CHAPTER III

BODY AS MIRROR TO THE SELF

Body is the best image of the soul.

— Wittgenstein

Beckett's theatre is an exemplification of this statement — the body as reflecting the soul of the person. "Soul" is not used here in the spiritual sense; instead, it connotes the self of the person or his personality, that is, that which he has made of himself or that which society or people have moulded by their negative or positive influence. Beckett's bodies, as has been observed, are not breathing bodies of a green world; what we witness on stage is a portrait gallery of cripples, the dying and the dead, the insane and the psychic, in a world on the edge of silence. On a superficial examination they appear very comical with their "strut" and "staggering," with heads peeping out of dustbins and urns, with bodies imprisoned in mounds
and crawling out of sacks and with a wide open
mouth on stage, but a closer examination reveals
them as tortured bodies both physically and
mentally and living their life having reconciled to
their lot.

A very general application of the statement,
"Body is the best image of the soul," to Beckett's
bodies discloses meanings on a religious and
personal level. But analyzing them within the
framework of feminist, psychoanalytic and post-
colonial theories opens a wide vista of reading,
which is new to Beckett scholarship. The aim of
psychoanalysis,

Is to return our souls to our bodies, to
return ourselves to ourselves and thus to
overcome the human state of self alienation.

(Goldenberg 28)

Feminists and post-colonial writers aim at
"writing the body" or letting the body be heard.
Returning souls to bodies and letting the body be
heard indicate the fact of assigning to body a
life, a designation and value, and of granting
meaning to bodily experience. These theories arose
against the grain of western philosophical
tradition, where the body and the soul were seen as
separate entities and the mind or the soul was seen as far more superior to the body. The body was ignored as something very trivial, material, mere organic waste in contrast to the soul which was glorified as more permanent, more noble and closer to the concept of the divine. The body was thought of as a temporary place where the mind and the soul reside. Under this dualistic view of a person the body becomes unimportant. The new theorists aim at rejuvenating the body and giving it its due importance. They never see the body and the mind or the soul as two distinct entities but see them functioning as one, that is, the body.

In psychoanalysis the body becomes more complex because the mind is never separated from it. All the fine things about human beings — their intellect, their morality, their aesthetic sensibilities — arise from bodily sources. (Goldenberg 176)

The feminists and post-colonialists too see all experience as bodily experience. The bodily exploitation of the suppressed class, that is, racial discrimination and sensual exploitation which formed the basis of their protest against suppression and oppression is grounded in bodily
experience. They attempt through their writings to regain the importance of the body and thereby establish their individuality and live a life in fulfilling their bodily experience. Hence the body and the soul are seen as one. An examination of Beckett's bodies reveals them as weary, worn out and depreciated bodies nearing extinction. This creates the impression that he devalues the body and that he is influenced by the dualistic tradition. And if his bodies are representative of the dualistic tradition where the insignificant body signifies the glorification of the soul or the intellect, we notice that his characters have not achieved intellectual perfection. Most of them are nervous wrecks, weak in mind and shying away from life and the world. Analyzing Beckett's bodies on the lines of modern body theorists reveals them as disclosing facts unexplored before. His body mirrors the soul of the person and also reflects the condition of the world.

Thus in Beckett the body forms the life of the person and that which he captures on stage through his bodies is the failure of the characters to live in the body. Almost all the characters of Beckett are failures and by depicting the body as battered
and weary, Beckett makes the bodies speak of the condition of their souls, which are frustrated and disillusioned by the meaninglessness of existence. This failure to find meaning in life comes about as a result of their failure to live in the body.

