed her there for the very journey. Since it occupies no air, time is sheer illusion conjured up for us by his telling of what he chooses to tell, a telling according to which he did nothing at all except experience bladder distress. This epistemological point remains faintly irritating however intimate our acquaintance with the play is; but it interferes little with the play's enchantment as the enchantment is dependent on language, notably the vowel-rich language of the blind man's wife, in counterpoint to her husband's frigid rhetoric. Beckett has lavished all his resources of eloquence on shaping the speeches.

The play conveys for its theme a sense of transience. The poor woman's existence is attested by a record she is playing 'Death and Maiden'. Maddy Rooney is herself in decay, destroyed with sorrow and pining and by gentility, church going, fat, rheumatism and childlessness reflecting that it is suicide to be abroad and a lingering dissolution to be at home. Though she is a great fat jelly and though one of the high points of the play is the desperate exertion required to set her into a motor car and then get her out of it, we are oddly aware

that all this is a tour de force of illusion. For, her body or the car or anything does not exist for our senses at all; but there are only objurgations and sounds of effort. All have faded into sound and incomparable language and the language itself has only the richness of decay. In Mrs. Rooney's brief duet with the landscape, we sense her terrible isolation: "All is still. No living soul in sight. There is not one to ask. The world is feeding. The wind scarcely stirs the leaves and the birds are tired singing. The cows and sheep ruminant in silence. The dogs are hushed and the hens sprawl torpid in the dust. We are alone. There is no one to ask" (14). In the words of Esslin, "Instead of establishing a bridge of friendliness Mrs. Rooney's attempts to communicate with the people she meets on the road in All That Fall merely serve to make her more estranged from them" (Esslin, Absurd 86).

Our experience of Dan is what is important, an experience solely of his voice and words from which we learn that he is a killer at heart and has killed love and still keeps his hands clenched about love's throat. Our experience in this work to come out of the dark is of more important than an implied plot.

Beckett gives this play a melodic contour:

Rural sounds, sheep, bird, cow, cock, severally then together.

Silence.

Mrs. Rooney advances along country road towards railway station. Sound of her dragging feet. Music faints from house by way. "Death and the Maiden" The steps slow down, stop. Mrs. Rooney: Poor woman. All alone in that ruinous old house.

Music louder. Silence but for music playing. The steps resume. Music dies. Mrs. Rooney murmurs, melody. Her murmur dies. Sound of approaching cartwheels. The cart stops. The steps slow down, stop. (7)

The sound effects in All That Fall are abstractions of the objects they represent. They create mood rather than verisimilitude. The prelude of rural sounds does not simply evoke the image of a farm but establishes the connection of the play which is a mixture of realism and poetry, frustration and farce. The succession of sounds created by the various vehicles like Christy's cart, Mr. Tyler's bicycle, Conolly's van and Mr. Slocum's car, is clearly organized in a logical progression

towards the volume and danger, associated with the train. The sound effects generated by Mrs. Rooney's panting and the slow, regular rhythm of her dragging feet provide the first movement with its tedious undertone. The music in the opening sequence of the play is Schubert's Death and the Maiden (7). By inserting this particular piece Beckett introduces a tragic theme which he returns to in intervals in the play, namely, the theme of the death of a child. At the end of the play we find Rooney's pass by the house where the music from Death and the Maiden is still playing. Mr. Rooney instinctively identifies it and a silence follows. The emotional beats that are accented throughout the play underline Beckett's concern with the vivid depiction of an emotional state.

The play depicts the framework of a journey. All the characters in the play are on the move. It has a melodic contour rather than dramatic curve. Life creates an illusion of a goal-oriented journey and the dialogue between Mr. and Mrs. Rooney displays their vision of a life in which suffering is the norm. A narrative description of Mr. Rooney's train journey in which the delay of the train, though an important thing, remains inexplicable till the end of the play. It is

only in the end we are told that the train was delayed because of an accident. The death of a child that fell out of the train was the mishap. The journey has three stages. First one is Mrs. Rooney's journey to the railway station to meet her husband. The second stage is the arrival of the train and the confusion Mr. Rooney experiences and the third stage is the return of Mr. and Mrs. Rooney along the country road. Mrs. Rooney sets out to meet her husband. On the way she encounters Christy a local carter, Mr. Tyler, a retired bill server and her old admirer Mr. Slocum, a clerk of a local race course. But, unlike the situation in Waiting for Godot, the expectation of Mrs. Rooney to meet her husband is fulfilled. If we examine the saga of Mrs. Rooney's life we can find that her life all along has been tragic. Barring the occasional flashes of happiness her life has been one of "lingering dissolution" (11).

Beckett delineates Mrs. Rooney as a woman who is hysterical and destroyed with sorrow and pining. Her longing for love and sighting wistfully at the lovely laburnum are expressed in the following words:

Mrs. ROONEY. ... Love, that is all asked, a little love

daily, twice daily, fifty years of twice daily
 love like parihorse – butcher’s regular, what
 normal woman wants affection? A peck on
 the jaw at morning ... There is that lovely
 laburnum again. (9)

Images of sterility, decay, suffering and deaths are created by the description of the local details of a rural village in Ireland. A ruinous old house by the side of a country road, an impotent hinny with its cart of dung, a ditch filled with rotting leaves and the very name of the village itself, Boghill, are examples of scenic images that illustrate the theme of decay. Pain and suffering are predominant emotions in the play. The blindness of Mr. Rooney, the rheumatism of Mrs. Rooney, the illness of Christy’s wife and daughter and the thoughts about the death of Mrs. Rooney’s unborn daughter arouse feelings of pathos. Christy’s cart filled with dung, Mr. Tyler’s burst cycle tyre, the starting trouble of Mr. Slocum’s car, the music ‘Death and the Maiden’ emanating from an old gramophone smack of decay. Beckett exhibits in this play the backdrop of pain and suffering. The sufferings of Mrs. Rooney are manifold. She is afflicted with disease.

The memories of her past always hunt after her. The feelings of her childlessness torment her. The blindness of her husband and her solitariness oppress her. The poignancy of her desperation can be felt when she utters the words:

Mrs. Rooney: (In anguish) Mind the hen! (Scream of brakes. Squawk of hen) Oh, mother, you have squashed her, drive on, drive on! (The car accelerates, pause) What a death! One minute picking happy at the dung, on the road, in the sun with now and then a dust bath, and then – bang! – all her troubles over (Pause) All the laying and hatching (Pause). Just one great squawk and then ... peace. (15)

When Mr. Barrel, the Station Master states that it was nice to see Mrs. Rooney up after her confining to bed for a long time, she replies that she would have preferred to lying stretched out in her comfortable bed just wasting slowly, painlessly away, keeping up her strength with arrow root and calves – foot jelly till in the end she would be seen under the blankets merely as a board. Mrs. Rooney's pessimistic view of life is expressed when she says to Mr. Tyler:

This dust will not settle in out time. And when it does some great roaming machine will come and whirl it all skyhigh again. (12)

Mrs. Rooney's oppressive loneliness is given expression in her words:

All is still. No living soul in sight. There is no one to ask. The world is feeding. The wind – (brief wind) – scarcely stirs the leaves and the birds – (brief chirp) – are tired singing. The cows – (brief moo) – and sheep – (brief baa) – ruminant in silence. The dogs – (brief bark) – are hushed and the hens – (brief cackle) – sprawl torpid in the dust. We are alone. There is no one to ask. Silence. (32)

The background of pain and suffering in the play can be seen as a consequence of man's condition in an absurd world or it can be seen as the result of the Second World War. Over and above, Beckett's suffering on a personal or sentimental level also can be seen here. He was a sensitive person and a number of events must have caused pessimism in him. The 1916 Easter rebellion in Dublin

which he watched along with his father, a simple incident from his childhood in which he saw a policeman literally beating a dog to death and the undue punishment he got at school are all the events he recounted in his later life. Moreover, the death of his father and his first love Peggy Sinclair disheartened him. His frequent visits to a hospital in Dublin where his friend Dr. Gooffrey worked provided him with first hand experience of physical and mental suffering of the patients. Beckett himself had to suffer stab injury in Paris. In the fifties his mother and his brother Frank both died. His brother died of lung cancer who like Beckett had been an energetic sportsman. Beckett himself was prone to unending health problems. So the problems of pain and suffering which are so central in Beckett's works appear to have roots in direct personal experience.

Let us now try to relate the theme of suffering and transitoriness of life in this play, to the Bible. The very title 'All That Fall' takes its root in the Bible as it forms a part of the verse, "The Lord upholdeth all that fall and riseth all those that be bowed down", (Ps. 145:14). It is in the background of this verse that the suffering of Mrs. Rooney is to be viewed. Mrs. Rooney is destined to suffer and

moves from one suffering to another but there is no relief to her. This verse in the Bible becomes quite irrelevant to her. This verse is meant only to give expression to cynicism combined with despair which the human voice is capable of projecting faced with the prospect of constant pain and inescapable death.

Though Mr. Rooney used to attend sermons he could not subscribe to the view of the clergy that it was the human lot to suffer. He developed a cynical attitude towards the idea of suffering as being a part of some divine plan and preparation for the after life. This is done in order to give expression to cynicism combined with despair which the human voice is capable of projecting faced with the prospect of constant pain and inescapable death.

The train in which Mr. Rooney travelled was delayed. Mrs. Rooney tries to find out the cause of the delay but Mr. Rooney dodges all her questions. He states emphatically that she will not move until the reason for delay is given. He is evasive and drags his conversation centering on other subjects. At this juncture a boy comes and announces that the death of a child was responsible for the delay. Whether Mr. Rooney is personally responsible for the death of

the child is a debatable point. But his evasive replies and the protracted dialogue point to his involvement in the murder. When Jerry comes and reports the news about the death of the child that fell out of the carriage, he carries along with him a ball like thing which Mr. Rooney had lost. It was something that Mr. Rooney always carried with him. Mr. Barrell, the Station Master, vouches that the ball like object belongs to Mr. Rooney who was a regular commuter. Mr. Rooney had a killer instinct in him as is evident from the following words:

Mr. ROONEY. Did you ever wish to kill a child?

(Pause) Nip some young doom in the bud

(Pause) Many a time at night, in winter, on

the black road home. I nearly attacked the

boy. (Pause) Poor Jerry! (Pause) What

restrained me then? (Pause) Not fear of

man. (Pause) Shall we go on backward now

a little? (31)

On another occasion when Mrs. Rooney insists on the reason for "Fifteen minutes late! On a thirty minute run" (30), Mr. Rooney

desires that “two hundred pounds of unhealthy fat” (30) is got rid of. When they move forward, we notice that their contrapuntal monologues intersect with each other. The situation provides a tension between the two. Mrs. Rooney is mourning her lost life while Mr. Rooney is mourning the obligation to live:

Mrs. ROONEY. What is the matter, Dan? Are you not well?

Mr. ROONEY. Well! Did you ever know me to be well? The day you met me. I should have been in bed. The day you proposed to me, the doctors gave me up. You knew that, did you not? The night you married me with an ambulance. You have not forgotten that, I suppose? (Pause) No, I cannot be said to be well. (31)

The above passage shows various dualistic forces at work. The shift between cynicism and childish simplicity is a disguise for the turbulence of his emotional suffering. Mr. Rooney’s account of everything that ails him may also be parodic expression of physical decay. He is blind. He walks in darkness and commits deeds of

darkness. Because of his sinful nature he is a fallen person and it is in tune with Christian theology. Almost all the protagonists in the play are deformed in their character. Mrs. Rooney admits that she is a hag. On her way to meet her blind husband she encounters three men of her village Mr. Christy, Mr. Tyler and Mr. Slocum. They are all men of dubious morals. Tommy and Barnell, according to Mrs. Rooney are cads. Miss Fitt is hypocritically virtuous. They are all fallen in some way or other.

When Mrs. Rooney exclaims, “What is wrong with me, What is wrong with me, never tranquil, seething out of my dirty old pelt, out of my skull, oh to be in atoms, in atoms!” (13), we can understand that she is able to diagnose the root cause of her pathetic condition. Even her longing for physical love also does not alter the situation. For her “it is suicide to be abroad” (10) and “lingering dissolution” at home (11). To redeem the situation, she calls “Jesus! Jesus!” In response to the request of Mrs. Rooney to Miss Fitt to proffer her arms, Miss Fitt’s words: “Well, I suppose it is the protestant thing to do” (21) can allude the ritual of proffering hands (kiss of peace) practiced in the church worship of the protestants.

Mrs. Rooney waits for the train that brings her husband home. The late running of the train brings to her mind a host of various thoughts including collision but the train carrying her husband finally arrives removing her embarrassment. He returns losing something that looks like a ball but that is retrieved and given back to him by a boy who acted as his guide on the railway platform. The boy may represent some divine agency who is prepared to make sufficient recompense for the guilty conscience as a result of the crime Mr. Rooney is believed to have committed. Moreover Mr. Rooney's statement that he does not know the number of steps to the platform despite the fact that thousand times he has climbed them reveals man's inability to grasp the meaning of life despite his physical life on the earth. Mrs. Rooney's words: "Just cling to me and all will be well" (29) point to the fulfilment of the hope of the faithful in the Saviour. Mr. Rooney's words: "the loss of my sight was a great fillip. If I could go deaf and dumb I think that I might pant on to be a hundred" (32), also are relevant in this context. Mrs. Rooney's words, "Oh, no coughing or spitting or bleeding or vomiting just drifting gently down into the higher life" (18) refer to life after death

since death is considered to be a mere slumber as far as Christian belief is concerned.

Endgame (1958) is a play in one Act. According to Beckett the play is rather difficult and elliptic, mostly depending on the power of the text to claw, and more inhuman than *Godot*. Hamm, blind, sits in an arm chair. He wears dark glasses, a gold toque, a dressing gown and thick socks. He has a whistle with which he calls Clov, his servant. Clov brings him a dog with only three legs. Hamm's parents Nell and Nagg, both legless as the result of a cycling accident are in the ashbins. Among them, Clov alone can walk but he cannot sit down. However he is trying to leave Hamm because he bullies Clov. Nell probably dies. Hamm goes on narrating a story. Clov kills a flea on his person and a rat in his kitchen, off-stage. Clov retires to change into travelling clothes while Hamm discards his possessions one by one and settles back in his chair covering his face with a bloodstained handkerchief. Clov appears at the door with umbrella and bag, all ready for the road but as the curtain falls, he is still standing motionless on the threshold watching Hamm.

When Clov gazes through the windows and sees nothing he reports that the outdoors has been condemned by some unimaginable catastrophe. The text itself alludes to the room before us as 'the shelter' outside of which is death. We are to imagine a fallout shelter perhaps, and the last of ours of the last morsels of human life, after perhaps an H-Bomb explosion. The Bomb was much in the mind of Europe in 1957 when the play was published. Philip Toynbee (1889-1975) has observed:

Most of us have paid involuntary visits to hell and this is what it looks and feels like. A Beckett's hell is everybody's hell, though everybody is alone in it. Beckett's world is the world of a battered heavy weight twitching and groaning on the canvas. It is the twitches and the groans, the confused memories of having once stood erect and the dazed hope of rising again – which give movement and pathos and truth to his remarkable plays. (blurb inside, Waiting for Godot)

The players are simply on stage. When all the world is a stage, conversely, the Beckettian stage is all the world including the

vanishing world. Hamm is a blind man who tells stories. His blindness is like Lear's or Homer's and he is like a James Joyce whose heroism is recognizable always in pain, in tribulation, always doggedly synthesizing the gaieties of his verbal world. Hamm may represent the dying God of whom we have been hearing since Nietzsche or a god blind and tyrannical like fate or a god with demiurge whose work is not complete as revealed from the assembly of a toy dog with three legs in the play. The play provides a stage-world where the players are kept by the dialogue and cannot go about their affairs until every night they have recited every word to the end. Theirs is the doom of perpetual re-enactment until such time as the faceless public have lost interest and the run may close. Clov's first words are a longing to be released from this ritual: "Finished, it is finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished. Grain upon grain one by one and one day, suddenly there is a heap, the impossible heap. I can't be punished any more" (12).

In this play there are clues to the world's deprivations when Clov speaks that here are no more bicycle wheels or that there are not even any bicycles. For the old man in the trash-can there is no more

pap. Hamm in his lofty misery concludes that Nature has forgotten them. There is the mention of a little order in the words that Clov utters, "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" (39). Order is immobility or else absence. A loveless world is depicted in the play. Hamm curses his father for engendering him. Hamm's father curses him, considering the life in which Hamm maintains him. The desolation in Endgame seems more than natural. Hamm's big world tends toward entropic featurelessness and he is glad enough of dreams that restore the old world. The big world is one in which there is no peace.

Endgame is a play that deals with the pathos of human life. Though Clov, Nagg and Nell are clownish, Hamm is the central character who creates the overall tone of the play. Hamm is the master and Clov is the servant. Their relationship is similar to the relationship between Pozzo and Lucky in Waiting for Godot. They can be cited as example for the inevitability of interdependence. Even in the face of hardships, Clov continues to maintain his allegiance to his master. The magnitude of his mounting problems is

revealed through Clov's words: "Grain upon grain, one by one and one day, suddenly there is a heap, a little heap, the impossible heap (Pause) I can't be punished any more (Pause)" (12). Job in the Bible compares his sufferings to the weight of the sand of the sea (Job 6:3). It is very selfevident that Beckett has the sufferings of Job in his mind when he creates his characters Hamm and Clov.

Moreover, the play is set in the background of a number of Biblical stories like the story of the creation of the world, the story of prophet Daniel's prophecy in the palace of King Belshazzar, revelation by St. John in the island of Patmos, the parable of the sower of the seeds, the Flood and Noah's arc, Joseph and his brothers, Adam and Garden of Eden, John the Baptist and Christ's crucifixion on the Cross at Calvary. These stories are meant to show the sufferings and misery of the major characters in the play.

In Krapp's Last Tape (1959) a table and a chair can be seen standing in a pool of strong light. The rest is in darkness. A tape recorder, a microphone and some boxes containing spools of tape are on the table. Krapp, an old man dingily dressed, white faced with a purple nose, grey haired, dishevelled, near sighted, hard of hearing is

seen walking laboriously. He begins by eating two bananas kept in a locked drawer of the table then shambles off into the darkness where he noisily uncorks a bottle and drinks. He returns, consults a ledger and finds a tape "box 3, Spool 5" lingering with great satisfaction over the word 'spool'. According to the ledger entry, this tape contains sections "Mother at rest at last, The black ball, The dark nurse, slight improvement in bowel condition, Memorable equinox and Farewell to love". Krapp puts on this tape made of his thirty ninth birthday the voice is strong, pompous yet unmistakably his at a much earlier time. Then he starts making the tape, on his sixty ninth birth day. He begins briskly enough but soon gets tired of his task and sinks back into memories of the past. Presently, he abandons the attempt altogether, replaces the earlier tape, plays over the final section again and as the curtain falls he is sitting motionless, staring before him while the tape runs on in silence.