The most striking aspect of Beckett's bodies on stage is that they are illustrative of the fact of alienation: alienation from its totality, from personal relations and social activities, alienation from the body itself and a detachment from physicality, a failure to live in the family and of the ties of the family; and it also indicates a seeking of other objects in place of the real. In a Hegelian sense, the failure to identify with one's society, the failure to reconcile to the ideals and institutions of one's society, leaves one in a state of alienation. In contemporary sociology and philosophy, alienation is generally understood as a sense of being estranged, shut out of common life, the sense of being an outsider. The other components of alienation are a sense of being self-estranged, cut off from one's own feelings or identity, the feeling of powerlessness and meaninglessness. Losing the capacity for love or for any other
strong emotion is one of the symptoms of alienation (see Lavine 250-251). Feminists and psychoanalysts take this on to a more personal and physical level in terms of the body and those associated with it. They argue that sexuality plays a considerable role in a person’s life and it pervades throughout his life. Sex, more especially intimate and healthy sex, gives meaning to one’s life and instils the people involved in it with a feeling of belonging. This gives purpose and meaning to existence. An absence or a denial of this marks the beginning of a death-like existence because it means a denial of the body and the needs of the body, which in turn is connected to the soul, or the make-up of the self of the person. One cannot live a wholesome life by estranging oneself from one’s body—a major component of one’s identity. Simone De Beauvoir states that “the body and sexuality are concrete expressions of existence” (50). To live in the body responding to its needs and impulses is to live life fully, a suppression of these demarcates the repression of the deepest urges of one’s physicality. Maurice Charney too expresses a similar opinion through the statement: “being in tune with your deepest sexual impulses also means
being in tune with the life force" (93). Almost all of Beckett's plays picturize this theme of alienation and the failure of the characters to live in the body and the life which surrounds it. They lead a life detached from the body, its needs and its activities, and live in isolation, completely cut off from society, from the world and from their own personal life waiting for the expected end. This leads to loneliness, frustration, disillusionment and a failure to find meaning in life, and this tells on their physical appearance. Thus a closer examination of Beckett's bodies and the causes for such representation reveals them as reflecting the inner self.

Krapp in *Krapp's Last Tape* has isolated himself from the world and cut himself off from all ties with society and lives in his den, listening to his recorded voice. Alienation from the world and from the body is well illustrated in his case. His is also a case of sexual alienation. In the words of Sandra Lee Bartky,

The historic suppression and distortion of the erotic requirements of women are clearly an instance of sexual alienation. . . . sexual alienation itself is only a
manifestation of a larger alienation from the body. (35)
The presentation of Krapp's body and his existence evinces this theme. His appearance indicates disinterestedness in life. His body thus reflects his isolated social and personal life detached from any form of relationship with the society and alienation from his own body.

A wearish old man: KRAPP.


Very near-sighted (but unspectacled). (215)

His carelessness in appearance and in keeping his body well maintained is indicative of his alienated self. He is at the point of advancing physical and intellectual decline. But we learn from his recorded voice that his youth was more fulfilling and active. And his failure lies in the fact that
he was unable to find meaning in his love relations. He reads from the ledger:

[Pause. He shrugs his shoulders, peers again at ledger, reads.]

Farewell to – [he turns page] – love.

(Beckett 217)

The recorded voice speaks of him bidding farewell to love:

TAPE: I said again I thought it was hopeless and no good going on and she agreed, without opening her eyes. . . . I lay down across her with 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. . . . Perhaps my best years are gone. When there was a chance of happiness. (223)

He bids love farewell and the human world farewell with the great ambition of becoming a writer and writing his magnum opus. But he fails in it, and Hugh Kenner questions: “Would he not have done better not to shut his heart?” (133). Yes, Krapp is a lonely, wearish old man because of his failure to know his self and live in the body. The body of Krapp becomes the instrument which conveys to the
audience the message of such failures. James Knowlson and John Pilling quote Martin Held who played the role of Krapp in the 1969 Schiller — Theatre Werkstatt production directed by Beckett. He reported Beckett as saying at rehearsal, "Krapp sees very clearly that he's through with his work, with love and with religion" (82). And the isolated body of Krapp exemplifies this theme.

The confinement of the body of Nagg and Nell too symbolizes the fact of alienation. So too do the bodies of Winnie and Willie, W1, W2 and M1 in Play and A and B in Act Without Words II. The physical confinement of Nagg and Nell literally signifies their alienation from the world and from each other. David H. Hesla draws a comparison between the image of a pile of sand and the image of the jar in Unnamable and the cylinder in Murphy and Watt. He states:

The pile of sand in which Winnie is buried is still another version of the jar. . . . the metaphor of the jar emphasizes the alienation of one human being from another. (239)

The image of the jar is also used in Endgame and in Play to illustrate the same theme. The jar becomes in Endgame the ashbins which Nagg and Nell inhabit
and in Play the grey urns containing W1, W2 and M1. Their body too depicts this isolated existence. They have been kept apart from each other and denied any form of body contact. Their attempts to reach each other fail frustratedly. When Nagg knocks on Nell’s lid she peeps her head out and asks him:

NELL: What is it my pet [Pause.] Time for love?
NAGG: Were you asleep?
NELL: Oh no!
NAGG: Kiss me.
NELL: We can’t.
NAGG: Try.