In this play, Beckett explains that the perceiving mind is itself changing so fast that the realisation of yesterday's aspirations can provide no gratification to the self of today. As Esslin remarks, "In Krapp's Last Tape, the well turned idealistic professions of faith

Krapp made in his best years have become empty sounds to Krapp grown old” (Esslin, Absurd 86). In it he has produced the perfect slide-rule for measuring a character’s past against his present self. Beckett has created an old man who for over forty years has been keeping a sort of diary in tape and is now in the habit of playing his past tapes to help him set through the day. When he talks back at his old tapes, it produces a dialogue between two Krapps at a considerable remove from each other in time. It is a device for confronting oneself with its old self and the audience with the both.

Beckett’s belief in moments where involuntary memory is in operation is stressed here. These moments of illumination give us the only genuine insight into reality. Everyday reality as we experience is a fiction. For Beckett, there is no possibility of grace, no escape from the deadening awareness of the meaningless passage of time. For Krapp, the only reality is words. His own past self is only real for him in the form of words on a tape and the pleasure he enjoys most in the present is the pleasure of words.

Krapp’s Last Tape is the monologue of a wearish old man, 69, rearsighted and hard of hearing. He listens to his past life with the

help of recorded tapes and he realises that the Krapp on the tape is different from what he is at present. He has changed and regrets his past actions. The tape that rotates in front of him contains the activities of his life at the age of 39. It is hard to believe that he was ever that young whelp engrossed in sexual life in pursuit of carnal life with unattainable laxation. He sneers at his youth and thanks God that it is over. The tape unfolds his life in retrospect. To the extent that Krapp views his life in retrospect and resolves that he does not want to repeat that sort of life, is akin to the life of a person who falls into the mire of sin and later rises up through repentance and resolves to lead a virtuous life. This is in tune with Christian theology.

In Happy Days (1963), Winnie, a woman of about fifty stands buried to her waist in the exact centre of a mound. At the back of the mound her husband Willie, a man of about sixty, lives. He can, only move on all fours. He passes his days by reading news papers or looking at a naughty post card. Winnie spends her time talking, reminiscing, looking at Willie and taking care of her appearance. Occasionally, she breaks down but always manages to pull herself together and put a brave face on things. In Act II, she is embedded to

the neck and cannot even move her head. She now invents stories to while away the time. Willie suddenly appears in front of the mound “dressed to kill” and makes a great effort to crawl up to Winnie who can no longer give him a hand as she might have done previously. Willie falls back twice but Winnie tries to make his visit one more happy day singing a song. Willie stares at her from the foot of the mound as the curtain falls.

In the play Beckett presents us with a static situation. Winnie is trying to pass the time between walking and sleeping as pleasantly as possible in a world where the opportunities for physical movement are steadily diminishing. Winnie at first buried to her waist, is later found embedded to her neck. These changes are not explained. No new situation is produced. Winnie can no longer count on external objects to help her pass the time, but she must draw more and more upon herself. Many people complain that Beckett’s plays are sordid, repetitive, meaningless, have no story, have none of the glitter we associate with the world ‘theatrical’. Above all, they have no relation to life as we know it. We do not come across well preserved ladies buried to their waist to their necks in mounds of earth under a blazing

sky as we do in this play. But, Beckett is not concerned with reproducing what we call life as we know it. He is trying to chart a whole zone of being in the individual hitherto left severely alone by the artist. It is a play based on impact.

In Happy Days Winnie is the main character and she is a well preserved, fifty year old woman. She is embedded up to her waist in the exact centre of mound. Initially she is embedded to her waist. Later she is found embedded to her neck. Willie, her husband is at her right and lies asleep on the ground hidden by mound. Winnie is also asleep. The ringing of the bell wakes her up. “Another heavenly day” (9) greets her. She begins the days with a prayer: “For Jesus Christ sake Amen”, “World without and Amen” (9-10). At the very outset of the play, we find a Beckettian character saying prayers to God. She radiates happiness and joy throughout the play. She does so even in a situation where the very proximity of her husband is no relief to her. Her husband Willie has no zeal for anything, no “interest in life” (11). Still she is inclined to pray “prayer perhaps not for naught” (12). Unlike other characters Beckett here introduces a character with a different mood. Her prayerful attitude, jovial disposition and optimism give us

a new insight into the outlook of the dramatist. The optimism of Winnie is coupled with pathos also, as her inexhaustible capacity for happiness will make any other reasonable creature miserable. Even when her body is buried in sand she finds pleasure in her small trifle actions. We see her cleaning her teeth, filing her nails, putting on lipsticks and adjusting her hat and similar other actions that are part of anyone's daily routine. Through these small actions she dissipates her anxieties and sorrows and tries to make her life happy:

WINNIE. What day? (Pause) Head up, (Normal voice)
What now? (Pause) Words fail, there are
times when even they fail. (Turning a little,
towards Willie) Is that not so, Willie?
(Pause. Turning a little further) is not that
so, Willie, Willie, that even words fail at
times. (Pause Back front) What is one to do
then until they come again? Brush and
comb the hair if it has not been done or if
there is some doubt trim the nails if they are
in need of trimming, these things tide one

over. (20)

In human life one always desires happiness but it is elusive. It is the most precious thing also. We always tend to believe that worldly gains contribute to our happiness but in the case of Winnie, a talk from the side of Willie can make her happy!

WILLIE. Oh you are going to talk to me today, this is going to be happy day! (19), Winnie always smiles when she thinks about her new style of life, but her smile goes off when she thinks about her life “in her old style”. (18)

Play (1964) is a drama in one Act. The curtain rises on a dark stage. There are three urns containing W1, M and W2. These characters have no names. They are first woman (W1) second woman (W2) and man (M). No indications are given as to place or time. These characters are in the same position with their necks held fast in the urns' mouths. They do not speak to each other. The man and the two women are all talking about a triangular relationship in which they were involved together but each one of them has a separate series of

memories about it. Their speeches are counter pointed. The minds behind them aren't even aware of each other, except in the past tense. These speeches are not made in reply to any previous speech, they are made into the void and this is too in accordance with the growing tendency for Beckett's monologues to be less and less addressed to anyone in particular. It represents the culmination of a steadily developing tendency in Beckett's stage plays to call on the actor to do less and less except talk. The playwright uses a spotlight to the speeches by focusing on the character who is to talk. Most of the time, the light settles on a single face but even when it is spread over all three, they are still quite oblivious of each other. In fact the star performer is the lighting operator. With the light flashing on, from one face to the next and with the quick toneless delivery of speech by the actors it is theatrically a very confusing experience. Beckett's interest in the story is his study of what happens to the three consciousnesses once the man opts out of both the relationships, condemning all three of them to solitude. Treated as it is, very little is communicated.

The three characters in Play are M (Man) W1 (First Woman) and W2 (Second Woman). It seems that the man is married to the

first woman, but he keeps an adulterous relationship with the second woman. They quarrel with one another because of the infidelity. Finally, the man disappears out of the lives of both the women. All of them feel a sense of isolation and suffer from guilt and anxiety. The first woman thinks of “penitence, yes at a pinch, atonement, one was resigned but no, that does not seem to be ten points either” (156). She wants to speak the truth about her life and be left in peace but she fails to get the strength. Meanwhile the second woman wishes that she becomes mad as a release from her self-consciousness. The man becomes increasingly aware of his guilty consciousness with the help of the light. The theme of adultery and infidelity lends colour to the religious character of the play. The peacelessness, isolation and loneliness are the results of sinful deeds. The verse, “The wage of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23) is relevant in this context but in the case of the man the spot light from the stage goes inside him and removes the darkness in him partially. It will be appropriate to recall the scene in the Bible in which the woman caught in adultery was brought before Christ who enlightened her with the words, “I am the light of the

world, whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).

Embers (1959) is a play in which Beckett marks the central character as mad but the madness spreads from the character to infect the whole body of the play that contains him. Henry, the protagonist sees only shingle and sea but spends his time conjuring with sounds and voices in his head to ward off aloneness. We are to learn that he always hears the sea whether he is near it or not and has the habit of talking to drown its persistent murmur. In Esslin’s words, “And in Embers the old man’s musings are equated with the beating of the waves upon the shore” (Esslin, Absurd 86). We hear the voice of a woman, Ada, Henry’s wife. We are not told, however, whether she is actually present sitting beside Henry or whether she is an abstraction in his mind like his dead father whom he also imagines as sitting beside him but whose voice is never heard. Ambiguity, abstraction—these are the possibilities peculiar to radio which Beckett is exploiting here to the full. Embers may be taken as the paradigm of everything Beckett has done since late 1950’s. It is unusual in presenting so

explicitly, albeit, enigmatically the elements of the past situation, the past happening from which the present agony is a recoiling.

Embers presents a tormented soul who longs to end his suffering. Beckett's familiar concerns are obvious in this inner narrative of Henry, the protagonist in the play. Henry is seen obsessed with his attempts to remember events from the past connected with his family and his wish to communicate with his father who is presumed as drowned. He tells himself a story about a man called Bolton, who sends for a doctor Holloway so that Henry may be given a lethal injection. But he is prepared to give only an anesthetic that will numb his pain for a limited period. The play ends with no solution and like other Beckett's characters, he is also obliged to go on with the knowledge that the next day will be the same as the previous one.

The idea that is illustrated in the play is that the present agony of an individual is what recoils from his past actions, as is expressed in the holy verse: "The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction" (Gal. 6:8).

Henry seems to possess a sense of guilt with regard to the death of his father and he tries to go into his past attempting to plumb his mind for this very reason. He goes near the sea and hears its sound. By doing so, he thinks that the panic in him can be controlled by the sound of the sea.

Through Henry, Beckett presents a character who is obsessed with a sense of guilt and longing for reconciliation with his father. Henry is considered a washout by his father as is revealed by his own words: "Father! (pause) you wouldn't know me, You'd be sorry you ever had me, but you were that already, a washout that's the last I heard from you, a washout" (25). Henry is very eager to know the truth about the past catastrophe and get a new awareness of his own guilt. His wife Ada helps him in this regard by her description of the events that led to the suicide of his father by drowning. She acts as a messenger to reveal the truth as a palliating presence for him. The sense of guilt in a person leading to his repentance and reconciliation with his adversary is a Christian approach for cultivating and maintaining human relationship. We find that Henry too is moving along this path.

Words and Music (1962) is a radio play. It plays around humorously with the possibilities of the medium but not in order to make any kind of statement. In fact it is not so much a play as a sketch. In this play Beckett hits upon a very imaginative device, breaking up an interior monologue into separate voice and making Music into a character with a will of its own. This is skittish and amusing. 'Words' known as Joe, and Music known as Bob are both at the disposal of a character called Croak who has not yet arrived when the action begins. We hear a small orchestra tuning up and we hear words giving himself a trial run on the theme of sloth. The sentences that come are repetitive and almost meaningless. Croak's arrival is heralded by the sound of shuffling carpet slippers. He announces the theme for the night which is love. Words responds substituting love for sloth. Croak expresses his displeasure. Music is given a chance. Music expresses its response in sounds and we hear soft music. Words protests and Croak has to make Music play louder which ruins all expression. Words is given a second chance but over-plays his part and Music, at a second attempt, does no better. Disappointed, Croak proposes an alternative theme, 'age'. After abortive attempts from

both Words and Music, Croak gets them to collaborate, Words singing and Music accompanying. After a number of false starts and a great deal of prompting by Music, they come out with a simple little song about age. This play resembles an intricate rich symbolist poem composed in a medium of pure audition.

In Words and Music the themes of love, sloth and age come under discussion. The passage on love given in the text is as follows:

Love is of all the passions the most powerful passion and indeed no passion is more powerful than the passion of love. (clear throat). This is the mode in which the mind is most strongly affected and indeed in no mode is the mind more strongly affected than this (Pause). (128)

It has a contrasting bearing on the chapter on love in the Bible which reads:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always preserves ... And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. (I Cor. 13:4-13)

Cascando (1963) means diminishing volume or decreasing tempo. In it there is a man who is very confident of his command of both the verbal and the musical faculties, opens them, closes them, singly and together, and is aware that he is incomprehensible to censorious folk called 'They'. His life is the familiar one, the telling of stories in a voice that hopes at last, to be achieving the last story. The story is about Woburn who is fleeing, stumbling, sprawling in mud, then, sprawling face down in a boat drifting by night, oarless, tillerless, his back to the stars, out to the open sea. The story is not the theme. The theme is the contrast between the self-wrapped-detachment of the presiding mind, his awareness of what 'they' say, his studied indifference to 'them' between this and the impassioned anxiety of his narrative voice to catch up with Woburn.

Cascando has a structural similarity with Words and Music. The outline of the play reveals a mind that opens and closes the never-ending stream of words, on the one hand, and on the other, shows an

inexhaustible source of individual musical phrases and motifs that appear to be composed according to the streams of voice. Moreover, Voice and Music are presented as separate creative faculties of the mind. In this play Beckett focuses on the steady tune and tempo of voice balancing the music with the voice as that they become two melodies in counterpoint. The word 'cascando' is a musical term equivalent to *calando*, referring to the end of a piece. It involves the decrease of volume and the deceleration of tempo. The shape of the narrative itself is indicative of the mind already in the process of degenerating towards an impasse. In Cascando Voice's low, panted, monotonous, rapid lyrics seem devoid of any human expression, and thus, the mechanical rap seems to be closer to a musical instrument than a human voice. For Beckett, music serves as tool for his reductionist method. His protagonists perhaps radiate pure feeling instead of words and their closest expressions get to musical expressions. Sometimes we may not be able to perceive the structure and rhythmic qualities of his plays by reading alone. The pauses and the silent echoes that resonate in these pauses cannot be explained satisfactorily. Furthermore, Beckett very often uses musical terms

such as piano, fortissimo, andante, allegro, da capo, cadenza to produce the desired effect. It is not through emotionally charged lines that Beckettian characters reveal their suffering but through musical notations. We often come across an intricate pattern of discordant points giving his plays a rhythm.

Come and Go (1967), Breath (1970) and Not I (1973) are three short plays. Come and Go is a brief and rather sketchy piece about the reunion of three elderly spinsters who used to be friends at school and are now reaching the end of their unsatisfying and pointless-seeming lives. Come and Go is a brief and rather sketchy piece that is noted for its poignancy and directness. It depicts the meeting together of three elderly spinsters who were friends at school. There are at the end of their unsatisfying and meaningless lives. It was expected of them that they should not broach the secret of their love affair. They have a past common to them and now they have a common present. But they were found guilty of broaching the secret subject and suffused in disappointment. Now they decide to enjoin reticence and out of their reticence, they make their life's finest achievement.

In this play each character defines herself by what she does not say. Each one is doomed. One character talks to the second one about the nature of the third one. If we examine this play in the theological perspective, we can see an attempt to span the space between birth and death. Just as each of the three characters exists on the stage, in turn, every human being comes to their world and leaves, making room for others to live. Finally, all depart. The guilt of the characters lead to their disappointment and eventual doom. Moreover, transitoriness of human life is also highlighted through the title of the play. As the Bible says, “We are aliens and strangers on earth” (Heb. 11:13).

In Breath a brief cry is followed by an intake of breath that continues for ten seconds. There is another cry identical with the first and taking place after five seconds of silence. The sketch is over. Some critics opine that it is a masterly summary of the whole life span between birth and death.

Breath is a sign of life, or in other words, is the beginning of life. The Biblical theme of God creating the first man and breathing

life into his nostrils and man's short span of life with all his attendant misery overshadow the play.

Not I is substantial by a better achievement. It vindicates Beckett's application of his reductionist methods to the theatre. The playwright creates the most striking images of modern drama. Space is in complete darkness. In mid air we see a human mouth and about two inches of surrounding flesh. Very dimly at the side, we see a listening figure, covered from head to foot in a loose djellaba, its head slightly higher than the mouth. It makes four slight movements and then becomes motionless. The audience's attention will be riveted by the movements of the lips, teeth and tongue as the words pour urgently, desperately and pathetically out of the mouth. The sound will seem to come in flashes creating pictures inside our imagination. All four movements of the listening figure are movements of 'helpless compassion'. The effect of depersonalisation is heightened by the ambiguity about whether she is alive or unborn or even dead. Beckett also goes beyond what he did with all the maimed and paralysed creatures in his earlier works. He makes 'her' ignorant of whether she is standing or sitting or kneeling or lying. The brain and the insistent

voice that seems to come from it are given an existence which scarcely depends on the body.

In Not I, we are presented with a mouth in mid-air, about eight feet above the stage level. At down stage, another figure in loose black djellaba intent on Mouth is seen standing. The story spanning the whole of a creature's life is narrated in the play. From the very beginning of the play, a child is introduced before us evoking our sympathy. The child is born before its time and it was denied of love and affection by its parents. Mouth talks about her in the third person and it is the story of a woman who has lived up to seventy years and unfortunately led a sinful life. A feeling of compassion is aroused every time she narrates her hallowing tale.

Her wanton life and the consequent traumatic experience, insentient condition and the sense of guilt, and fear of punishment are expressed through these words:

first thought was ... oh long after ...

sudden flash ... she was being punished ..

for her sins ... a number of which then ... (217)

Her sinful nature leads her to the realisation that there is “some flaw in her make up” (218) and her inner voice urges her to give up her habit.

The play is clothed in Biblical atmosphere as the theme of God and sin dominates it. Over and above, the title also comes from the Bible. The musings of the woman about her past, her sense of fear regarding punishment, her remorseful attitude and her turning towards God for mercy make the story. God is presented as merciful and loving. Moreover, the motif of the forgiving God is recurrent.

The Catastrophe (1984) is a short play where there are only four characters – the protagonist, the Director, Assistant and Luke. The figure of the protagonist is static. The rehearsal setting of the play presents a complex of relations among the characters and a complex of meanings for the changes imposed upon protagonist. The play is open to various readings. So long as there are a director, Protagonist and other two characters it points to the hierarchical scheme of theatre personae. It may also refer to the egoistical will of the creator to control what he has created. It may either be God or the

artist. Beckett bases the play on the story of the woes described in Revelation (Rev. 8:7-13).

Beckett's Characters

Beckett's characters are always subject to drives which tend to isolate them from the world of relationship and activity. They live in "A universe where love has been frozen them, an insidiously plausible universe, a universe that bubbles up into visible grotesques" (Kenner16). They are all repellent grotesques. In Waiting for Godot, we have Vladimir who has bad breath and weak bladder. There is Estragon whose feet are small. Krapp is constipated. Willie in Happy Days can only crawl on all fours. He eats his mucus. Nell in Endgame is a toothless cripple. Hamm is a blind hemophiliac and he cannot stand up while Clov cannot sit down. Hamm remarks, "Every man his speciality" (16). By it he means his deformity. Being bereft of all physical dignity, Beckettian characters have few pleasant character traits. They are for the most part cruel, violent, obscene, blasphemous, finding a corrosive pleasure in their own squalor and the abject helplessness of others. Krapp describes the world as 'this old muck ball' and life at sixty nine "as the sour cud and the iron stool" (18).

Even Winnie in Happy Days, the gentlest of them asks, “How can one better magnify the Almighty than by sniggering with him at his little jokes, particularly the poorer ones”? (24). Nell in Endgame is more direct and she speaks: “Nothing is funnier than unhappiness, I grant you that” (20). Vladimir seems to speak for all of them when he refers to this “foul brood to which a cruel fate consigned us” (79). Beckett never dissociates himself from his people. Hamm tells Clov, “You are on earth. There is no cure for that” (44).

It is yet remarkable that Beckett reveals through his characters, unexpected virtue like charity, compassion, love and an unbreakable determination to endure. As the famous critic Madeline Renauld says:

‘I do not know what Beckett thinks of women, but I know that he understands them profoundly from inside. If his plays manage to affect us (and if they did not succeed in invading our sensibilities, they would not be played throughout the entire world), it is because Beckett, in spite of his modesty, manages to express his immense compassion for all human life and because he is one of

those exceptional man to whom love and lucidity are on the same level'. (qtd. in Calder 83)

Estragon though eager to die will not hang himself first. Vladimir's greater weight might break the branch leaving him to face the world alone. Vladimir is deeply protective watching over Estragon as a fond parent watches over a sleeping child. For Winnie, the mere knowledge of Willie's proximity is adequate reason for going on, while a sound or even a sign from him is more than enough to make her day meaningful. Nag and Nell in Endgame apart in their dustbins speak a love duet, heart piercing is its tenderness. Even the nameless heads in Play, emptied, ruined, impotent creatures can each feel pity and hope for the others. They save themselves from despair, saving us with them. If pity and hope are possible in such a place and in such a word for such people, then they are possible anywhere for anyone.

In the whole world of his work, there is not one unfeeling man or woman. They all suffer and their anguish finds an echo in us. Habit, as Vladimir says, is a great deadener but anguish is a great reviver. The moment we sense that what Beckett is presenting corresponds to something in ourselves, apathy is no longer possible. We feel and feel

deeply. Further more, he is working from inside his material and we have been drawn into it with him. The more we understand Beckett's characters the more do we realise that the magnitude of our vital and harrowing problems need not be a tortured secret but can really be understood and shared.

Beckett's characters use ordinary words and very short sentences. They do not indulge in philosophical or moral arguments. They seldom soliloquise and they never preach. He keeps his characters busy. To borrow Hugh Kenner's words,

They are live actors, living people whose feet resound on floor boards, whose chests move as they breathe and we must learn to understand, with a corner of our attention, that they are imprisoned inside this play. They are people with opinions and digestions, but their freedom tonight is restricted. They are not at liberty to speak any words but the words set down for them which are not inspiring words. (Kenner 27)

Their actions may not be spectacular but every move is part of the overall experience, as eloquent as any work.

All of Beckett's characters are either old or even very old. Except in his early novels and short stories, we do not come across adolescent or young or middle aged adults in his works. Youth is represented only by memories of a girl on a boat or of the time when one was not too decrepit to be refused admission to the Eiffel Tower. In his plays, there is no chance of any development of character through relationships. Sometimes his characters are like children who have time to play games. Vladimir and Estragon in Waiting for Godot play a game of being Pozzo and Lucky. They play by being very polite to each other, by abusing each other and they stagger about on one leg trying to look like trees.

Of the four characters in Endgame, Hamm is confined to his arm chair, while Nag and Nell are confined to their dustbins. Clov is the only character who can move about. The restriction of movement heightens the obvious interdependence of the characters. It also limits the possibilities of knock-about comedy. Hamm's world is coming to an end. In this play, Nature is dead. Nag is crying. Therefore, he is still alive. Hamm is a sort of a saviour: "All those I might have helped. Helped! Saved, saved! The place was crawling with them" (44). At the

same time, he rejects all the suppliants who came to him for help. He plays the part of a destroyer too. He wants the end to come. He asks Clov to destroy all types of life which are threat to him. Under his dark glasses, the eyes have gone all white and seeing nothing he can see Nothingness. Hamm has a number of tracts seen as schizophrenic. His paralysis and his blindness are seen partly controlled by his own will power. We think of his schizophrenic traits when we learn about his consignment of his parents to dustbins, his asexuality, his hints of godlike powers, his longing for the end, his cultivation of a relationship with absolute nothingness and his belief that everyone else is dead.

Beckett's characters represent humanity in terms of broken down old creatures. As Colin Counsell remarks, "Most of them are in some way physically and sensorily impaired, suffering blindness or amputation, paralysis, dementia, speechlessness or decrepit old age" (Counsell 117). Some of them start from immobility. Others who can move often come to find movement more and more difficult as the action progresses. Molloy in the novel Molloy starts off hobbling friskily about on crutches. By the end of his narrative, he can hardly

move at all. Moran is not a lame when he starts off in pursuit of Molloy but the longer he goes on looking for him the more he comes to resemble him. Malone is unable to get out of bed. The unnamable is static. Bom in How It Is can only crawl about on the mud and he becomes more and more a voice, less and less a body.

Beckett puts a female character called Winnie at the centre of the picture in Happy Days. She is extrovert and unintelligent. The chief function of her husband Willie is to provide a strictly theoretical possibility that he is listening to his wife. He usually utters only a syllable. He has no zest for anything, no interest in life. Winnie has inexhaustible capacity for happiness in circumstances that would make any reasonable person miserable. The triviality of Winnie's mind is underlined by the triviality of her actions. Most of her actions are part of anyone's daily routine. But because of her situation, they all appear utterly incongruous and pointless. She is entirely a victim of time. She is no longer able to expect any freedom in the future as she is imprisoned in her own past. In Play, there are three characters imprisoned up to their necks in urns. They represent three persons trapped and passive in a limbo created by their own consciousness.

For Beckett the recognition that reality is ultimately devoid of meaning is a positive act. But it enables us to extract maximum value from our lives, to experience the fertile diversity of existence in a phenomenal world. Alan Schneider in his reminiscence “Waiting for Beckett” states:

‘Beckett’s plays stay in the bones. They haunt me sleeping and waking, coming upon me when I am least aware. Sometimes a stray bit of conversation heard by accident on a bus or in a restaurant brings home one of Vladimir’s and Estragon’s ‘little canters’. Sometimes I find myself actually like Clov or like Hamm or, more often like both simultaneously. Sam’s characters seem to me always more alive and more truly lasting than those in the slice – of – life realistic dramas with which our stages today abound. His words strike to the very marrow – the sudden sharp anguish of a Pozzo or of a Hamm crying out for understanding in an uncertain universe; Clov’s detailed description of the bleak harsh landscape of our existence on earth. While against and in spite of the

harshness and the uncertainty, there is the constant assertion of man's will, and spirit, his sense of humour, as the only bulwarks against despair; the constant 'glimmers of hope', even in the dark depths of that abyss in which we find ourselves'. (qtd. in Calder 51)

**A STUDY OF SAMUEL BECKETT'S PLAYS IN
RELATION TO THE THEATRE OF THE ABSURD**

THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE
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Chapter Four

The Motif of Time in the Plays of Beckett

In chapter three Beckett's plots and characters have been examined. His non-adherence to conventional well-knit plots and unusual delineation of characters have been highlighted. He has broken through the crust of stage conventions to the shifting core of psychological reality present in human hopes, fears and dreams. Moreover the themes of his plays have been evaluated against the backdrop of the Bible. Now we may examine Beckett's views on Time and how the motif of Time is developed in his plays.

The motif of Time recurs in his plays. Ihab Hassan says that "Like Proust, Beckett is haunted by Time" (Hassan 121). Its flow causes suffering and tragic endurance for Beckett's characters. His characters are torn out of their natural finite world and deprived of Parmenides' delusions. Parmenides, 5th century BC. Greek philosopher is of the view that knowledge acquired through the sense organs is an illusion and an error. Zeno, the Greek Philosopher of the

6th century BC tried to prove that movement or any activity does not exist. The only thing that remains unchanged and constant is Being and the essence of reality is infinity. The movements and thoughts of a finite being in space and time are incompatible with the reality of the Universe. Therefore, the finite world demarcated by time is the ostensible and the illusory world of human being. It only creates the delusion of flowing, change and movement, and the world is separated from the real and only true world of the infinite Universe as the Being of a unity. It is, therefore, seen that Beckett's characters fall into timelessness and immobility. Though they are situated in the only real infinite Parmenides' world, they still stay human beings with human mind and feelings. This is the tragedy of Beckett's man and the absurdity of his world. In other words, his predicament lies in a situation where he cannot face the world deprived of delusions. He is entrapped in the impossibility of integrating a finite and limited human life with the infinity of the Universe where he lives. Therefore, the inconsistency now consists in different beings in time or rather different time categories as finite and infinite. That Beckett's characters are expelled from the stream of events, creates the illusion

of a flux of time. In the words of Esslin, “To one who felt that habit and routine was the cancer of time, social intercourse a mere illusion” (Esslin 33). His characters stop in time and space and stand face to face with their true existence in a world of which the real essence is its infinity. Time takes hold of them and becomes their enemy. It crushes through memories and a nonsensical hopeful vision of tomorrow. In these moments time loses its only quality i.e. the delusion of fluency appearing to be the natural life process. Blaise Pascal (1623 – 62) is of the view:

‘We sail within a vast sphere, ever drifting in uncertainty, driven from end to end. When we think to attach ourselves to any point and fasten to it, it wavers and leaves us; and if we follow it, it eludes our grasp, slips past us and vanishes for ever. Nothing stays for us. This is our natural condition and yet most contrary to our inclination; we burn with desire to find solid ground and an ultimate sure foundation where on to build a tower reaching to the infinite. But our whole ground work cracks and the earth open to abyss’. (qtd. in Hesla 129)

Beckett airs the view of Zeno (6th cent. BC Greek philosopher) with regard to the passage of time, as is when Hamm speaks in Endgame: “Moment upon moment, pattering down like the millet grains of ... (he hesitates) ... that old Greek and all life long you wait for that to mount up to life” (45). Zeno’s parable of the heap of millets points out that in a finite universe, the heap can never be completed but be possible only in an infinite universe. In the quote, the heap of Millet is replaced by the heap of days.

Hamm, Clov and Hamm’s parents represent three generations and also three periods. Clov as the son of Hamm stands for Hamm’s past. He was like Clov who is now capable of moving and using the legs. Nell and Nagg represent Hamm’s future. They are old and closer to death. Hamm, the main character represents the present or continuity of time. Moreover, we can notice that there are two time levels operating simultaneously in the play. One is the linear scheme of time appearing through the age of all the characters and their relationships. On the other, there is a vertical line representing Zeno’s time succession, the eternal slowing down and tending to infinity. This line is represented mostly by Hamm. Beckett projects this infinite

present right on the stage through the character of Hamm and his spasmodic sticking to the central position in the middle of the stage:

HAMM. I am more or less in the centre?

CLOV. I'd say so.

HAMM. You'd say so! Put me right in the centre.

(Endgame 24)

Hamm wants Clov to place him at the centre of the stage as if he would like to be as deep as possible in the moment of the present in order to reach the long desired end.

Linear time is primarily concerned with change while the vertical Zeno's time succession implies sameness. When Hamm speaks: "But we breathe, we change! We lose our hair, our teeth! Our bloom! Our ideas!" (16), it is the linear time that is indicated. On another occasion, when Hamm begs for his painkiller, Clov repeats that he is leaving. Through repetition static time is expressed. The conversation between Hamm and Clov given below shows that time has stopped:

HAMM. What time is it?

CLOV. The same as usual.

HAMM. (Gesture towards window right) Have
you looked?

CLOV. Yes.

HAMM. Well?

CLOV. Zero. (13)

Static time is expressed through the motif of a circle which appears in different forms. Clov is seen pushing Hamm in the chair along the walls around the room as “right round the world” (23). He comes back to the same place as if nothing has happened. Static time is expressed in the quality of repetition represented by the rotation of the “bicycle wheels” (15) at the beginning of the play. The repetitive dialogue also expresses the Static time:

CLOV. (Looking) Grey. (Lowering the telescope,
turning towards Hamm, louder) Grey!
(pause. Still louder) Grey! (Pause. He gets
down, approaches Hamm from behind,
whispers in his ear).

HAMM. (Starting.) Grey! Did I hear you say Grey? (26)

When Hamm asks for oil can to oil the castors, Clov replies that he oiled them 'yesterday'.

HAMM. Yesterday! What does that mean?
Yesterday!

CLOV. (Violently) That means that bloody awful day, long ago, before this awful day. I used the words you taught me. If they don't mean anything anymore teach me others or let me be silent. (32)

We find that Beckett's characters are deeper and deeper in the moment of timelessness. The words showing time in the quote express a different time quality when the actual words lose their meaning.

In Happy Days we have Winnie, a character embedded in mound that stands for heap of time that always promises but never grants her wish. When she is grounded in the mound, she is grounded in the present as well. When Winnie is stimulated into wakefulness by

a bell, she mentions it as bell for sleep. Here, as Francis Doherty remarks, "... time is abolished and has been replaced by an unchanging light, an empty landscape and arbitrary division into wakefulness and sleep to replace day and night". (Doherty 116). When the night falls her sufferings will come to an end. She envies the brute beast because of its fast and painless death: "That is what I find so comforting when I lose heart and envy the brute beast ..." (16). On another occasion when Winnie tends to move towards the future her time passes slowly: "Sometime all is over, for the day all done, all said, already for the night and the day not over, far from over, the night not ready, far, far from ready" (34).

At another point, she realises that she is in moment of continuity of time when she utters: "... it's not hotter today than yesterday, it will be no better tomorrow than today, how could it, and so on back into the far past, forward into the far future ..." (29). Winnie is quite aware what kind of future lies before her when she says: "... cast your mind forward, Winnie, to the time when words must fail" (25). In the second Act of the play, Winnie is almost completely buried in the mound. She will not die soon as her time will

slow down infinitely. Since time does not pass in linear fluency it disintegrates into separate fragments. Winnie separates one second from the other and a particular moment appears to be an infinite moment:

WINNIE. I used to think ... (pause) ... I say I used to think there was no difference between one fraction of a second and the next, (Pause). I used to say ... (pause) ... I say I used to say, Winnie you are changeless, there is never any difference between one traction and the next. Why bring that up again?. (44)

In Krapp's Last Tape, the motif of Time is presented through the confrontation of an individual and his past. Krapp occupies himself with listening to the old tapes he recorded many years ago. Searching for his identity, he does not identify with the one on the tape as his character has changed. Krapp states: "Just been listening to that stupid bastard I took myself for thirty years ago, hard to believe I was ever bad as that" (17). He views his past as a time contingency but at the same time, he is aware of his identity that he remains the same Krapp.

His tragedy consists in refusing his past and in his changeless existence as Krapp. He through saving his voice and his impressions of past events, tries to preserve his true self. Thirty years ago, he believed that there was something durable in his personality, a durable core which was the true self of his identity.

KRAPP. The grain, now what I wonder do I mean by
 that, I mean ... (hesitates) ... I suppose I
 mean those things worth having when all the
 dust has – when all my dust has settled. (12)

It appears that Krapp also is approaching an end. As the title indicates, it is Krapp's last tape that he listens. He sings a song about the day reaching the end as if it is his own end.

KRAPP. Now the day is over
 Night is drawing nigh-igh
 Shadows – (Coughing, then almost
 inaudible) of the evening.
 Steal across the sky. (19)

Krapp's life is noted for misery and has nothing to wait for but death. His only joy in the last "past half million" (18) moments is the only thing – the word "Spool" (10). Krapp's movement towards death is represented by the tape and its cyclical shape showing recurrence and sameness. Beckett keeps the tape running on to imply that there is still an infinite space of time till Krapp's actual death.

Time is usually thought of rather as a play's environment or framework. It is a structural element, not a thematic one. The theatre is not the vehicle for dealing directly with time. But this is not so in the case of Beckett. Certain ideas central to understanding the basic features of Beckett's plays are put by him in his essay on Proust:

'There is no escape from yesterday because yesterday has deformed us or been deformed by us. The mood is of no importance. Deformation has taken place. Yesterday is not a milestone that has been passed but a daystone on the beaten track of the years and irremediably part of us, heavy and dangerous. We are not merely more weary because of yesterday, we are other, no longer what we were before the calamity of yesterday. The good or evil

disposition of the object has neither reality nor significance. The immediate joys and sorrows of the body and the intelligence are so many superfetations. Such as it was, it has assimilated to the only world that has reality and significance, the world of our own latest consciousness and its cosmography has suffered a dislocation so that we are rather in the position of Tantalus, with this difference that we allow ourselves to be tantalised. And possibly the 'pereptumm mobile' of our disillusion is subject to more variety. The aspirations of yesterday were valid for yesterday's ego, not for today's. We are disappointed at the nullity of what we are pleased to call attainment. But what is attainment? The identification of the subject with the object of his desire. The subject has died – and perhaps many times on the way. For subject B to be disappointed by the banality of an object chosen by subject A is as illogical as to expect one's hunger to be dissipated by the spectacle of uncle eating his dinner'. (qtd. in Hayman 16)

When one day is that not enough for you,
one day like any other day, one day he went
dumb, one day I went blind, one day we will
go deaf, one day we were born, one day we
shall die, the same day, the same second, is
that enough for you? They give birth astride
of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it
is night once more. (89)

In Waiting for Godot, Pozzo states, “Have not done tormenting me with your accursed time”? (89). The very same sentiment can be expressed by any of the other characters in the play. Time is their common enemy. To Pozzo, it brings only privation and decay. To Lucky, it brings no relief from his slavery. In the second Act, he seems to have lost the power to speak.