[Their heads strain towards each other, fail to meet, fall apart again.] (99)

Here the needs of the body are denied and hence any form of intimate relationship with each other. “Their talk of kissing and loving is a measure of the never-dying pagan urge for life within man” (Chaman 62). Sex and the erotic requirements of both Nagg and Nell are suppressed, which means that they are denied complete bodily existence. They exist on the pap and painkillers offered to them, but they are restricted from experiencing the
deepest urges of the body. Similarly the entrapment of Winnie and Willie too suggests a situation as that of Nagg and Nell. The depiction of their bodies speaks of the fact of alienation, distanced from society and detached from any form of relationship both human and physical. These bodies thus indicate alienation from the world and from the body. The isolation of A and B in Act Without Words II also signifies the same fact. Just as Krapp lives his life confined in his den and detached from the world, so does A and B live caged in their sack. They have no external activities other than their daily routine of changing clothes, eating carrots, consuming pills and praying. When this is done they crawl back into the sack and lie still.

Tracing the presentation of Beckett's bodies from Vladimir and Estragon in Waiting for Godot to Bam and Bem in What Where, we find that a majority of them have severed themselves from their sexual life. They are not dedicated family people since not much mention is made of deep family ties. Men do not speak of women in their lives nor do women speak of their love for men. Dejected and depressed, they seem to have lost belief in
relationships and hence by choice lead isolated lives. But the adverse effect of such isolated existence is a set of morose characters and drained out bodies. Beckett's presentation of the bodies in this manner is to emphasize the importance of the body and of the life of the body. One does not achieve intellectual perfection or spiritual enlightenment by leading isolated lives; rather it leaves one neurotic and disillusioned. As Naomi R. Goldenberg observes,

We need to shrink from theories that foster contempt for physical life. . . . we have become a species which spends approximately half of our collective energy and resources in devising our own destruction. . . . we must immerse ourselves in theories that support life. (173)

There seems to be no women in the lives of Vladimir and Estragon, they seem to be lost and confused characters with no definite plans about the future. They have nowhere to go, no woman waiting in the hearth of their homes and hence they seek solace in each other's company. The same is the case with Hamm who appears to have lost faith in relationships and life. He leads a frustrated and
lonely existence and shouts at the cause of his existence, that is, to Nagg, "Why did you engender me?" This outrageous question expresses his distrust of love and sexual relationship, which leads to procreation. Therefore he alienates himself from such activities. Michael Robinson comments that,

Beckett’s heroes not only believe love to be all too inadequate a substitute for the totality lost with God but are aware that love also leads to copulation and the birth of more suffering. Love therefore is the most revolting and sinful of human activities.

(28)

Most of Beckett’s characters adhere to this concept which is evident from their bodies.

The isolated existence of A and B in Rough for Theatre I also portrays their detachment from the world and of their estrangement from people and society. It may be an inevitable fact that they are victims of the cruelties of life and lead disillusioned lives out of their bitter and painful experiences. But they do not seem to recover from it and make the best of their lives but live doomed to their fate. B speaks to A:
We had our woman, hadn't we? You yours to lead you by the hand I mine to get me out of the chair in the evening and back into it again in the morning and to push me as far the corner when I went out of my mind. (228)

Apart from their bodies signifying their isolated existence, their words too attest to this fact. Their bodies are thus representatives of their mental and emotional state of mind. The dishevelled appearance of May in Footfalls in her wornout long grey garment and the "prematurely old" appearance of the Woman in Rockaby leading a secluded life are connotative of their alienation and detachment from physical life.

It can be observed that all the characters merely exist and don't live their lives. Their bodies reflect this stagnant condition. Their weary and worn out bodies mirror their soul or their self, which is sunk deep in the perception of meaninglessness of existence. Either the deepest urges of their body are suppressed by the intervention of external forces or the characters themselves deny these to their bodies from their own experiences or out of their failure to find meaning in them. This "denial of the body,"
according to Sally Alexander, is “part of a wider denial of ourselves” (72). Isolated, lonely, weary and worn out, their bodies thus become reflective of their impotent existence. Such impotent existence always dooms the life of the body and paves the way for its gradual extinction. As Naomi R. Goldenberg observes, “we are gradually killing ourselves by becoming increasingly detached from our own bodies” (77). By losing touch with one’s physicality we lose touch with its potential for life and for the joys of life. Thus a lifeless, inactive and languid body always represents the state of mind of the character.

The bodies on the stage also mirror a picture of the society in which they live. Lonely and isolated characters, confined within the four walls of the room with no interaction with human beings, speak of the non-existence of a family. We gather from what we perceive that the institution of family has disintegrated and even if the characters exist as husband and wife, as in the case of Willie and Winnie, there seems to be no thought to raise a family of their own. And any mention of birth and offspring is contemptuously ignored. Winnie recoils and gives a shrill cry when she sees
the emmet with its eggs. Perpetuation of the species seems to be a horrifying fact to her, she restrains herself from it and hopes that procreation does not take place among all organisms. "What a blessing nothing grows," she says. "Imagine if all this stuff were to start growing" (152). The recurrent portrayal of bodies in a similar manner discloses Beckett's obsession in manifesting this theme on stage. No room on Beckett's stage feels like a home. It is always "bare interiors," "ruins" and "dens," "dustbins" and "urns" and "sacks" in lieu of the comfort of a home. The idea of a home and of family has completely vanished from his stage and the images of isolation, sterility, death and barrenness pervade. The ghost-like appearance of the Beckettians with dishevelled and unkempt hair is also reflective of their disinterestedness in life in general. Their alienation is complete and absolute. Men and women seem to have rejected conventional marriage and the roles of motherhood and fatherhood. Vladimir, Estragon, Pozzo and Lucky do not have the companionship of a woman nor the warmth of a home. Vladimir's enquiry as to where
Estragon spent the night, has him reply, "In a ditch."

VLADIMIR: May one inquire where His Highness spent the night?

ESTRAGON: In a ditch. (11)

The shabby appearance of Vladimir and Estragon in rags and ill-fitting trousers and also their aimlessness is also reflective of their mental state. They do not play the role assigned to them by nature or as is expected of conventional standards by society but deviate from it and lead isolated lives. This could be interpreted as an establishment of the fact that they have lost faith in such institutions and even in basic man-woman relationships and love. They seem to be living with the sole aim of waiting for the end and do not cherish any hope of living their life. Thus there are no children in Beckett's world and the characters do not reproduce. Life, birth and regeneration are horrifying facts to them. Hamm gets very desperate at the information that a fly exists.

CLOV: [Anguished, scratching himself.] I have a flea!

HAMM: A flea! Are there still fleas?
CLOV: On me there's one. [Scratching.] Unless it's a crablouse.

HAMM: [Very perturbed.] But humanity might start from there all over again! Catch him for the love of God! (108)

This expresses his hatred for life and horror at the thought of the continuation of the species. His attitude towards human life is also similar. He hates the fact of his birth and he calls his father "Accursed progenitor" (96). This connotes another fact that he himself would not continue the task of procreation. Lalitha Ramakrishana makes an apt observation:

Beckett's characters die without reproducing themselves. Perpetuation of the species is considered one of the Almighty's poorer jokes. (17)

Since both culminate in death and the interval between the two is an endless stretch of sorrow and misery, they consider the process of generating life as meaningless. Perhaps according to them birth which promises nothing other than an extension of the chain of sorrow had better not happen and be stopped forever. And it could be this recognition that has alienated them from the bonds
of family. Their lonely and isolated bodies on stage bear witness to this fact.

Aspects of alienation from family and the disintegration of family are captured in images of loneliness and isolation as that of the men in Act Without Words I and Act Without Words II. An identical phenomenon is observed in the case of Krapp, May and the woman in Rockaby. There is no evidence on stage or in their dialogue and monologue that they have families of their own; rather we comprehend from their appearance and from their isolation that they have detached themselves from humankind. Either they remain alone brooding over their own misery, suffering and pain; or they are steeped in their personal tensions, as May in Footfalls and the woman in Rockaby; or even if there existed an attachment as is the case with Krapp, they disentangle themselves from it with no goals of a family. Beckett's focus is thus mainly on the theme of alienation, and the isolated existence of the characters in a wasteland-like setting indicates this theme.