Beckett’s characters are very much conscious about time. Time does not pass at all. It stays around us as in Waiting for Godot. His characters have become so decrepit, lost so many limbs and faculties because so much of time has gone by for them. Even when time passes, it passes slowly. Hayman states

Molloy and Moran both go on deteriorating rapidly in the course of the novel and Malone is often uncertain about whether he is dead already, an uncertainty that he shares with the nameless, perhaps bodiless narrative voices in Texts Pour Rien and The Unnamable (1953). Born in How It Is (1964) and the characters in Play are all situated somewhere outside temporal existence. (Hayman 19)

When Vladimir and Estragon say that time has stopped, this does not just mean that it is passing slowly. There is a sense in which it does stop during the play. We see Pozzo consult his watch four times during his scene and at the end of the scene he tries hard to find it fumbling in his pockets and searching on the ground, all in vain. He decides finally that he must have left it back at the manor. But in Act II, we find his indifference to time. We may attribute this to the influence of Vladimir and Estragon or the loss of his watch or the loss of his sight. In any case both losses are symbolic of entering a world in which time and space do not have their normal significance.

Between the decisions and the actions of the Beckettian characters, there is a time-lapse. In Waiting for Godot, Pozzo

thrashing about on the ground, is unable to get up. At this juncture, Vladimir and Estragon still take time for a discussion about whether or not, they should help him. At the end of the play, they say: "Let's go" and stay exactly where they are. The intention to move does not necessarily correspond with the initiation of appropriate action in the appropriate limbs. Exactly the same thing happens in Endgame. Hamm asks Clov to move. Clov, instead of moving, heaves a great groaning sigh. When Hamm remonstrates: "I thought I told you to be off", the answer is, "I am trying" (14). It is the same with the parents of Hamm. When Nell wants to go back into the dustbin, she does not go back and she does not know why she doesn't. At the end of the play, Clov has finally decided to leave Hamm. He packs and stands there ready to go but never gets himself to the point of going.

In All That Fall we have Maddy Rooney moving with so much difficulty. "How can I go on, I cannot. Oh let me just flop down flat on the road like a big fat jelly out of a bowl and never move again!" (9). Tired of her body, tired of moving and tired of her life, her one wish is for dissolution. Her blind husband has much the same antipathy towards movement. He hates children and often has the will to kill the

little boy who acts as his guide. He stresses on physical deterioration. As for Dan, the worse he gets, the better he seems to feel. The loss of his sight is a fillip to him. He wishes that he could go deaf and dumb too. Both Maddy and Dan hate movement and most of the things that make up the substance of living. Beckettian characters do not have any possibility of grace, no escape from the deadening awareness of the meaningless passage of time. For Krapp, who is a writer, the only reality is word. His own past self is only real for him in the form of words on a tape and the pleasure he enjoys most in the present is the pleasure of words. Within the first minute of the action, we see him relishing the word 'spool'. The tape on Krapp's machine is an image of the mind, coiling backwards and forwards in time. Krapp prefers solitude to sex and sociability. Henry in Embers is depicted as a mad person. He gives himself orders as if his mind and the body were independent organs. With Henry, we are not allowed to stand back and look at the madness from a distance. We are forced inside it.

To Estragon and Vladimir, it brings only frustration and occasionally a brief interlude in their otherwise tedious waiting for the promised one. The two purpose various stratagems for passing time.

They try to converse calmly but the conversation declines into an intolerable silence. It is intolerable because it leaves each alone with his thoughts and to think is misery. But even here, time is against them because Vladimir observes: "What is terrible is to have thought" (76). The present is strewn with the corpses of dead ideas. It is a charnel-house where the fleshless bones of past thoughts are immured. And to make matters worse, we cannot help looking at these skeletons. Estragon says that he is tired of breathing. The business of living for Vladimir and Estragon is a matter of filling up the gaping holes in Time. It does not matter whether or not to fill up the gaping holes in Time, so long as it is filled, so long as it is got rid of, so long as it is passed into the past where it can be ignored and forgotten:

ESTRAGON. I tell you we were not here yesterday.

Another of your nightmares.

VLADIMIR. And where were we yesterday evening,
according to you?

ESTRAGON. How would I know? In another
compartment. There is no lack of void. (66)

Time and space are void and any particular time (yesterday evening) or particular space (here) is just one of several compartments in the void. The now is empty, though it is exactly the emptiness of the now which the two men cannot abide and which, therefore, they do their best to fill with whatever comes to hand. In the midst of one of their little canters, Gogo or Didi will suddenly realise the futility and meaninglessness of it all. Gogo at the end of the exercise roars, "God have pity on me!" More pitiful is Didi's announcement: "Time has stopped" (77). For Didi, time has quit moving. The present is the fullness of its nothingness that has encompassed him. Shortly thereafter he suggests that they leave the place. It would seem to be an effort to escape time by changing place. It is a foolish and impossible idea, of course. Both Didi and Gogo seem to realise it. Although each proposes to the other that they go away, they never act on the proposal. They seem to realise that to exist is to exist in time. And to exist in time one must be able to tolerate the guilt of the past, the meaninglessness of the present and the death which lies in the future.

Didi and Gogo are largely spared the burden of the past because their memories are so defective that little of earlier time remains to them. They remember something about picking grapes and Gogo's attempted suicide very vaguely. Otherwise, Gogo can hardly remember what happened the preceding day. Since time is void, it is difficult to distinguish between one absence and another. Didi points to the tree as palpable evidence of the fact that it is "here" where they found themselves yesterday. The present and the future present serious threats to Didi and Gogo. The character of the future determines the character of the present and it makes existence in the now of time so difficult to sustain because the future is ambiguous and vague. It holds both threat and promise. The pair wait for Godot and their lives depend upon the decision of Godot. They have made Godot, "a kind of prayer" and "A vague supplication" (18), and they wait now for his answer. Until Godot comes, they can plan nothing, do nothing, but pass or fill time or improvise. Like their speech, their existence is extemporaneous, out of time where time is conceived as the ambience of purposive, teleological action. For they have no goal and can have none until Godot appears to tell them of his decision. Their existence

is absolutely contingent upon the event, the arrival of Godot. The play presents to us the image of that kind of existence that is dependent upon time future. For existence, human being in time has its value or worthwhileness corroborated only by events which are yet to appear. The significance of the present can be apprehended only when present events are translated into the past. Only then can one say whether such a decision was right or wrong for these later events have shown it to be so.

We can identify Godot in some special way by saying that Godot is simply 'Time Future'. He is arriving at every instant of time but as soon as he passes the barrier between Time Future and Time Present, he is no longer Godot but someone or something else. The boy speaks about Godot: "Mr. Godot told me to tell you he won't come this evening but surely tomorrow" (50). Godot will not come this evening because this evening is now. He will come tomorrow and will all future tomorrows because tomorrow is Time Future. Since Godot is Time Future he cannot be Time Present. So while he is always on the way he can never arrive.

In Endgame also we do not know very much about the character's past. We can only speculate on what their future will be. All we have is a present, that is more or less, intelligible. All the four characters tell jokes and stories. Towards the end we learn that Nell, one of the characters has probably died. Of the future, we know almost nothing. There are fragments obscure but visible of Time Past. Of Time Future, there is nothing to be perceived except a void. There are two versions of Time Past in this play. For Nell, it is something to be sighted over. "Ah yesterday" - yesterday is when one went rowing on Lake Como and the bottom of the lake, like time itself, was white and clear. By the end of the play, she is dead. So perish all sentimentalists. For Clov, yesterday is "that bloody awful day long ago before this bloody awful day" (32). He continues to the end of the play, spiritually exhausted. Of time future also, there are two versions: One is that there isn't any. The second is that if there is any, there will be sharks or in other words it will be perilous.

HAMM. Let's go from here, the two of us! South!

You can make a raft and the currents will

carry us away for away to other ...
mammals!

CLOV. I will start straight away.

HAMM. Wait! (Clov halts) will there be sharks, do
you think?

CLOV. Sharks? I do not know, if there are, there
will be. (28)

We can therefore say that most of his plays are about the passage of time or about the refusal of time to pass.

If we examine the beginning of Time in the Biblical context, what may first come to our mind is the first verse in Genesis: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen 1: 1) which indicates that ‘Time’ began with the process of creating the heaven and the earth. The division of the light from the darkness that was upon the deep resulted in the making of day and night that composed the first day. The process of creation continued for days. The Time was associated with activities and it was measured in terms of days, months and years. It thus became linear time. God is said to be the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. He is the past, the

present and the future as revealed in the verse: “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is and which was and which is to come, the Almighty” (Rev 1:8). Therefore the Infinite represents timelessness. It is, in other words, eternity of creation or activity in love that is associated with the Infinite. To quote Jesus’ words from the Bible, “My father worketh hitherto, and I work” (John 5:17). On the other hand, influenced by Existentialist thought, Beckettian characters seem to prefer ‘to exist’ rather than ‘to be human beings’. Their indecision and division between ‘habit’ and ‘anguish’ or self and responsibility for the Other, render them to suffer existentialist consequences like boredom, despair, finite time, meaninglessness and even suicide.

**A STUDY OF SAMUEL BECKETT'S PLAYS IN
RELATION TO THE THEATRE OF THE ABSURD**

THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE
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Chapter Five

Biblical Imagery and Echoes in the Plays of Beckett

In chapter four, Time has been analysed as a theme in Beckett's plays. Habit and routine are said to be cancer of Time. The impact of the passage of Time on the characters of Beckett is corrosive leading to privation and decay. Life appears to them a matter of filling up the gaping holes in Time. They seem to realise that to exist is to exist in Time and to exist in Time one must be able to tolerate the guilt of the past, the meaninglessness of the present and the death that lies in the future. Further, we may now concentrate on the Biblical imagery and echoes in his plays.

The abundant Biblical allusions, references, images and metaphors that are sprinkled in most of his works proclaim not only his erudition in the scriptures but also his dependence on them for his literary output. I have made efforts to explore the religious echoes in the plays rather in a chronological order, omitting some, however, wherein religious echoes are relatively absent. In most of his works,

Beckett relies upon the Biblical images and allusions more for the reinforcement of his Absurd views than the glorification of God or other allied religious precepts. The way in which the quotations are inverted, and the ironical and the paradoxical ways in which they are used, point to this direction. When Beckett juxtaposes religious values with his absurd values, his idea is only to express his anguish at the prevailing predicament of human beings rather than converting them into his philosophy. How Beckett has brilliantly and successfully presented the dilemma of man who is incongruent with his surroundings can be discerned from a proper study of his plays against the backdrop of religious echoes in them.

From the very outset of the play, Waiting for Godot, it is clear that the play is set in a religious background. In the first scene itself, there is an allusion to the Biblical verse: “Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life” (Prov. 13:12) when Vladimir utters “Hope deferred maketh the something sick” (10) to show how hope is related to the physical well-being of an individual.

When Vladimir and Estragon allude to the salvation of one of

the thieves, as a result of repentance, the picture of the Samaritan woman comes to our mind. When the woman in the Bible stands near the well, we have Vladimir and Estragon remaining by the tree. Repentance is a precondition for the absolution of sin as far as the Christian faith is concerned. Vladimir's words: "Suppose we repented" (11) are relevant to this proposition. The tone of the following conversation between Vladimir and Estragon is set in the Biblical background:

VLADIMIR. Did you read the Bible?

ESTRAGON. The Bible ... (He reflects) I must have taken a look at it.

VLADIMIR. Do you remember the Gospels?

ESTRAGON. I remember the maps of the Holy land, coloured they were, very pretty. The Dead sea was pale blue. The very look of it made me thirsty. That's where we will go, I used to say, that's where we'll go for our honeymoon we'll swim, we'll be happy.(12)

The first Act of the play refers really to the haunt of Christ.

Vladimir's query how it is that only one of the four evangelists, St. Mathew, St. Mark, St. Luke and St. John, speaks about the salvation of a thief being saved, and his statement that only one i.e. St. Luke makes a mention of it whereas, of the other three i.e. St. Mathew, St. Mark and St. John do not make any mention of it whereas St. Mark says that both of the thieves abused Christ, and Vladimir's subsequent reference to the Saviour – all these reveal the author's deep insight into the various incidents in the bible. The two tramps waiting by the tree and expressing their desire to hang themselves on the tree brings to our mind the incident of Judas hanging himself by the tree after the betrayal of Christ.

Estragon's words: "What about hanging ourselves" (17) reminds us of the words in the Bible: "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us: for it is written, cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3:13). The dialogue between Estragon and Vladimir is resonant with religious terms like "A kind of prayer", "A vague supplication" (18) and sentences like "Your worship wishes to assert his prerogatives"? (19) captures religious atmosphere in the play. The advent of Godot shouting at his

horse as mentioned by Vladimir (19) brings to our mind an association of metaphors depicted in the Bible, “And I saw, and behold a white horse and he that sat on him had a bow and a crown was given to him: and he went forth conquering and to conquer” (Rev. 6:2). Moreover, there are references to a red horse, a black horse and a pale horse in the subsequent verses (Rev. 6: 4-7).

The following conversation among the characters also is resonant with religious echoes:

VLADIMIR. (conciliating) I once knew a family called Gozzo. The mother had the Clap.

ESTRAGON. (hastily) We are not from these parts, Sir.

POZZO. (halting) You are human being none the less. (He puts on his glasses) As far as one can see (He takes off his glass) Of the same species as myself. (He bursts into an enormous laugh) Of the same species as Pozzo! Made in God’s image! (23)

The statement ‘Made in God’s image!’ alludes to the story of creation described in the Book of Genesis: “So God created man in

his own image, in the image of God created him; male and female created he them” (Gen. 1:27).

Pozzo’s words given below show the faith of the believers in God:

Pozzo: ... in that case – (puff) – What happens in
 that case to your appointment with this ...
 Godot ... Godot ... Godin ... anyhow you see
 who I mean, who has your future in his
 hand ... (pause) ... at least your immediate
 future. (29)

The future of Vladimir is in the hands of Godot he is waiting for. It is in tune with the faith of every believer in the protection of God even if the concept of God varies from person to person. Man’s moorings in God give him a sense of security in this world devoid of light, certitude or peace.

Vladimir’s words to Lucky, “How dare you! It’s abominable! Such a good master! Crucify him like that! After so many years! Really!” (34) recalls to our mind that situation in which the disciples of Christ betraying him: “And Peter remembered the words of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crows thou shalt deny me

thrice. And he went out and wept bitterly” (Matt. 26:75); and “Then Judea, which he betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself” (Matt. 27:3).

Towards the middle of the first Act, there arises a situation when Vladimir experiences that “time has stopped” (36) and everything seems black to him. When Pozzo puts a question to Estragon what his name is, he answers it as ‘Adam’ (36). The cessation of time, the darkness and the name of Adam, (Gen. 3: 31) the first man created by God remind us of the beginning of the world and the creation of the first human depicted in the first chapter of the Genesis in the Bible.

If Estragon takes the appellation ‘Adam’, then all the sufferings that go along with his waiting are in conformity with the fall of the first man and his consequential suffering. The opening lines of Milton’s Paradise Lost are relevant in this context:

Of man’s first disobedience and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe

With loss of Eden till one greater Man

Restore us and regain the blissful seat (Book 1:1-4)

The following words of Estragon express his pathetic condition: “All my lousy life I have crawled about in the mud! And your talk to me about scenery! (Looking wildly about him) Look at this much heap! I’ve never stirred from it!” (61). Vladimir tries to divert Estragon’s attention from his present lot and takes him to a new country, the Macon country, where he will have new landscapes and experience big difference: “Things have changed since yesterday” (60). In the changed situation, Estragon would be happy with Vladimir:

VLADIMIR. Say I am happy.

ESTRAGON. I am happy.

VLADIMIR. So am I?

ESTRAGON. So am I.

VLADIMIR. We are happy.

ESTRAGON. We are happy (silence) what do we do
now, now that we are happy?

VLADIMIR. Wait for Godot. (60)

Vladimir states that they were together in the new country and picked grapes for a man whose name they could not remember and the place he lived:

VLADIMIR. But we were there together, I could swear to it! Picking grapes for a man called ... (he snaps his fingers) ... can't think of the name of the man at a place called ... (snaps his fingers) ... can't think of the name of the place, do you remember ? (62)

Picking grapes or 'Grape harvesting' (53) has association with what is stated in the Bible: "I am the true vine and my Father is the husbandman" (John 15:1), and "I am the vine and ye are the branches: He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). God the Father is said to be the husbandman of the vine yard, Christ is the vine and who believes in him are the grapes. The harvesting of the soul is the paramount duty of the evangelists. Beckett might have read the verse, "Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great but the labourers are few: pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the

harvest, that he would send forth the labourers into his harvest”
(Luke 10:2).

Pozzo is mistaken for Godot by Estragon whereas Vladimir reiterates that it is not Godot:

VLADIMIR. Poor Pozzo!
 ESTRAGON. I knew it was him.
 VLADIMIR. Who?
 ESTRAGON. Godot.
 VLADIMIR. But It’s not Godot.
 ESTRAGON. It’s not Godot?
 VLADIMIR. It’s not Godot. (77- 78)

A reading of the verse, “For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ and shall deceive many” (Matt. 24:5) is relevant in this context.

Towards the middle of the second Act, we have a scene where Pozzo is in sleep. Vladimir strikes him and wakes him from his sleep. Estragon makes a query whether Vladimir is sure about the name of Pozzo. Pozzo is reluctant to move closer to them fearing that they would hurt him. They are calling him with different names:

ESTRAGON. To try with other names, one after the other.

It'd pass the time. And we'd bound to hit on
the right one sooner or later.

VLADIMIR. I tell you his name is Pozzo.

ESTRAGON. We'll soon see (He reflects) Abel! Abel!

POZZO. Help.

ESTRAGON. Got in one!

VLADIMIR. I begin to weary of this motif.

ESTRAGON. Perhaps the other is called Cain. Cain!

Cain!

POZZO. Help!

ESTRAGON. He's all humanity. (83)

This passage brings to our mind the story of the two sons of Adam. Cain was a tiller of the ground and Abel was the keeper of the sheep. "And Cain talked with Abel his brother and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and slew him" (Gen. 3:8). Cain represents the fallen humanity in the sense when God speaks: "When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond

shall thou be in the earth” (Gen. 3:12).

Beckett has in his mind the Day of Judgement described in the Gospel - “And he shall set the sheep on his right hand and the goats on the left. Then shall the king say unto them on this right hand, come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 25:33-34, John 21:15-17) - when Vladimir speaks to the boy in the following words:

VLADIMIR. You work for Mr. Godot?

BOY. Yes, Sir.

VLADIMIR. What do you do?

BOY. I mind the goats, Sir.

VLADIMIR. Is he good to you?

BOY. Yes, Sir.

VLADIMIR. He doesn't beat you?

BOY. Not Sir, not me.

VLADIMIR. Whom does he beat?

BOY. He beats my brother, Sir.

VLADIMIR. You have a brother?

BOY. Yes, Sir.

VLADIMIR. What does he do?

BOY. He minds the sheep, Sir. (51)

The messenger boy may be an evangelist or a prophet or some one engaged in the work of the Gospel and his brother boy may be one who represents a diabolical force as sheep stands for good people and goats for the wicked people.

The symbol of the tree used in the play is to exude hope. The tree can be construed as the Garden of Eden. If so, the characters of the play are waiting for salvation or for the Messiah. The Jews looked forward to the time when God would send them a special leader who would lead them to victory over their enemies or over the empire of which they were part. Many of their prophets spoke about this leader, a man anointed by God (Isa. 9:7, 11:1-9). 'Messiah' means anointed in Hebrew, the Greek word 'Christ' means the same thing. Christians believe that Jesus is this promised Messiah. Very early in the play, the story of the salvation is discussed in the brief dialogue between Estragon and Vladimir concerning redemption:

VLADIMIR. But all four were there. And only one speaks of a thief being saved.

ESTRAGON. Who believes him?

VLADIMIR. Every body. It's only the version they know.

ESTRAGON. People are bloody ignorant apes. (13)

A critical examination of the above passage opens a vista of many interpretations. It is argued that the very idea of salvation is dismissed and only the ignorant people believe so. It is also likely that Beckett, born and brought up by Jewish parents, may be throwing light on the concept of 'Messiah'. The belief of the Christians that Jesus was this promised Messiah, caused the conflict between Jewish religion and Christianity. Jews believed that God was one and if Jesus was God, how could he die? According to Helen Baldwin, "the Tree" is symbolic of Christ's cross and "Tradition has it that Christ's cross was made from wood deriving originally from the tree in the Garden" (Baldwin 108). Jaques Guicharnaud also considers 'the tree' a cross (Guicharnaud 212). It is also suggested that the tree mentioned in the play is a metaphor for the 'Tree of Knowledge and Life' which brought death to humanity (Gen. 2:9). It is also symbolic of the rejuvenation of man completely cut off from

his metaphysical roots. Prophet Habakkuk envisages a time of death and privation when “the fig tree does not bud”, (Hab. 3:17) but “as soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out”, it is a sign of summer (Matt. 24:32). The sprouting of leaves on the tree where the tramps stood, means the necessity of the hope of the believers.

The messenger boy sent by none the less a God like figure, sleeping in the hay loft in a barn, resembles Jesus in his manger. There are two brothers who live in the barn. The one who keeps the goats, traditionally a symbol of Satan, is well treated while the boy who tends the sheep, a symbol of God’s follower, is beaten. (Mark 13:13, John 15:20). This may be because of the fact that unfair treatment may lie in the existential plight of the righteous. The persecutions and the sufferings, the prophets and the disciples of Christ were subjected to, for no fault of theirs, may be relevant to be remembered in this context. The following verses “And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake”, (Mark 13:13), and “If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you”, (John 15:20), stand in support of the unfair treatment to the just.

Lucky speaks about the antipodal places in Christian teachings,

heaven and hell: "... that is to say blast hell to heaven so blue still and calm so calm with a calm which even though is intermittent is better than nothing ... (42). We have in this quote the picture of heaven where calm prevails and the picture of hell where fire burns and it is better to look forward to the peace of heaven. Moreover, a reading of the passage: "Given the existence ... tennis ... the stones ... so calm ... Cunard ... unfinished ..." (42-45) gives us an insight into the retributive justice of God. "Who can doubt it will fire the firmament" (43) refers to the verse "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervant heat"? (II Peter 3:12). The constant oblique reference to "Cunard" (43) whose steamships were used in the Crimean War point to the devaluation of the Christian faith as War leads to destruction of human life most special in Christian faith. The reference to 'Berkley' (44) who tried to reconcile science with the Christian doctrine points to the fact that religion and science tend to clash at present.

The following portion of the text points in many direction toward one underlying purpose, viz., a critique of the resurrection of

Christ:

In spite of the tennis on on the the beard the flames the
tears the stones so blue so calm alas alas on on the skull
the skull in connemara in spite of the tennis the labours
abandoned left unfinished ...(44).

Tennis was originally named Jeu de paume which translates “a game of the palm”. This could to refer Christ’s stigmata that was shown to his disciple Thomas as an evidence of Christ’s identity and resurrection as stated in the verse: “Then said he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side and be not faithless, but believing” (John 20:27). The flames can allude to the pentecostal flames that descended upon the apostles as tongues of fire filling them with the Holy Spirit and allowing them to speak in foreign tongues so as to communicate the work of God to the foreigners as mentioned in the verses: “And when the day of pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place” and “And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire and it sat upon each of them”, (Acts 2:1&3). The ‘tears’ appears to refer to the tears shed by Mary

Magdalene when she saw that the tomb of Jesus was empty. “But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping and as she wept. She stooped down and looked into the sepulchre” (John 20:11). She then saw a man and he asked her why she was weeping. She replied that the body of Jesus had been removed from the tomb. That man revealed himself to be Jesus. Thus Mary became the first witness of Jesus’ resurrection. In the same way, the ‘stone’ refers to the giant stone placed over the opening of Jesus’ tomb. The skull refers to Golgotha or skull place where Jesus was crucified. “And it was about the sixth hour and there was a darkness over all earth until the ninth hour” and “And the Sun was darkened and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst (Luke 23: 44-45). This passage lists the evidences of Christ’s crucifixion but its fragmentation and eclecticism work to undermine the value of evidences. The final words of the quote are even more significant: “labours abandoned left abandoned” point to the task of preaching and converting the people to his discipleship entrusted with his followers. Despite all of the witnesses and miracles, words and actions, the campaign of the Christian faith is unfinished and its efficacy is not widespread. Through the words of

Lucky, the dramatist suggests that the Christian faith has its shortcomings and it fails to deliver the goods. The tirade finally ends as Pozzo and the other characters triumphantly tackle Lucky like the mob that silenced Jesus, shouting “Crucify him! crucify him!” (Luke 23:21).

The conversation between Estragon and Vladimir regarding the wearing of footwear throws light on the simplicity of Christian living:

VLADIMIR. Christ! What is Christ got to do with it. You
are not going to compare yourself to Christ!

ESTRAGON. All my life. I’ve compared my self to him. (52)

Vladimir’s statement, ‘What is Christ got to do with it’ looks like an inversion of the words of Legion in the Bible, “What have I to do with thee, Jesus,” (Luke 8:28). Moreover, the words of Estragon appear to be the words of Beckett who is desirous of making an introspection into his life and following the simple Christian life. “To every man his little cross” (62) spoken by Vladimir echo the words spoken by Jesus, “And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me” (Matt. 10:35).

The master-servant relationship between Pozzo and Lucky represents a situation similar to a man under the bondage of sin. He wants to free himself from Lucky. The more Pozzo wants to free himself, the more he depends on Lucky. The same is the hold of sin on man. The more a person wants to extricate himself from the bondage of sin, the more he falls into the quagmire of sin and he becomes helpless. Towards the close of the first Act and the second Act of the play we find both Vladimir and Estragon deciding to move but they cannot. They encounter a situation of helplessness. They are helpless in many ways. In such a situation, the intervention of an external agency or power alone can redeem the situation. It is here that the hope in Christ is relevant. There are so many situations of utter helplessness in the Bible where Christ intervenes and redeems the situation. The occasion of marriage in Cana, of Galilee (John 2: 1-11) and the case of the centurion's servant (Luke 7:2-10) can be cited as some of the examples. It is this figure of the redeemer that overshadows this play and it is the hope in Him that motivates it. Thus we find that this play abounds in Biblical allusions and references. It is replete with Christian imagery and resonant with

religious echoes.

In All That Fall, Beckett maintains that individual suffering produces greater impact on us than the statistics of deaths produces on us. This is the reason why he tries to wring out some kind of meaning out of his own experience. He scales down the suffering to an elementary personal level, orchestrated by sounds alone, and lays bare the reduction of the human to the bestial. A hold-up is caused by the conversation Winnie, the protagonist in the play makes with a carter. She is willing to get along with him. But the hinny that neighed and pawed the ground a moment ago refuses to advance. Further more, the animal gazes at Winnie. She remarks, “How she gazes at me to be sure, with her great moist cleg-tormented eyes! Perhaps if I were to move on, down the road, out of her field of vision”! (9). This alludes to Balaam’s donkey in the Bible (Num. 22:21-23). Balaam saddled his donkey and went with the princess of Moab to destroy the Israelites. God was very angry and the angel of the Lord stood on the road to oppose him. When the donkey saw the angel standing in the road with a sword drawn in his hand, she turned off the road into a field. Balaam beat her to get back

on the road. The Lord opened the donkey's mouth and the donkey spoke to Balaam. Then the angel of the Lord told Balaam that the donkey saw him and turned away from him three times.

In ancient and Renaissance tragedies we witness the lofty sufferings and consequences of great men but Beckett transfers this to the physical and mental degeneration in the simplest beings, such as tramp, the fool, the old, the blind and the lame. In this play, Beckett exhibits low and rustic characters devoid of any intellectual dignity and it is in this situation that the essential passions of the heart find a better soil for the attainment of maturity and are less under restraint and speak a more emphatic language.

It is worthwhile to examine the major characters in the Biblical context. Mrs. Rooney is a lady in her seventies. She is a woman with a past. Her initial encounter with Christy, a carter, leads to a talk on sty dung and allied matters. She is on her way to the railway station to receive her blind husband by the twelve thirty mail. Otherwise he would have been killed. One is reminded of what Balaam said to the angel of the Lord, "I have sinned. I did not realise you were standing in the road to oppose me. Now if you are displeased, I will go back" (Num. 22:34).

Mrs. Rooney tries to flee from extraneous perception. The fear of being observed is found in this passage. The animal's stare makes her turn inwards and she perceives her own anguish. The gaze of animal makes her self-conscious and self aware:

Mrs. ROONEY: What I have done to deserve all his,
 what, what? (Dragging feet) so long ago ...
 No! No! (Dragging feet Quotes) "Sigh out a
 something something tale of things, done
 long ago and ill done" (She halts) (9).

The threat of self-perception and the exposure to the raw suffering of the being lie at the crest of this mental focus. Mr. Rooney has a need to escape from the hinny's field of vision. Balaam with his sinful character could not see the angel of the Lord but the donkey could see the angel. Mr. Rooney perhaps fails to realise her moral degradation and the sinfulness of her character but the hinny can perceive it. There have been many instances in the Bible where the birds and animals have helped so many people in a similar fashion: "But ask now the beasts and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air and they shall tell thee; or speak to the earth and it

shall teach thee and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee” (Job 12:7,8). When Elijah, the prophet dwelt by the brook, Cherith, “the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening” (I Kings 17:6). Abraham went and “took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of the son” (Gen. 22:13). Jonah, the prophet remained “in the belly of the fish three days and three nights” (Jonah 1:17).

The wretchedness, the ugliness, and the barrenness of Mrs. Rooney find expression in her own words:

Mrs. ROONEY. How can I go on, I cannot. Oh let me just flop down flat on the road like a big fat jelly out of the bowl and never move again! A great big slop thick with grit and dust and flies, they would have to scoop me up with a shovel (Pause). Heavens, there is that up mail again, what will become of me! (The dragging steps resume). Oh I am just a hysterical old hag I know; destroyed with sorrow and pining and gentility and church-

going and fat and rheumatism and
childlessness. (9)

Mrs. Rooney's life was full of woes but she was more obsessed with the feeling that she was barren or childless. She expresses this feeling to her husband, putting the question whether hinnies are barren or sterile. Her words in this context allude to the scriptures:

Mrs. ROONEY. Hinnies procreate (silence) You know, Hinnies or jinnies, aren't they barren, or sterile or whatever it is? (Pause) It wasn't an ass's colt at all, you know, I asked the Regius professor (Pause).

Mr. ROONEY. He should know.

Mrs. ROONEY. Yes, it was a hinny, he rode into Jerusalem or whatever it was on a hinny (Pause). That must mean something (Pause). It's like the sparrow than many of which we are of more value, they weren't sparrows at all. (38)

The first part of the passage takes its roots from the verse: "And they

brought the colt to Jesus and cast their garments on him and he sat upon him” (Mark 11:7).

Jesus spent his last Sabbath in Bethany with Lazarus and his sisters. News spread that the Lord was coming to Jerusalem. In preparation for the royal entrance to Jerusalem, he sent two of his disciples into the village to bring a colt. If we look at the ancient sculptured slabs of the Roman column, we will be struck by the majesty of kings riding in triumph on horses or in chariots. In contrast to this, here is one who comes triumphant upon an ass, the symbol of the outcast – a fitting vehicle for one riding into the jaws of death. Jesus who was rich became poor for the sake of mankind that they might be rich. Another reference is that about Abraham who “rose up early in the morning and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son” (Gen. 22:3). The sparrows in the quote from Beckett’s text refer to the verse, “fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows” (Matt. 10:31). The meaning of the verse is that even a small sparrow will not fall to the ground without the knowledge of God; and if so, human beings who possess souls are more valuable than the birds.

Even when Mr. Rooney feels that she “was so plunged in sorrow, that she would not have heard a steam roller go over her” (19) or “just wasting slowly” (18) or that she does not exist (16), she exudes her confidence that “there is that lovely laburnum again” (9). When she slips into the mire of despondency and gloom, Mr. Tyler tries to cheer her up with the words: “What Sky! What light! Ah in spite of all it is a blessed thing to be alive in such weather and out of hospital” (11). The dialogue between Mrs. Rooney and Miss Fitt is a lucid description of worship in the Church on Sundays. We have the faithful kneeling side by side at the same altar and drinking from the chalice. The altar and the chalice bring to our mind the sacrament of the holy communion. A beautiful image of Church worship is created through the words of Mrs. Rooney: “Last Sunday we worshiped together. We knelt side by side at the same altar. We drank from the same chalice. Have I so changed since then” (20). Miss Fitt’s words: “Mrs. Rooney! I saw you, but I did not know you” (19) are seen in contrast to the words of Nathaniel that he saw Jesus and knew that Jesus was the son of God (John 1:49). Here the words of Miss Fitt truly reflect attitude of the church goes and the level of human

relationship that exists between them. Miss Fitt is a typical character showing hypocritical virtue and the ironic effect of church worship. She claims that she is alone with her Maker in church. Even the sexton knows that it is useless to pause before her either with the plate or the bag for collection. When everything is over she goes out into the sweet fresh air oblivious to her co-religionists, the majority of which are very kind and understanding. Her own words are relevant in this context: “I suppose the truth is I am not there, Mrs. Rooney, just not really there at all. I see, hear, smell, and so on, I go through the usual motions but my heart is not in it, Mrs. Rooney, but my heart is in none of it” (20). It is, therefore, evident that the play is replete with Biblical allusions and references.

At the very beginning of the play Endgame, we hear Hamm speaking about his miserable conditions: “Can there be misery – (he yawns) – loftier than mine?” (12). This quote can refer to the Biblical verse: “Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed and my calamity laid in the balance together” (Job 6:2). Like Job, Hamm wants to see that his misery comes to an end: “Yes, there it is, it’s time it ended and yet I hesitate to – (he yawns) – to end (Yawns). God, I’m tired,

I'd be better off in bed". (12-13). Hamm's words echo the scripture: "For now, should I have lain still and been quiet I should have slept; then had I been at rest" (Job 3:13).

Nagg lifts the lid of the bin and listens to the conversation between Hamm and Clov. He learns that Clov was moving to kitchen. He seeks for pap. At this juncture Hamm curses his father calling him, "Accursed progenitor" (15). The context is similar to the situation in which Job curses the day on which he was born: "Let the day perish wherein I was born and the night in which it was said, there is man child conceived" (Job 3:3).

Nagg, during the course of narrating the story of an Englishman needing a pair of striped trousers stitched from a tailor in a hurry and the delay caused from the side of the tailor, refers to the creation of the world in six days by God: "In six days, do you hear me, six days, God made the world. Yes Sir, no less sir, the world! And you are not bloody well capable of making me a pair of trousers in three months!" (22). This quote recalls to our mind the span of the creation of the world expressed in the Bible: "And God saw everything that he was made, and, behold, it was very good. And the

evening and the morning were the sixth day” (Gen. 1:31). When Hamm speaks to Clov, “why don’t you kill me?” (15) and “why don’t you finish us?” (29), we know that Hamm has lost his interest in life and he has realised that he has certain flaws in his character.

The following words are relevant in this context:

HAMM. Routine. One never knows (Pause) Last night I saw inside my breast. There was a big sore.

CLOV. Pah! You saw your heart.

HAMM. No, it was living (Pause. Anguished) Clov!

CLOV. Yes.

HAMM. What is happening?

CLOV. Something is taking its course. (26)

Hamm cannot stand. Clov cannot sit. Hamm is of the opinion that every man has his speciality or in other words every man has his characteristic inherent drawback and he acts accordingly. Even when Clov states: “No one that ever lived ever thought so crooked as we” (16), he is not prepared to act in a crooked way. It is evidenced by his words: “We shouldn’t” (16). The moral sense of Clov comes to the

surface in this context.

Clov takes leave of Hamm and goes to the kitchen. Hamm wants to know what he is doing in the kitchen. To the reply that he looks at the wall. Hamm responds by the following words:

HAMM. The wall! And what do you see on your wall? Mene, mene? Naked bodies?

CLOV. I see my light dying.

HAMM. Your light dying! Listen to that I well, it can die just as well here, your light. Take a look at me and then come back and tell me what you think of your light. (Pause)

CLOV. You shouldn't speak to me like that. (17)

This quote relates to the Biblical story of Daniel the prophet interpreting the words written on the wall of the palace of King Belshazzar. While Belshazzar was drinking his wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them. As they drank the wine, praising the various gods of gold, silver, bronze,

iron, wood and stone, suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall near the lampstand in the royal palace:

And this the writing that was written, ME'NE, ME'NE, TE'KEL, U-PHAR'SIN. This is the interpretation of the thing: ME'NE; god has numbered the kingdom, and finished it. TE'KEL; thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PE'RES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. (Daniel 5:25-28)

The idolatry, arrogance and lechery led to the destruction of the king. Likewise, the flaw in the character of Hamm accounts for the inevitable doom that awaits him. Clov of course is a contrast to him. His words, "I see my light dying" (17) reveal the fact that the efficacy of his inner light or enlightenment is declining. It appears that Clov is a follower of Jesus. This is evident from the answer "If they were going to sprout they would have sprouted. (violently) They'll never sprout" (17) to the question put by Hamm, "Did your seeds come up?" (17). The sowing of the seeds alludes to the parable of the sower in the Gospels. 'Seeds' stand for the words of God (Mark 4:14).

Clov's words are meant to indicate the losing of the hold of the words of Christ on the people.