Thus on Beckettland the spectator is faced with a denial of life and not an affirmation of it. The natural urges and the deepest impulses of the body
are suppressed and the Beckettians prepare and tune their life for the end and do not respond or incline themselves to a normal living. The ultimate outcome of such mechanical existence is a destruction of life. Sexuality and celebration of the erotic in married life does not occur on Beckett's stage. The denial of this most important physical aspect of a man's life reflects on their lifeless bodily appearance. In celebrating the erotic all our work, action and endeavours become a conscious attempt at attaining success, whereas when we live away from our body and deny its sexual needs, this affects the body psychologically and is projected in external appearance. As Audre Lorde observes,

When we live outside ourselves. . . . when we live away from those erotic guides from within ourselves, then our lives are limited by external and alien forms, and we conform to the needs of a structure that is not based on human needs let alone an individuals. But when we begin to live from within outward, in touch with the power of the erotic within ourselves, and allowing that power to inform and illuminate our actions upon the world
around us, then we begin to be responsible to ourselves in the deepest sense. For as we begin to recognize our deepest feelings, we begin to give up of necessity, being dissatisfied with suffering and self-negation and with the numbness which so often seems like their only alternative in our society. . . . In touch with the erotic (I) becomes less willing to accept powerlessness, or those other supplied states of being. . . . such as resignation, despair, self effacement, depression, self denial. (De Lamotte 100)

Beckett's bodies starved of their deepest physical needs are reflective of their emotional condition.

If the lonely and isolated bodies on Beckett's stage signify the disintegration of family and alienation of the body from its physical life and also from the society at large, it also portents the downfall of patriarchy. Man occupied a dominant position under patriarchy and had women under his control and authority. He was the master of his home, the deciding authority and he commanded respect. He partook in social activities from which women were exempted. Physically, he was stronger than the female and intellectually too he was
considered superior when compared to them. The dualistic tradition of Western philosophy had established the superiority of the mind or soul over the body. The body was considered inferior and was devalued. Man was associated with intellect and woman with the body and since the body was perceived as base and inferior women too were subdued and suppressed. Thus under patriarchy man reigned supreme, both in society and at home. He associated himself more with intellectual activities and physically too he was the stronger. But on Beckett’s stage there is a complete reversal of this concept of patriarchy. Man’s erstwhile glory and grandeur has vanished and the authoritarian dictatorial status that he had acquired for himself no longer exists. Instead, what we perceive on stage is a mockery of man. He appears clownish and undignified with his “strut” and “staggering” and with ill-fitting clothes. He no longer commands and controls and no longer exercises the powers he once had under the dictates of Western philosophical tradition, but we find him a mute victim of the changes of society. The scene resembles one where the sexual revolution has uprooted the long established norms of patriarchy.
Man no longer occupies a central position; rather he appears lost, confused and struggling to survive in his loneliness. The best example of such a situation is the case of Willie and Winnie. As against the normal, natural phenomenon of the male occupation of the central position here it is the woman who dominates the scene. Willie is assigned a secondary place and appears the weaker mentally, physically and intellectually. The myth of genesis is rewritten here. Ideas and practices relating to male supremacy are reversed and we have Winnie in the commanding position. She orders him about his routine and he responds very obediently.

WINNIE: Go back into your hole now, Willie, you've exposed yourself enough. [Pause.] Do as I say, Willie, don't lie sprawling there in this hellish sun, go back into your hole. [Pause.] Go on now, Willie. [WILLIE invisible starts scrawling left towards hole.] That's the man. [She follows his progress with her eyes.] Not head first stupid, how are you going to turn? [Pause.](147)

The concept of the dominance of men in patriarchy, we observe, has disappeared from the scene. In the other plays the reversal of roles is not as
blatant, but Beckett illustrates this theme through the lonely and isolated existence of his characters. There are no women in their lives for the establishment of their dictatorial reign. Either women have estranged themselves completely from him, or he has detached himself from any form of relationship with them because of their liberation and the sexual, economic and political freedom that they inherited as a result of it. Such things are only hinted at in the play, never enacted or embodied. Man seems to retreat from the scene where the sexual revolution has placed its stamp and seeks refuge in the company of males. This is a commonly observable phenomenon in most of Beckett's plays. Vladimir and Estragon seek solace from their lonely life in each other's companionship. Vladimir is very emotional and warm-hearted towards his friend and embraces him often as a sign of their affection.