Towards the middle of the play we are confronted with a world of devastation and destruction. Clov goes towards the ladder with the telescope. First he looks to an auditorium where he sees a multitude in transports of joy. According to him things are livening up: "I see ... a multitude ... in transports ... of joy" (25). This passage has its root in the verse: "After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, stood before the throne and before the lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands" (Rev. 7:9). When Clov looks on the without, he sees the earth, the sea and the ocean where the living creatures are dead. The sun, the moon and the stars were turned dark and the day was dark. A reading of the relevant texts in the play as well as in the Bible will show the striking similarities. The passage in the play is as follows:

CLOV. (after reflection) Nor I (He sets upon ladder, turns the telescope on the without) Let's see. (He looks, moving the telescope) Zero

... (he looks) ... zero ... (he looks) ... and
zero.

HAMM. Nothing stirs All is –

CLOV. Zer –

HAMM. (violently) Wait till you're spoken to!
(Normal voice) All is ... all is ... all is what?
(Violently) All is what?

CLOV. What all is? In a word? Is that what you
want to know? Just a moment (He turns the
telescope on the without, looks lowers the
telescope, turns towards Hamm) Corpsed.
(Pause) Well? Content?

HAMM. Look at the sea.

CLOV. It's the same.

HAMM. Look at the ocean!

Clov gets down, takes a few steps towards
window left, goes back for ladder, carried it
over and sets it down under window left,
gets up on it, turns the telescope on the

without, looks at length. He starts, lowers the telescope, examines it, turns it again on the without.

CLOV. Never seen anything like that!

HAMM. (Anxious) What? A sail? A fin? Smoke?

CLOV. (looking) Light is sunk.

HAMM. (relieved) Pah! We all know that ...

CLOV. (looking) There was a bit left.

HAMM. The base. (25)

The following is the corresponding text from the Bible:

The first angel sounded and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up and all green grass was burnt up.

And the second angel sounded and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea and the third part of the sea become blood;

And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died and the third part of the ships

were destroyed. And the third angel sounded and there fell a great star from heaven burning as it were a lamp and it fell upon the third part of the rivers and upon the fountains of waters. And the name of the star is called Wormwood; and the third part of the waters became worm wood and many men died of the waters because they were made bitter.

And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten and the third part of the moon and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened and the day shone not for a third part of it and the night like wise. (Rev. 8:7-12)

What St. John has been seen in his vision while in the isle of Patmos appears to have been short listed by Beckett in this context. What his character Clov has seen through his telescope creates this imagery.

Through the words of Hamm, the dramatist brings to our mind a picture suggestive of the Flood and Noah's Ark described in the Bible:

HAMM. I once know a madman who thought the end

of the world had come. He was a painter and engraver. I had a great fondness for him. I used to go and see him, in the asylum. I'd take his by the hand and drag him to the window. Look! There all the rising corn! And there! Look! The sails of the herring fleet! All the loveliness! (Pause) He'd snatch away his hand and go back into his corner. Appalled. All he had seen was ashes (Pause). Forgotten (pause). It appears the case is ...was not so ...so unusual. (32)

'A mad man', 'a painter' and 'engraver' mentioned in the quote refer to Noah. In deference to the command of God, Noah began to build an ark 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high. Predicting the doom of the earth with the flood, he built it and it was regarded as an act of madness by the people. Because of the carpentry and painting the ark with pitch, he is called a painter and engraver by the dramatist. It will be appropriate if the relevant verses are quoted in this context: "So God said to Noah, 'I am going to put an end to all

people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am going to destroy both them and the earth. So make yourself an ark of cypress wood, make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out” (Gen. 13:14).

The sound of the trumpet heralding the second coming of the son of man and the resurrection of the dead are expressed through the following words:

CLOV. I'll go and see. (Exist Clov. Brief ring of alarm off. Enter Clov with alarm-clock. He holds it against Hamm's ear and releases alarm. They listen to it ringing to the end. (Pause) Fit to wake the dead! Did you hear it?

HAMM. Vaguely.

CLOV. The end is terrific! (34).

The ringing of the alarm clock refers to the sounding of the trumpet evident from the holy verse: “For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (I Cori. 15:52) and the description of the terrific end is seen in the verse: “But the

day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (II Peter 3:10).

Hamm is seen narrating stories to Clov. All these stories have their roots in the Bible. One such story relates to a man who came before him begging for grains. Hamm’s words, “I’m a busy man, the final touches before the festivities, you know what it is” (36) recall to our mind the picture of Joseph, who was the governor of the land of Egypt and “come on now, come on, present your petition and let me resume my labours” (36) point to the question that was put before his brother Judah why he appeared before him. Judah’s description about the place where a man and his child alone live allude to his father Jacob and his brother Benjamin. “Corn, Yes, I have corn, It’s true, in my granaries. But use your head. I give you some corn, a pound , a pound and a half, you bring it back to your child and you make him – it he’s still alive – a nice pot of porridge (Nagg reacts) a nice pot and a half of porridge full of nourishment” (36) refer to the verse: “Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every

the man and put him in the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it” (Gen. 2:15). Adam referred to as gardener listened to his wife and ate the forbidden fruit and God said, “Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life” (Gen. 3:17). Hamm’s further words gives us the clue to the story of Jonah, the prophet:

HAMM. I don’t know (pause) I feel rather drained.
 (Pause) The prolonged creative effort
 (Pause). If I could drag myself down to the
 sea! I’d make a pillow of sand for my head
 and the tide would come. (41)

Hamm is persuaded by Clov to tell another story. Stating that he is tired and drained because of the prolonged creative effort of telling two previous stories, Hamm ventures to touch upon the story of the hardship that Jonah faced at the bottom of the sea. The above passage alludes to the Biblical verse: “You hurled me into the deep, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me all your waves and breakers swept over me” (Jonah 2:3).

Through the depiction of Hamm, the protagonist in the play,

Beckett creates in our minds the image of the suffering Job, Joseph, Adam, and Jonah, the prophet.

Clov is trying to ascertain the time of the Flood of Hamm who narrates the story of how Noah alone was spared and Hamm's words in this context: "Oh way back, way back, you weren't in the land of the living" (32) refer to the verse "Surely God will bring you down to everlasting ruin. He will snatch you up and tear you from your tent, he will uproot you from the land of the living" (Psalm 52:5). Beckett's intention is to prove that God is one who brings people down to everlasting ruin and responsible for the suffering of human beings but in the back drop of Christian faith, one may assert that the guilty and the sinners can perceive God only as a destroyer who punishes the mighty men who boast all day long, whose tongues plot destruction and who practice deceit, who love evil rather than good, as the reading of Psalm 52 reveals.

Hamm refers to the incurable ills of the earth when he utters "All those I might have helped (Pause) Helped! (Pause) saved (Pause) saved (Pause). The place was crawling with them! (Pause violently). Use your head, can't you, use your head, you're on earth,

there's no cure for that! (Pause). Get out of here and love one another! Lick your neighbour as yourself!" (44). The last part of the quote is the inverted form of the verse in the Bible, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. 19:19).

Towards the end of the play, the picture of John, the Baptist appears before us when Hamm speaks the words given below:

HAMM. You don't want to abandon him? You want to bloom while you are withering? Be there to solace your last millions last moments? (Pause): He doesn't realise, all he knows is hunger and cold and death to crown it all. (52)

There is close similarity between the quote and the verse in the Bible: "He must increase but I must decrease" (John 3:30). When we read the above from the text, we find oblique references to the sufferings of John the Baptist as well as to the solace which millions of people are likely to get from Christ.

Compassion or pity for the sufferings of others is a dominant Christian virtue. It is the compassion for the suffering sinners that

ultimately led to the crucifixion of Christ. His whole embracing love for the entire human kind was manifested through his sacrifice on the cross at Calvary. Therefore, charity is considered to be the greatest of all Christian qualities. “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity” (I Cori. 13:13). It was because of his compassion, Christ healed the sick, the deaf and the dumb. “Jesus wept” (John 11:36) when he saw Mary weeping over the death of her brother Lazarus. The value of this feeling is stressed in various verses in the Bible. “I desire mercy, not sacrifice” (Matt. 12:7). Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy (Matt. 5:7) and “shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant as I had on you”? (Matt. 18:33) and “For great is your love, reaching to the heavens” (Ps. 57:10). It is this compassionate face of Christ that appears before us when we hear Hamm speaking the following to Clov: “No ... perhaps it’s compassion (Pause). A kind of great compassion (Pause) Oh you won’t find it easy, you won’t find it easy” (48).

In Hamm’s room, the objects lie scattered. He ends his revels. He throws his pet toy dog away. Clov tries to pick up the objects and

puts them in order. Clov expresses his desire for order:

HAMM. Order!

CLOV. (Straightening up) 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. (39)

The quote points to a new order of things or in other words, a new heaven and a new earth from where God shall wipe away all tears from their eye, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away (Rev. 21:4). Thus a careful study of the play reveals a host of oblique and inverted allusions to various events and stories in the Bible.

In Act without Words the protagonist is in the reflective mood and the scene is set in a dessert with dazzling light. "A little tree descends fro flies lands. It has a single bough some three yards from ground and at its summit a merge tuft of palms casting at its foot a circle of shadow" (57). It brings to us a cluster of Biblical images. The image of Jonah the prophet, who became displeased and angry at

the Lord's compassion shown to the people of Nineveh, went out and sat down at a place. Then the Lord provided a vine and made to grow over him to give shade for his head and Jonah was very pleased about it.

Towards the end of the play, we find that "The tree is pulled up and disappears in the flies" (60). Similarly, in the story of Jonah, we find that the vine that had sheltered him withered away the next day and the sun blazed in Jonah's head.

The descent of the cube and its subsequent withdrawal is described in the play: "A big cube descends from flies, lands (59) and "The big cube is pulled up and disappears in flies" (59). The quoted passage unfolds the vision of Peter described in Acts 10:9-16. Peter on his journey became tired and hungry. He fell into a trance. He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. This happened three times and finally it has taken back to heaven.

Another picture is that "a tiny carafe to which is attached a huge label inscribed WATER, descends from flies, comes to rest

some three yards from ground” (57). ‘WATER’ in the Biblical sense is used for baptism or it may connote the words of Christ. The protagonist, in the midst of his adversities and sufferings, may either have to cleanse himself or to obey the words of Christ for the alleviation of his sufferings.

The Beckettian critic Jan Kott maintains that Beckett presents Job through the character of the protagonist (Hayman. 32). Satan is allowed to bring several major tragedies into the life of this good and religious man. There is a discussion between Job and three friends as to why Job has suffered so much trouble. A fourth one makes a brief appearance. The questions raised are not only about human suffering but about God: is he fair? Is he even good? Traditional, trite answers are shown to be inadequate. Beckett’s concerns about his fellow beings also are on the same line.

It will be worthwhile to quote some passages from the text to show that the image of Job overshadows the entire play. At the very outset of the play, we find the protagonist, falling, getting up, dusting himself and reflecting. In the same vein, we find Job in his travails. “Therefore I despise myself and repeat in dust and ashes” (Job 42:6).

The nameless protagonist is made to suffer. The palm tree that offers him shade closes like a parasol. A bottle of water appears before him only to elude his grasp. He wants to hang himself but the bough of the tree does not oblige him. He tries to cut his throat with a pair of scissors but it is whisked away.

A reading of the Book of Job, shows that God allows Satan to take everything from Job except his life. This is to prove that Job will remain steadfast and upright even in the face of unbearable hardships but in the mime, Beckett brings the belief in a punitive exterior force sadistic and irresponsible into much clearer relief. The striking similarity between the nameless protagonist in the play and Job in the Bible is in their unmerited suffering.

In Krapp's Last Tape the protagonist is presented as a man of 69 sitting "before the fire with closed eyes, separating the grain from the husks" (12). The quote refers to the idea contained the verse: "His winnowing fork is in his hand and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matt. 3:12). Moreover when Krapps says: "The new light above any table is a great improvement with all this

darkness round me I feel less alone” (12) he is inclined to look at the light above that will remove the forces of darkness from his life with reference the verse: “who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (I Pet. 2:9).

Krapp tries to lead a life just as others do, having good relationship. For the purpose he makes efforts at church going but “went to sleep and fell of the pew” (19). Even when Krapp tries to overcome his weaknesses of the flesh, he tends to fail. The dilemma Krapps faces is analogous to the dilemma faced by St.Paul: “For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing” (Rom. 7:19). A desire for change in his character is visible when Krapp speaks: “Just been listening to that stupid bastard I look myself for thirty years ago, hard to believe I was ever as bad as that. Thank God that’s all done with any way (pause)” (17).

The instance of David, the king of Israel praying to God for the absolution of his sin of adultery with Bathsheba when the prophet Nathan came to him immediately after his sinful act, is relevant in this context of Krapp’s words:

The dark I have always struggled to keep under is in reality my most – (Krapp curses, switches off, winds tape forward, switches on again) – unshatterable association until my dissolution of storm and might with the light of the understanding and the fire – (Krapp curses louder, switches off, winds tape forward, switches on again) – my face in her breasts and my hand on her. We lay there without moving. But under us all moved and moved us, gently, up and down and from side to side. (16)

‘The new light’, ‘the vision’, ‘miracle’, ‘the fire’, ‘the pew’, ‘Christian Eve’, ‘Sunday morning’ are some of the words used in the text that contribute to the religious atmosphere in the play.

At the beginning of the second Act in Happy Days we find Winnie embedded up to neck. She can no longer turn or raise her head. She is capable of moving her eyes. She gazes front and sees:

WINNIE. Hail, holy light (Long pause. She closes her eyes. Bell rings loudly. She opens eyes at once. Bell stops. She gazes front. Long

smile. Smile off. Long pause) Some one is looking at me still (pause). That is what I find so, wonderful (pause) Eyes on my eyes. (Pause). (37)

The passage gives us the image of a woman who has sunk in the quagmire of sin trying to emerge out of it, thanks to the holy light that radiates from a holy person who is looking at her and caring for her. It alludes to the story of the sinful woman who went to the Pharisee's house where Jesus, the Light of the world, turned towards the woman and said, "your sins are forgiven" and "your faith has saved you, go in peace" (Luke 7:48, 50). Winnie's words, "so that I may say at all times even when you do not answer and perhaps hear nothing, something of this is being heard. I am not merely talking to myself that is in the wilderness, a thing I could never bear to do" (18) echo the words of John the Baptist, preaching in the Desert of Judea "A voice of one calling in the desert" (Matt. 3:3) that went unheeded.

Winnie is enquiring whether Willie who is hidden by mound can see her from the position where he is even if he raises his eyes in

her direction. Her words: “Lift up your eyes to me, Willie” (23) resemble the Biblical verse: “I lift up my eyes to the hills” (Ps. 121:1). Moreover, the reading of Winnie’s words: “One does not appear to be asking to great deal indeed at times it would seem hardly possible – to ask less – of a fellow creature – to put it mildly – where as actually – when you think about it – look into your heart – see the other – what he needs” (23) lead us to the verse in the Bible, “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you” (Matt. 7:12).

Winnie is seen giving instructions to Willie with regard to his movement in the mound and the way in which he moves or crawls is not to her liking. In this context Winnie says, “Oh I know it is not easy dear, crawling backwards but it is rewarding in the end” (21). It echoes the words of the Psalmist “and in keeping of them there is great reward” and “who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults” (Ps. 19:11-12). These words highlight the need for introspection. Men who can understand their errors and correct them are capable of reaping reward from their upright life.

Winnie makes an attempt to understand why there are the

poorer ones, who are mere trifles irreverent and she makes the statements with sarcasm! “How can one better magnify the Almighty than by sniggering with him at his little jokes particularly the poorer ones”? (24). When Beckett makes Winnie speak so, he may have in his mind the instance in which the disciples of Jesus asked him whether a man blind from his birth became blind because of his sins or the sins of his parents, and to which Jesus replied that it was neither of that man nor of his parents: “but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life” (John 9:3).

Winnie’s desire to sing a song too soon is considered a mistake but she sees the bag. The bag contains many things. Any way, it is the bag that takes her forward and enables her to cast her mind forward. The bag may refer to her previous life. She supposes that it was a comfort to know that Willie was there in her proximity but she is tired of him:

WINNIE. I will leave you out, that is what I will do,
 (She lays revolver in the ground to her
 right). There, that’s your home from this
 day out. (smile). The old style! (Smile off)

And now? (Long pause) is gravity what it was, Willie, I fancy not (pause) Yes, the feeling more and more that if I were not held – (gesture) – in this way, I would simply float up in to the blue. (Pause).(26)

This quote gives us the image of the soul longing for the liberation from the body as described in the Bible: “For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life” (II Cori. 5:4).

Moreover Winnie’s words: “And that perhaps some day, the earth will yield and let me go, the pull is so great, yes, crack all round me and let me out” (pause) (26) create the semblance of the situation arising out of the death of Christ depicted in the Gospels: “And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose”(Matt. 27:51-52).

Winnie's sinking in the mound up to the neck and her immobility represents the wickedness of the world, it has plunged into and the predicament of the humanity to come out of this dilemma. The main protagonist grows into a character that represents the plight of the human kind when she says: "I cannot (Pause) I cannot move (Pause) No, something must happen in the world, take place, some change I cannot if I am to move again" (28).

Towards the end of the play, Willie is seen slithering back to foot of mound and lying with the face to ground. He rises to hands and knees, raises his face towards Winnie. Winnie's words in this context, "you were always in dire need of a hand" (47) point to the need of a person capable of lifting. This situation alludes to the redemptive power of Christ "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

In Act II, Winnie makes the mention of "great mercies, great mercies" (42) and the day is well advanced but because of some problem, one cannot sing. At the same time, another one says, "Now is the time, it is now or never and one cannot" (42). The quote resembles the words in the Bible, "behold, now is the accepted time,

now is the days of salvation” (II Cor. 6:2).

Towards the middle of the first Act, Winnie is visualising how she is going to die. This is evidenced by the following words:

WINNIE. Shall I myself not melt perhaps in the end
or burn, Oh I do not mean necessarily burst
into flames, no, just little by little be
charred to a black cinder, all this (ample
gesture of arms) – Visible flesh (pause). (29)

These words mirror the image of hell where the wicked people suffer. Hell is described in the Bible as a place where there are unquenchable fire and undying worms. The above quote reflects the idea in the verses: “So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth and severe the wicked from among the just. And shall cast them into the furnace of fire. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 13:49-50).

Willie is seen reading the pages of a newspaper and he reads out: “His grace and Most Reverend Father in God Dr. Carolus Hunter dead in tub” (14). The way in which Willie reads the news brings to

our mind the picture of a priest reading out notices as a part of the service in the church. Willie's words conjure up the atmosphere of the church service before us.