VLADIMIR: Together again at last! We'll have to celebrate this. But how? [He reflects.]

Get up till I embrace you. (11)

Later in the scene on occasion when Vladimir is cross with him he softens as would a woman and soothens the scene.

Their actions are more expressive of feminine traits. Devoid of the warmth and companionship of a woman they seek male company and friendship. These are indications of the after effects of the sexual revolution, which has also led to the downfall of patriarchy.

Among the Beckettians Pozzo is the only one who is aggressive and pompous, displaying traits of the aristocratic class. He domineers over the abject Lucky whom he addresses as "Pig" and "Hog." But towards the end of the play considerable changes take place and Pozzo becomes blind. He is no longer self-assertive and domineering but is led by his slave Lucky. Thus he too becomes one among the Beckettians. Hamm in *Endgame* predominates the scene as is indicated from the fact that he has everybody under his control by his tyrannical nature. He is
not a patriarch since he is neither a husband nor a father. But the fact that his supremacy is under threat bothers him deeply as his actions and words foretell. He orders Clov to place his chair in which he is seated right at the centre of the room after his round. It is an attempt to make sure that he does not lose his position or to maintain his stature.

HAMM: Take me for a little turn. [CLOV sees behind the chair and pushes it forward.] Not too fast! [CLOV pushes chair.] Right round the world! [CLOV pushes chair.] Hug the walls, then back to the centre again. [CLOV pushes chair.] I was right in the centre, wasn't I?

CLOV: [Pushing] Yes.

... HAMM: Back to my place! [CLOV pushes chair back to centre] Is that my place?

CLOV: Yes that's your place.

HAMM: Am I right in the centre.

CLOV: I'll measure it.

...

HAMM: I'm more or less in the centre?

CLOV: I'd say so.
HAMM: You'd say so! Put me right in the centre! (105)

Later in the scene where Clov hands him a black toy dog, Hamm insists on the dog being placed in such a position that it might appear to implore him. HAMM: "leave him like that, standing there imploring me" (12). This is his way of deriving psychological satisfaction from an illusion of God-like importance. And his hugging the dog and fondling it is, as Pierre Chabert interprets, "A substitute for a human relationship." (28)

The distressing situation of A and B in Rough for Theatre I also attests to the fact of the lost status of man. Man appears a "poor bare-forked animal" discarded as rubbish among the ruins of history. Both A and B, one blind and the other lame, lead an isolated existence. We gather from what they say that they had their women but were deserted by them. The economic and sexual independence woman attained from the liberation movement has left its mark on man. Woman no longer seems to be the submissive and subdued woman she once was. She has overthrown man from his self-built authoritaria position and he seems to be groping in the dark, seeking companionship among
his own gender. It was through woman that man sought self-realization. As Simone De Beauvoir observes,

He hopes to fulfil himself as a being by carnally possessing a being, but at the same time confirming his sense of freedom through the docility of a free person. . . . Appearing as the other, woman appears at the same time as an abundance of being in contrast to that existence the nothingness of which man senses in himself. . . . In woman is incarnated in positive form the lack that the existent carries in his heart, and it is in seeking to be made whole through her that man hopes to attain self realization. (159).

The woman in Rough for Theatre I is not the meek and humble woman of the past, accepting suffering and misery, and the miserable family life as fated to her. Dora, A's wife, boldly walks out of his life to fresh pastures, unable to reconcile to her life with him.