Happy Days, too, deals with a situation arising out the alienation and lack of love. According to the Christian faith love is the most sublime action since "God is love" (I John 4:9). All the ills in the world are ascribed to the dearth of love. St Paul after elaborating the qualities of charity concludes that faith, hope and love are the three things that remain "But the greatest of these is love" (I Cor. 13:13). The predicament of Willie and Winnie, the main protagonists in the play, can be traced to the absence of love between them. This can be evidenced from their words:

WINNIE. I think you would back me up there Willie
(pause) or were we perhaps diverted by two
quite different things? (pause) Oh well,
what does it matter, that is what I always
say, so long as one ... you know ... what is
that wonderful line ... laughing world ...
something something laughing wild amid

severest woe. (Pause) And now? (long pause) Was I ever lovable? (pause) Do not misunderstand my question. I am not asking you if you found me lovable – at one stage (pause) No? (Pause) You can't? (Pause) Well, I admit it is teaser.

WILLIE. Sucked up?

WINNIE. Yes, love up into the blue, like gossamer.
(25-26)

Though this problem of alienation may appear to be the dilemma of these two characters, it is really the problem that besets the entire humanity. It is moving from the specific to the general. The feeling of alienation is the result of lack of faith. The mound or the hill that lies in between Willie and Winnie represents the hill of insurmountable problems and unending woes that stare at human beings. To surmount this heap of hardship, she has recourse to prayer. Just as the Psalmist prays, “Save me Oh God, for the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in the miry depths, Where there is no foot hold” (Ps 69:1-2), Winnie, embedded in the mound up to the waist prays to God for help. Jesus’ words: “For verily I say unto you,

if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain. Remove hence to yonder place and it shall move; and nothing shall be impossible to you. How be it this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting” (Matt. 17:20-21) are pertinent to the subject.

The repeated use of the words like ‘Amen’, ‘Good Lord’, ‘Good God’, ‘Holy Light’, ‘Prayer’, ‘Worship’, ‘Graces’, ‘reverend’, ‘love’, ‘happy days’ and ‘hell’ contribute to the religious tone and mood of the play.

In Embers Henry, the protagonist, wants to communicate with his dead father. But his father does not help him by responding:

HENRY. Can he hear me? (Pause) Yes, he must hear me (pause). To answer me? No, he does not answer me (Pause). Just be with me (Pause). That sound you hear is the sea, we are sitting on the strand (pause). I mention it because the sound is so strange, so unlike the sound of the sea, that if you didn't see.

What it was you wouldn't know what it was. (Pause) Hooves! (Pause. Louder.) Hooves! (sound of the hooves walking on hard road). They die rapidly away. (pause) Again! (Hooves as before. (Pause) Excitedly). (21-22)

The above quote again alludes to the Biblical verse: "at the sound of the hoofs of galloping steeds at the noise of enemy chariots and the rumble of their wheels. Father will not turn to help their children;" (Jer. 47:3).

Henry is trying to create the presence of certain people so that someone other than himself can reveal something about himself. Since he can not know himself, he needs a perceiver who can help him to see. He finds in Christ a perceiver of this sort and makes appeal:

HENRY. Not Yet! You needn't speak. Just listen. Not even. Be with me (Pause) Ada! (Pause. Louder) Ada! (Pause) Christ! (Pause). (37)

Henry used to walk along with his daughter Addie in the fields and ask her to look at the lambs:

‘Run along now, Addie and look at the lambs’

(imitating Addie’s voice) ‘No papa’. ‘Go on

now, so on’. (Plaintive) ‘No papa’.

(violent) Go on with you when you’re

told and look at the lambs!’ (26)

This passage reminds us of the words of Jesus to his disciple: “Simon son of John do you truly love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord”, he said, “You know that I love you?” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs”. (John 21:15).

In the end, to the extent that Henry is mad, fragmented in his personality and is desirous of composing himself with the riddance of guilt by the intercession of an external agency, Legion a lunatic depicted in the Gospel (Mark 5:1-15) can be fitted into the framework of the character of Beckett’s protagonist.

In Words and Music, the textual descriptions of age and sloth also refer to the Biblical verses. For example the passage “Age is ...

age is when ... old age I mean ... if that is what my Lord means ... is when ... if you're a man ... were a man ... huddled ... nodding ... the ... waiting" (129) echoes the idea of transience of human life as expressed in the verse: "The length of our days is seventy years – or eighty, if we have the strength, yet their span is but trouble and sorrow for they quickly pass and fly away". (Ps. 90:10). Sloth is considered a vice and it is so expressed in the verses: "Lazy hands make a man poor" (Prov. 10:4) and "the lazy man does not roast his game" (Prov. 12:27) and laziness ends in slave labour (Prov. 12:24).

Eh, Joe presents another typical Beckettian protagonist in whose head the voices of different persons are reproduced. A monologue goes on in his head. The voices of his father, mother and another woman assail him but he has vanquished the voices of his dead father and mother but the voice of the woman persists. It is the voice of the woman he seduced and discarded and who died by the stand, a place for her face scooped out in the stones.

This play is also not free from religious echoes. Among the voices Joe hears, is the voice of God. This voice creates fear in his mind and wants to escape the confrontation between his

consciousness and himself. There are just nine movements for the camera and in the fifth movement, we are taken into the mind of Joe, where his religious and moral scruples assail him:

How's your Lord these days? ... Still worth having? ...
 Still lapping it up? ... the passion of our Joe ... Wait till
 He starts talking to you ... When you're done with
 yourself ... All your dead dead ... sitting there in your
 foul old wrapper ... very fair health for a man of your
 years ... Just that lump in your bubo ... silence of the
 grave without the maggots ... To crown your labours ...
 Till one night ... "Thou fool thy soul" ... Put your things
 on that ... Eh Joe " ... Ever think of that? ... When he
 starts on you ... When you're done with yourself ... If
 you ever are. (204)

The words 'Thou fool, thy soul' in the passage allude to the parable of the Rich Fool in the Bible. The story says that the ground of a rich man produced good crop. Since he had not sufficient place to store the crops, he thought of tearing down his barns and building bigger one. Then he said to himself, "You have plenty of good things

laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry” . But God said to him, ‘You fool’. This very thing your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself”? (Luke 12:19-20). Moreover, “Wait till He starts talking to you” in the quote is based on the belief that the spirit of God speaks to the person under temptation, and prevents him from falling into it: “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: or if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgement:”(John 16:7-8). The play is littered with other Biblical references such as “great love god knows only”, (204) and “on Mary’s beads we plead her needs and in the holy mass” (205).

In Breath, the image that comes to us is the picture of God creating the first man. According to the story in the Bible “The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into the nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living being” (Gen. 2:7). The brief cry is symbolic of a transitory life with its attendant misery and torments, ending in death. The transcendence of

human life is graphically drawn in the verses: “As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth” (Ps. 103:15); “Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity” (Ps. 62:9); “But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?” (Job 14:10); “As the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath” (Eccles. 3:19).

In Not I there are references to God and sin. The utterances of the woman in the play, “God is love ... she will be purged” (121) and “God is love ... tender mercies” (221) and “answered... prayer unanswered” (223) are pointers in this direction.

Moreover, the parallel story of Mary Magdalene, a sinful woman in the Bible is relevant in this context. The woman who had lived a very sinful life in the town learned that Jesus was at a pharisee’s house. She was a tormented and shattered soul who had lost her peace of mind. She went to the house with an alabaster jar of perfumes. She stood behind him weeping and then poured perfume on his feet and wiped them with her hair. Jesus forgave her sins and asked her to go in peace. The story of the sinful woman narrated in

the Gospels can fit into the framework of the character of the woman represented by Mouth up to the extent of feeling remorse-stricken on account of her sins, though in the play, the prayer of the woman remains unanswered. We can view the narrator and the listener of the story in the light of the Biblical verse: “For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due to him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad” (II Cor. 5:10). “That time in court” (221) mentioned in the text may allude to the judgement seat of Christ and the listener who is an AUDITOR, may allude to Christ himself or his representative, preparing the accounts of her deeds or misdeeds. Even the title of the play might originate from the verse: “Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it but it is sin living in me that does it” (Rom. 7:20). The quote refers to the words of St Paul spoken at the time when he too was struggling with sin.

In The Catastrophe the protagonist is pictured as one with ash coloured night attire and with lovely head, resemble the mighty angel in Revelation: “Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud with a rainbow above his head”

(Rev. 10:1-2). Director gives instruction to the assistant to take down the words he is going to dictate:

D. Down the head (A at a loss. Irritably), Get going. Down his head. (A puts back pad and pencil, goes to P, bows his head further, steps back.) A shade more. (A advances, bows head further) stop! (A steps back) Fine. It's coming. (Pause) Could do with more nudity.

A. I make a note.

(She takes out pad, makes to take her pencil). (300)

Similarly we find that St John also begins to write when the angel instructs him: "And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write" (Rev. 10:4). Moreover, when the Director speaks: "For God's sake! What next? Raise his head? Where do you think we are? In Patagonic" (300), we think of St. John in ecstasy while in the island of Patmos. According to Michael Guest,

Catastrophe's depiction of the process of theatrical creation serves as a model for divine creation, in a

variation upon the theatre metaphor. Hence, the theatre hierarchy becomes a metaphysical scheme that includes an angelic Assistant and the evangelistic Luke as agents of the creator's will. Human existence is created as an iconic object of art, complementing the arrogant creative will and literally 'For God's sake' (300). Ultimately its purpose is no more than for the trivial amusement of the bogus angelic hosts, applauding from the stalls in a heavenly theatre. (Guest 3)

The atmosphere in the play is sequel to the catastrophe or woe caused by "the heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulphur. A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulphur that came out of their mouths" (Rev. 9:17-18). This second catastrophe is the prelude to the last woe as "final touches to the last scene" (297).

It would be appropriate to devote a few pages to prove the point that his poems as well as novels also abounds in Biblical echoes and images.

Beckett wrote “Whoroscope” in 1929. It is a poem on ‘time’. It is concerned with man’s existential anxiety in the midst of the ephemeral agitations that disturb the surface of life. It is replete with Biblical allusions:

So we drink Him and eat Him
 and the watery Beaune and the stale cunes of Hovis
 because He can Jig
 as near or as far from His jiggling Self
 and as sad or lively as the chalice or the
 tray asks (60-65).

We get the picture of the wine mixed with water and the bread during the Holy Mass. The idea of the movement of the bread and wine from one place to another also is indicated in the above stanza.

‘Rahab’ referred to in line 90 of the poem (“Then I will rise and move, moving towards Rahab to the shows”) is a Biblical character (Josh. 2:6) who gave asylum to the Israelite spies in the town of Jericho. Our failure to unravel the mystery of God and the world figures out in the line “starless inscrutable hour” (198). Saint Augustine’s revelation in the shrubbery and his reading Saint Paul

and his subsequent spiritual conversion are evident in the lines:

He tolle'd and legge'd

and be buttoned on his redemptionist waistcoat. (75-76)

Moreover, the closing lines of the poem reveal the cruel fate of man and his revolt as an abortive being in the dark and ignorant egg like universe. Half-egg, not yet a fledgling represents the excrement of creation or the fate of the egg is the fate of man or the relation of the destiny to man:

How rich he smells,

this abortion of fledgling

I will eat it with a fish fork.

White and yolk and feathers. (86-89)

“Dortmunder” is a poem in which the notion of passivity is stressed. The narrator in the poem is a scribe who writes what he sees and hears. He is compared to Habakkuk, one of the Jewish Prophets mentioned in the Old Testament:

Then, as a scroll, folded

and the glory of her dissolution enlarged

in me, Habakkuk, mard of all sinners. (10-12)

The choice of Habakkuk in this context is to raise the question why God contributes to the triumph of the unjust by allowing the barbarian Chaldeans to defeat the sinned Judah.

Moreover, through the lines like “Past the red spire of sanctuary” and “She stands before me in the bright stall”, other religious metaphors are introduced in the poem. “Serena – I”, a poem that envisions the world as a cruel and painful place, has certain lines that describe the destiny of the house fly. The fly in its self-enjoyment dooms itself giving up its servile role as a carrier of disease. It is in a way a service to man though in a negative way. In this context the poet says:

It is autumn of his life

he could not serve typhoid and mammon. (52-53)

The last line in the quote is a parody of the verse: “Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt. 6:24). The Biblical lines on serving two masters are changed to show that God permits the existence of evil and suffering in the world. In another poem “Serena III”, the poet

describes the poignant evocation of the separation of the lover through the Biblical image of the separation of Mary and Joseph reflected through the line, “something heart of the Mary” (13).

“Sanies II” ends on the note of a supplication:

Lord have mercy upon

Christ have mercy upon us

Lord have mercy upon us. (41-43)

Beckett’s poem “Vulture” presents the picture of the palsy-stricken man obeying the words of Christ “, Arise, take up thy bed and walk” (Mark 2:9). But in the poem, the meaning of the Biblical quote is reversed: “stooping to the prone who must soon take up their life and walk” (3-4). This is expressed in the context of the idea that poetry is a residue of life and the materials of the outer world perish and become an offal before it can serve as material for poetry. In another poem “Enueg I” the line “Above the mansions the algum-trees” (10), refers to algos (pain) represented by algum-trees mentioned in the Old Testament (I Kings 10:11 ; II Chron. 9:10). The poem “Alba” also has religious tones. The second line in the poem “and Dante and

Logos and all strata and mysteries” reads along with the ninth and tenth lines “who though you stoop with fingers of compassion to endorse the dust”, gives us the image of Logos (Christ) coming down to earth to forgive the sinners, as revealed in the first chapter of St John. Moreover, the story of the woman taken in adultery and Jesus stooping down and writing on the ground and finally forgiving her are brought to our minds.

“Enueg II” is a poem based on religious theme of Veronica wiping the face of Christ with a cloth during his journey to Calvary. Jesus Christ has become a universal figure of compassion who takes pity on every man in distress. The dying narrator in the poem has his policeman as Christ has the soldiers to prod him on in his fatigue. There is a reference to Judas. The narrator is compared with him.

The following lines of the poem reveal the religious metaphoric structure:

Veronica mundi

Veronica munda

Give us a wipe for the love of Jesus

Sweating like Judas
 tired of dying
 tired of policemen. (9-13)

At the end of “Sanies I” there is a Biblical allusion to the story of Peter jumping into the water in response to Christ’s summons when he sees Christ walking on the sea (Matt. 14:25-31). This is evidenced from the lines:

her whom alone in the accusative
 I have dismounted to live
 Gliding towards the dauntless hautch-girl on the
 face of the waters. (44-46)

In “Serenea III”, the narrator speaks, “hide yours not in the Rock, keep on the move. Keep on the move”. The quote is an inversion of the well-known Christian hymn: “Rock of ages cleft for me. Let me hide myself in Thee based on verse” (Isa. 26:4). “Ooftish” deals with the theme of suffering from disease. The disapproval of the view that suffering has positive spiritual value is expressed in it. The lines “Golgotha was only the potegg” and “it all

boils down to the blood of the lamb” create religious atmosphere in the poem. The contribution of money to the kitty for the mitigation of pain and suffering advocated by the preacher during his visit to a sick person is viewed with bitter irony and satire. “Calvary by night” as the title indicates, is Biblical in character as it relates various scenes connected with the crucifixion of Christ. It also means everyman’s journey through darkness of life to his destiny as victim and it has a religious tone. The religious imagery suggests a resurrection to come and the lines noted below prove it:

Till the clamour of a blue flower
 beat on the walls of the womb of
 the waste of
 the water. (15-18)

The poem “Casket of Pralimen for a Daughter of a Dissipated Mandarin” indicates concern with a religious dimension and its religious theme provides it a unity though it is loosely constructed. There are many religious images in the lines quoted below:

Radiant lemon – whiskered Christ

and you obliging porte – phallic – portfolio

and blood – faced Tom

disbelieving

in the Closerie cocktail that is my

and of course John the bright boy of the class

swallowing an apostolic spit

THE BULLIEST FEED IN 'ISTORY

if the boy scouts hadn't booked a through

for the eleventh's eleventh eleven years after.(15-24)

The lines under reference give us the picture of Christ. Judas with his scrotum-shaped purse, the doubting Thomas, John the disciple and the Last Supper and moreover, the lines: "Fool! Do you hope to untangle / the knot of God's pain" (41-42) contribute to the religious tenor of the poem, apart from taking us to the crux of the problem raised in the poem. The following lines allude to the story of the devils entering into the herd of swine and the swine possessed with devil running down to the sea and their eventual death (Matt. 9:28-32):

Though the swine were slaughtered

beneath the waves

not far from the firm sand
 they're gone they're gone. (71-74)

“Text”, one of Beckett’s early poems, also is concerned with the religious problem of suffering. The Bible also contributes to the making of this poem. One of the sections of the poem brings in Job and his unmerited suffering to the reader’s mind:

Open Thou my lips
 And
 (if one dare make a suggestion)
 Thine eye of sky flesh
 Am I token of God craft?
 The masterpiece of a scourged apprentice?
 where is my hippopot’s cedar tail?
 and belly muscles?
 shall I cease to lament
 being not as the flesh sneezing
 non-suppliant airtight alligator. (20-30)

The Biblical Job is different from the Beckettian Job. Job in

the Bible is asked to remember that he has eyes made of flesh and he should see with them. God made his hands and he now wonders why his hands are turned against Him. Because of his unbearable hardships he wishes that he should not have been brought out of the womb and he had died before any eye saw him. Job is reminded of the strength of the creatures like the leviathan and is brought to the knowledge of God's power. When Job is an example of the suffering servant, Beckett's job in the poem remains unreconciled to his sufferings and laments that he cannot suffer the afflictions.

“Hell Crane To Starting” is an indictment against the erotic experience and it abounds in many Biblical references.

Oholiba charm of my eyes
 there is a cave about Tsoar
 and a spanish donkey there. (1-3)

Aholah and Aboliba were the daughters of a woman and they were whores. ‘Oholiba’ in the poem alludes to Aholiba in the Old Testament (Ezek. 23:4). ‘Tsoar’ refers to the city of Zoar where Lot entered. “Then Lot went out of Zoar and dwelt in the mountain” (Gen. 19:23-30). ‘Donkey’ in line 3 and ‘ass’ in line 22”, and “But

there is a bloody time ass”, refer to the Biblical verse: “For she doted upon their paramours whose flesh is as the flesh of asses and whose issue is like the issue of horses” (Ezek. 23:20). A reading of lines (5-12) brings in to our mind the story of Jacob, narrated in chapter 32 of Genesis where Jacob comes carrying gifts for his brother Esau. He wrestles with the angel and Jacob’s thigh is put out of joint. There his name is changed to Israel and the place is called Peniel. The lines are as follows:

And he won’t know

Who changed his name

When Jehovah sprained the seam of his haunch

in peniel in peniel

after he’s sent on the thirty Camels

Suckling for dear death

and so many fillies

that I don’t want log tablets. (5-12)

Moreover the line “Bilha always blabs” alludes to Reuben’s illicit relationship with Bilhah who was the concubine of his father (Gen. 22).