A: What peace! [B pushes him roughly away, A falls to his hands and knees.] Dora used to say, the days I hadn't earned enough, You and your harp! You'd do better crawling on all
fours, with your father’s medals pinned to your arse and a money box round your neck. You and your harp! Who do you think you are? And she made me sleep on the floor. (233)

Dora mocks and insults A and walks out of his life. B too has his own tales of woe and they seek the companionship of each other. B hopes to make a good life together with A, each helping the other. B says, “If you ask me, we were made for each other.” Later he asks A, “Are you beginning to like me?”. All these are pointers towards the downfall of patriarchy and the supremacy of man. He is no longer the controller, but is either controlled or contemptuously ignored. He appears a buffoon or a clown, begging and imploring rather than dictating or commanding. *Act Without Words I* makes a mockery of man’s sense of superiority. The once great patriarch, the most supreme of all creations, the commander and the ruler, and all the great and powerful things which marked him as man, whoever he was, is now flung on stage like a worthless bundle. He is stripped of all his dignity and is reduced to the state of a puppet. So too are the characters in *Act Without Words II*. Both A and B seek refuge within sacks and are forced into their daily
routine by a goad. The lost dignity of man is brilliantly captured through this illustration. Thus the ludicrous depiction of the characters reflects on one angle the downfall of patriarchy and it also mirrors their dejected souls.

A retrospect in time to the history of the body and of the reverence for woman and the power of her flesh establishes the importance of the body of women. Body theories grew up within its framework. Joseph Bristow in Sexuality states:

If. . . . women are denied access to types of mental labour, then they will weaken humanity. It is on this issue that Schreiner's evolutionary precepts come into their own: It is the woman who is the final standard of the race, from which there can be no departure for any distance for any length of time, in any direction: as her brain weakens, weakens the man she bears: as her muscle softens, softens his, as she decays, decays the people [Schreiner 1911:109].(49)

The status of women in society thus has its impact on the members she procreates. The power which emanates from her flesh has the capacity to
generate or destroy. An analysis of Beckett's women reveals a similar aspect of the body. Linda Ben Zvi comments that,

By count women dominate the Beckett stage. In the stage plays from *Happy days* on there are ten women, eight men and in *What Where* five of indeterminate sex, designated "he" but bearing no other visual mark of gender. More significant than their numbers, however, is the power of their depiction. With the sensitive eye of a painter, Beckett creates portraits of women that go beyond simple gender identification. His women are among the most arresting and powerful that a dramatist — particularly a male dramatist — has ever sketched. (xii)

The images which come alive on stage are those of Winnie in *Happy Days* gradually sinking into her mound and engaged in her daily routine; the trio in *Come and Go* stepping in and out of the unlit darkness, marking with their movements the steps from youth to age; the lonely walker in *Footfalls*, the aged rocker in *Rockaby* and the most grotesque image of all, the Mouth in *Not I* spewing the words of her fragmented life. The world of all these
characters, we learn, is in the process of decay and disintegration as the characters themselves. This elucidates Schreiner's statement: "as she decays, decays the people." Thus the distorted depiction of the body of women on stage mirrors the condition of the society or family to which she belongs. It also makes evident the fact that it is only through proper and normal man-woman relationships that life can be made fulfilling. A lack of this or a deviation from the conventional path always leads to frustration and disillusionment. Beckett's women on stage represent this fact.

Alienation from family and the absence of any strong man-woman relationship highlight various other aspects of Beckett's theatre. The absence of a conventional family and the normal relationship between husband and wife and the horrifying expression of the characters towards the idea of procreation highlight the absence of sex and sexuality in Beckett's world. This factor magnifies the relationship between his male characters and also their obsession with various other objects like bananas and carrots. In a majority of the plays where more than one character is staged there
is more intimacy in man-man relationships than man-woman relationships. Vladimir and Estragon are very affectionate and caring towards each other and very often express this physically.

VLADIMIR: Together again at last! We’ll have to celebrate this. But how? [He reflects.] Get up till I embrace you.

ESTRAGON: [Irritatedly.] Not now, not now. (11)

Later,

ESTRAGON: Come, Didi. [Silence.] Give me your hand. [VLADIMIR half turns.] Embrace me! [VLADIMIR stiffens.] Don’t be stubborn! [Vladimir softens. They embrace.] (18)

Another passionate moment between them is after another argument:

VLADIMIR: Did I ever leave you?

ESTRAGON: You let me go.

VLADIMIR: Look at me. [ESTRAGON does not raise his head. Violently] will you look at me!