The lines “Because Benoni skirted after crop of my aching lions”

refer to Benoni (son of pain), the last child of Jacob (Gen. 35:18). The use of the erotic and the Biblical in the poem reflects the uncertainty of a puritan conscience anxious for amorous experience familiar with religious scruples. In another poem “From the only poet to a shining Whore”, the same conflict finds expression. The first ten lines of the poem, plentiful in Biblical allusions, depict the character of Rahab, the harlot of Jericho in the Bible, who was saved by the power of faith:

Rahab of the holy battlements
 bright dripping shaft
 in the bright bright patient
 pear-brow dawn-dush lover of the sun.
 puttanina mial.
 you hid them happy in the high flax
 pale before the fords
 of Jordan and dry red waters
 and you lowered a pledge
 of scarlet hemp. (1-10)

Rahab was a prostitute who sheltered two Israelites sent by Joshua.

She took them up to the roof and hidden them under the stalks of flax. “The dry red waters” alludes to the story of the Lord drying up the waters of Jordan when the Israelites came out of Egypt. ‘Scarlet hemp’ refers to the incident of tying the scarlet cord in the window of Rahab’s house as a proof for keeping the oath between her and the two men.

The title of the entire collection of the short stories is known as More Pricks than Kicks (1934) and the very title is taken from the Bible and is based on the verse spoken by Jesus to Paul on his way to Damascus: “It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks” (Acts 9:5 and 26:14). In “Draft”, the last story in this collection, there is statement “O. Anthrax where is thy pustule?” (272) is a changed form of the verse “Where, O death is your victory?” (I Cor. 15:55).

In his novel Watt (1953), Biblical allusions give a Christian tone to the religious atmosphere in it. The word “Witness” occurs many times in the novel. ‘God is my witness’, ‘God is a witness that cannot be sworn’ (6) and “glad he witnesses and is witnessed” (40) are cited here as a few instances. This is a word very profusely used in the scriptures. The following passages,

I blush to say even blasphemous words and expressions, and perhaps also because what we know partakes in no small measure of the nature of what has so happily been called the unutterable or ineffable so that any attempt to utter or elf it is doomed to fail, doomed, doomed to fail.... for the only way one can speak of nothing is to speak of it as though it were something, just as the only way one can speak of God is to speak of him as though he were a man. (61-74)

add to the religious echoes in the novel. The reference to the dog as “the one to eat the food left over by Mr. Knott in the manner described until it died” may allude to the verse in the Bible, “but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table”, (Matt. 5:27). The allusions to the well known prayer strengthens the religious atmosphere. The expression in the Sign of the Cross “as it was the beginning, is now and ever shall be” is adapted as, “as it was now, so it had been in the beginning and so it would remain to the end” (129). The activities of Sam and Watt in the mental institution provide them opportunities to come nearest to God. Their actions are

stoning birds, grinding the eggs of the larks and feeding their favourite friends that are rats. They take a plumb young rat and feed it. “It was on these occasions, we agreed, after an exchange of views, that we came nearest to God” (153). Close to this passage comes a juxtaposition that associates “knott, Christ, Gomorrah, Cork” (154). Though these passages border on black humour and ironic savagery, they contribute to the religious atmosphere. The description of the asylum as “mansions” (151) alludes to the description of heaven in the Gospel “in my father’s house there are many mansions”, (John 14:2). It appears that Watt has come to Mr. Knott’s house fundamentally for religious purposes. Watt explains his search to Sam later in the following words:

Of nought. To the source. To the temple. To him I
bought. This emptied heart. These emptied hands. This
mind ignoring. This body homeless. To love him my little
reviled. My little rejects to have him. My little to learn
him forgot. Abandoned my little to find him. (164)

Moreover, the following description of Knott resembles the suffering of Jesus: “His face was bloody, his hand also and thorns

were in his scalp” (157). The symbolic structure of Watt is that Watt can identify himself with Knott as well as Christ. The theme of alienation also is very obvious in this novel. Thus various religious metaphors push Beckett’s art towards a starker goal.

Molloy (1955) also depicts an absurd journey. Molloy begins his story by recalling that he once crouched on a hilltop watching two men approach one another on a country road.

They have become A and C, a possible reference to Abel and Cain whose legend (which first got mentioned in “Dante and the Lobster”, 1934) illustrates Beckett’s preoccupation with the unpredictable nature of God’s favours, for Cain was ‘cursed from the earth’, after seeing his brother’s offering preferred to his own for no apparent reason. But A and C also recall Camier and Mercier respectively: they ‘know each other perhaps’, one is short, the other tall, one of them at least look old and A, like Camier at one point in the manuscript walks with his head bowed on his chest. (A and C also suggest, moreover, the two thieves of whom so much is already

said in Godot, for Molloy later on refers to them unambiguously as mes deux larrons)” (Fletcher 121).

Towards the end of the novel, the novelist makes Moran parody certain questions of theological nature. They are transcribed here:

1. What value is to be attached to the theory that Eve sprang not from Adam’s rib but from a tumour in the fat of his leg (arse)?
2. Did the serpent crawl or, as Comestor affirms, walks upright?
3. Did Mary conceive through the ear, as Augustine and Abobard assert?
4. How much longer are we to hang about waiting for the ante Christ?
5. Does it really matter which hand is employed to absterge the podex.

6. What is one to think of the Irish oath sworn by the natives with the right hand on the relics of the saints and the left on the virile member?
7. Does nature observe the Sabbath?
8. Is it true that the devils do not feel the pains of hell.
9. The algebraic theology of Craig. What is one to think of this?
10. Is it true that the infant Saint-Roch refused such on Wednesday and Fridays?
11. What is one to think of the excommunication of Vermin in the sixteenth century?
12. Is one to approve of the Italian cobbler Lovat who, having cut off his testicles crucified himself.
13. What was God doing with himself before the creation?

14. Might not the beatific vision become a source of boredom in the long run?
15. Is it true that Judas' torments are suspended on Saturdays?
16. What is the mass for the dead over the living? And I recited the pretty quietist Peter, Our Father who art no more in heaven than on earth or in hell, I neither want nor desire that thy name be hallowed, thou knowest best what suits thee, etc.. The middle and the end are very pretty. (167-168)

Thus we find that most of Beckett's works are littered with Biblical references and allusions, religious imagery and metaphors. The preceding pages have shown the extent of Christian echoes in the literary art of Beckett. Robert Pinget in his tribute on the mystique of Beckett, creates an image of Jesus transforming an immoral girl into a saint:

'But she did have the good luck to meet Jesus on evening when he was making a point of passing through her infamous district. As it is impossible to resist this

man with his soft eyes, she went up to him and caught his attention. And he, he did not look at her with concupiscence. She suddenly felt embarrassed, something that had never happened to her before. They continued to look at each other. Then, all of a sudden, everything that Mary had lacked with her one-night stands, all her young girl's aspiration, all the goodness, the calm, the joy of loving, started to turn her head and she did not think any longer, but fell on her knees and cried like a mad woman, like the poor little mad girl that she was. One should not think that she was crying from shame, it would be better to think that she was crying from joy. She had found her man. He gives her his heart. It is all she needs. She has no further use for bodies, she has been more than saturated with them. And so she continued to cry from joy for many years, and never stopped pronouncing the name of her lover, and she is dead'. (qtd. in Calder 85)

The entire quote reverberating with Christian echoes is indicative of

Pinget's understanding and appreciation of Beckett's affinity with Christ. Maria Jolas in her reminiscences of Beckett refers to him: "Like Joyce, he is also a Christ haunted man, not yet of the new barbarism" (qtd. in Calder 165).

In short, Beckett's disillusionment with the post war conditions coupled with his own bitter experiences in life made him a tormented soul. His sincere efforts to comprehend the rationale behind the incongruities and the absurdities of the human conditions failed him and that led to his mordant and bleak view of life. In order to affirm the various aspects of Absurdity, he turns to the Bible and makes it his major target of attack. Bitter reflections on God's created world are cast. God and Christ are ironically presented. In most of his plays, Christian echoes are mocking echoes. They are presented to produce cosmic irony and comic despair. Most of the stories, references and allusions from the Bible are meant to show misery and suffering. Thus Beckett uses the Scriptures as an instrument for asserting the different aspects of the human predicament.

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Chapter Six

Conclusion

One may recapitulate the main points in the preceding chapters. It has been stated in the introductory chapter that the Theatre of the Absurd is not to be regarded necessarily a school but is related to a group of dramatists who seem to share certain attitudes towards the existential predicament of man in the universe. Humanity's plight is purposelessness in an existence out of harmony with its surroundings. The central theme of these writers is the state of mental anguish produced by the lack of purpose in all we do. In the writings of these writers the ideas are allowed to shape the form as well as content. The semblance of a logical construction, but with no rational thinking of idea with idea, and with no intellectually viable argument, is seen in their works.

In the second chapter entitled 'Beckett's Vision of Life and Art', we have learned that Beckett was born and brought up in a

middle class protestant family and had his education in Dublin, London. During his stay in France he came under the influence of James Joyce. Moreover, other thinkers like Descartes, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Geulincx and Camus influenced his thinking and writings. Alienation, suffering, solitude, privation, diseases and decay occur as themes in his works. His vision of life is Absurdity, the main ingredients of which are nihilism, Cartesian views, existentialism and phenomenology. In general he has a gloomy view of life, in comparison with the Christian promise of a life abundant in hope.

The third chapter under the caption 'Beckett as an Avant-garde: His Plots and Characters in Absurdity' presents Beckettian characters and plots in the Absurdist context. His characters are absurd, 'ancient' and crippled bums and destitutes. They are confused about time and space. They are beset with verbal difficulties and obsessed with fantasies and violence. They can only discover and be comprehended by means of perception and illusion. They state what they see remaining in ignorance. They do not try to impose meaning by stating what they think they should be. They are

noted for their similarity. His characters also vary in situations as much as in their character from crawling through mud to planning to write the account of one's death. Yet similarity grips our attention before diversity strikes us. The plots of his plays centre around human experiences.

The fourth chapter with the title 'The Motif of Time in the Plays of Beckett', is a gist of Beckett's views on Time as presented in his plays. He is always haunted by Time. Time is developed as a theme in his plays. The flow of Time causes sufferings to his characters. His characters fit into the scheme of linear time and vertical time. Their age and relationship show change effected by linear time. Their slowing down and tending to infinity reveal sameness represented by vertical time. Time and space are void and any particular time or particular space is only a part in the void.

Chapter five under the caption 'Biblical Imagery and Echoes in the Plays of Beckett' seeks to drive home the point that the Beckett's plays are replete with stories, litotes and references from the Bible against which his view of Absurdity is elucidated. In Waiting for Godot hope is juxtaposed with hopelessness. All That Fall with its

title from the Bible presents the tragic and dissolute life with flashes of hope here and there. Not I again with its title from the Bible depicts the helplessness of a human being driven to commit sin even against his wishes. When Endgame presents the pathos of human life, Embers expresses the desire of a person for the end of his suffering the result of which is his past action. Guilt finds expression in Play whereas Come and Go reflects the unsatisfying and meaningless life. Catastrophe deals with destruction and devastation. Love, sloth and age are woven into the fabric of Words and Music. Thus faith, hope, salvation, sin, repentance, Providential cruelty and dissolution are discussed with allusions to Biblical characters, stories and situations.

Moreover, it is only fit and proper to state that a detailed study of the religious imagery and echoes in the poems and the novels of Beckett would have been relevant to my present study. But as it falls outside the scope of this thesis it is not studied in detail though a few pages have been devoted to this purpose.

No doubt, the writings of Samuel Beckett have always presented a challenge to his audience and readers for their stunning effect and elusive meaning. His economy of structure and his vision

of human wants and cruelty, hope and despair have made him the 20th Century's most influential playwright. His works reputed for bleakness, intellectual difficulty and sheer weirdness are set in archetypal spaces with characters devoid of social context or personal history. His scholarship is revealed in the various kinds of problems his characters encounter and the various strategies he has used to organise their thoughts and actions. In order to investigate the loneliness of individual consciousness he has abandoned the traditional features of drama and has become the most puzzling and controversial of all modern dramatists. Even when Beckett is regarded as forbiddingly obscure, uninterested in plot and excessively narrow in range, still to many others, "he is the clearest, most limpid, most disciplined joiner of words in the English language today" (Kenner, A Reader's Guide 10).

Beckett perceives life to be inexorably chaotic. He gives the impression of a man who has experienced human deprivation with infinite irony and pain. Moreover, he reveals modern man's experiences and his desire to conceal from himself. He goes to the root of nihilism, to the question of Being and Nothingness and

touches on the darkened dread; the void. Exploring inner space, he maps out the stark region of human life. Nothing is ontologically whole in the world of Beckett. Objects and persons are pre-determined to be partial. All processes are subject to arbitrary or absurd rules. Nothing ends because potentiality overwhelms reality and alternatives proliferate. Nothing is, therefore, consummated. Time tends to be viciously circular. It worsens things without altering their nature. Its true function is to reveal essences in the courses of their disintegration. Epistemologically, all things are ambiguous. The senses are not given data sufficient for judgement. When the senses get them, the time lag between perception and expression makes the latter out of date. In a process of unending flux, each moment contains the negation of the preceding atom of time. In the words of Esslin,

In Beckett's work this tension between the transient, unendingly decaying nature of the material universe and the immaterial aspect of consciousness which incessantly renews itself in ever-recurring self perception plays an important part.^t Consciousness cannot

conceive of itself as non existing and is therefore only conceivable as unlimited without end. The more in Beckett's works the material envelope decays and is stripped away, the more painful becomes the tension between the temporal and the infinite. (Esslin, Beckett 7)

Beckett's art is ontological. His quest for the identity of man leads him to the treasure house of the ideas of the pre-Socratics, the rationalists of the 17th and 18th centuries and the existentialists of the 20th century. Man sees around him the confusion and the mess. They lead him to darkness, loneliness, despair, suffering and finally death. But even in the dark, there is a glimmer of hope but its nature and duration in the dark world of Beckett cannot be delineated clearly. For Beckett, darkness and light look alike creating a mess and making the situation inexplicable "And for all its dialectical brilliance, its logical elegance, its symmetrical proportions and its painful self consciousness, Beckett's art is profoundly and essentially human" (Hesla 229). Usually, the subject-matter of literature centres on the relationship between individuals, struggles for position and the conquest of sexual objects but these things appear to Beckett as

external trappings of existence. Discarding these 'inessential' questions, Beckett discusses the basic questions regarding man's categorical coming into being, 'who he is', the true nature of self and the meaning of 'I'. It is because of the stripping of reality to its bones that Beckett has been developed as a writer towards an ever greater concentration, sparseness and brevity. John Calder remarks:

The more he shrinks his world, the more he enlarges it. The more he hides himself the more he reveals himself and our situation takes on a new aspect. The more he wallows in the muck, the more he extends our idea of beauty. The more he removes his centre of gravity from the body physical, the soldier the shuddering flesh becomes. The more he plunges us to the depths of despair, the brighter burns our need to hope. The more abstract the more concrete, and the more apparently difficult the more rewardingly simple the content ... and the emotion. One could go on for ever. (Calder 3)

Beckett's pre-eminence among the writers of the Theatre of the Absurd is an accepted fact. His literary art is sufficient in itself. It is

not fettered to a particular philosophical system of religious belief but eclectic in nature. The artist in him moves into himself in search of a more universally valid self. An hitherto neglected realm of impotence and ignorance considered incompatible with art by many artists was chosen by Beckett for exploration. "He is there, looming large and inescapable on the literary landscape, the games which he has been playing with words for over thirty years have gradually become matters of immediate relevancy to us" (Fletcher, The Novels of Beckett 233).

What is attempted in this thesis is to explore the Absurd elements in the works of Beckett which he has, according to the hypothesis here, asserted chiefly against the message of the Bible. The influence of the Bible on him, the various religious images and metaphors he has used to shape his vision, the numerous Biblical references and allusions he has employed to produce paradoxical and ironical effects in his plays have been discussed. Beckett has leaned toward the Bible not for projecting a benevolent divinity but for presenting a divinity as a mystery of evil. Reason and justice prove the world absurd. Mercy is only a fiction. The tyranny of God the

Father, is felt everywhere. Even Christ is considered by Beckett as the suffering servant - himself a victim. The faith of God as Person does not seem to help anyone in crisis (as in the case of Beckett's brother and his mother). So faith is something irksome for Beckett and he lets it go. Yet he always turns to Christian symbolism and religious imagery for artistic purposes. A religious nostalgia is palpable in his writings. His 'heroes' certainly languish for the lack of any God to save them and frequently express their anguish in this regard.

A careful study of his writings will show that he was well-versed in the Bible. He has explored its riches to add to the material of his dramatic art. Moreover the Bible is a complex and lengthy book containing many different kinds of writing. It has helped Beckett much. It may be safely assumed here that the book 'Ecclesiastes' in the Bible dealing with the meaninglessness of life is a source of seminal influence on Beckett for the genesis of the kind of idea of Absurdity that is in him. Quotations from the Bible are very often twisted. Inversion of religious imagery is a recurrent feature. Ironic litotes is used in plenty. This profusion of Biblical

echoes contributes to the assertion of the Absurd. The entire spectrum of Beckett's works is sprinkled with clusters of religious metaphors, imagery and allusions. Many Biblical characters like Adam, Cain, Abel, Noah, Moses, Abraham, Joseph, Job, St. Paul and prophets like Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Habakkuk are arrayed in his works. Over and above, the figure of Christ haunts and overshadows many of his literary compositions. Jacobsen and Muller state that "One might truthfully say that to a reader completely ignorant of the Gospels and the Mass, a heavy proportion of Beckett would be lost" (Friedman 22).

We can, therefore, say in conclusion that the Bible has contributed much material to the making of Beckett's genre of literature. In other words, Beckett's writings would have lost their charm, strength and power if he had not fallen back upon the Bible. However, as an artist, Beckett is not expected to give solutions to human problems. Beckett is appreciated, on the other hand, for enlightening his audience and readers with a proper and impressively profound understanding of what the contemporary situation of humanity really is – that is, in the post-war era in which a complacent

belief in any god is a matter of suspect. The present-day human situation as is revealed through Beckett's works, seems to express the belief that in a godless universe human existence has no meaning or purpose and, therefore, all communication breaks down. Consequently, as his various creative renderings demonstrate, logical construction and argument give way to irrational and illogical speech and to its ultimate conclusion, silence.

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