[ESTRAGON raises his head. They look long at each other, then suddenly embrace, clapping each other on the back. End of embrace.]
ESTRAGON, no longer supported, almost falls.] (54)

In *Endgame* despite the tiff between Hamm and Clov throughout the play, Hamm express an urge to be kissed by Clov.

HAMM: Kiss me. [Pause.] Will you not kiss me?

CLOV: No.

HAMM: On the forehead.

CLOV: I won't kiss you anywhere.

[Pause.]

HAMM: [Holding out his hand.]. Give me your hand at least. [Pause.] Will you not give me your hand?

CLOV: I won't touch you. (125)

These are indications of a very intimate relationship that existed once and of Hamm's attempt to renew it. A and B in *Rough for Theatre I* have been deserted by their women and B tries to establish a good relationship between them so that they would help each other and live together. B says to A: "If you ask me we were made for each other" (229). Later he asks A "Are you beginning to like me" (230). Love and intimacy are seen to sprout more strongly in man-man relationship than man-woman relationship.
The sexual pre-occupation of the characters is also indicated by Krapp's addiction to bananas and Estragon's obsession with carrots. Carrots and bananas can be seen as substitute erotic objects.

ESTRAGON: [He looks at the carrot appreciatively, dangles it between fingers and thumb.] I'll never forget this carrot. [He sucks the end of it meditatively.]{21} 

Krapp's addiction to bananas and his playfulness with it also denote the same fact. As the curtain rises he is observed fumbling in the drawers and in his pocket and finally he

Unlocks second drawer, peers into it, feels about inside it, takes out a large banana, peers at it, locks drawer, puts key back in his pocket. He turns, advances to edge to stage, halts, strokes banana, peels it, drops skin at his feet, pushes end of banana in his mouth and remains motionless, staring vacuously before him. Finally he bites off the end . . . meditatively eating banana . . . He resumes his pacing . . . unlocks second drawer, takes out a second large banana peers at it, locks drawer . . . halts, strokes banana, peels it, tosses skin into pit, puts
end of banana in his mouth and remains motionless, staring vacuously before him . . . Finally he has an idea, puts banana in his waist coat pocket, the end emerging and goes with all the speed he can muster backstage into darkness. (215-216)

This obsession with bananas is sexually symbolic. The banana as penis is the substitute erotic object. This draws comparison with a passage quoted by Maurice Charney in Sexual Fiction. Here in the chapter titled "Erotic Sainthood and the Search for Self-annihilation: Story of O and the Image" Charney quotes a passage, which is sexually symbolic.

Ann held her right hand out toward the half-opened flower. Very gently she ran her fingertips around the outer edges of the petals, partly closed, barely touching their tender pink flesh. (32)

Maurice Charney states that the rose as vulva becomes the erotic art object. Similarly the bananas and carrots are the erotic objects for Estragon and Krapp and imply their homosexual inclination. Thus the intimate man-man relationship and the man's obsession with male erotic objects,
apart from testifying their sexual preference, also exemplify the fact of their disillusionment and of their distress of conventional man-woman relationships.

The physical appearance of the characters — their made-up face and body — is reflective of their struggle against Time. It is suggestive of their longing to keep themselves young and attractive and it also speaks of their fear of time, which ruins their beautiful skin. Winnie’s investment in physical appearance is indicative of this fact.

WINNIE: [Turns to bag, rummages in it, brings out lipstick, turns back front, examines lipstick.] running out. [Looks for spectacles.] Ah well. [Puts on spectacles, looks for mirror.] Mustn’t complain. [Takes up mirror starts doing lips.] (141)

Later:

WINNIE: [Pause. Smile appears, broadens and seems about to culminate in laugh when suddenly replaced by expression of anxiety.] My hair! [Pause.] Did I brush and comb my hair? [Pause.] (145)
Winnie's attempt to preserve her youth and beauty and to keep herself sexually attractive mirrors the side of her personality which is optimistic and which looks forward to an ever youthful life despite the work of time. Simone De Beauvoir makes this observation:

Keeping attractive implies — like the upkeep of a home — a struggle against duration: for her body is also an object that deteriorates with time . . . . They endeavour to preserve themselves as others preserve furniture or canned food . . . . (596-597).

Investing in appearance is an attempt to remain ever fresh, ever young and ever alive. It expresses man's attachment to that which is worldly and his desire to remain on the earth and be an object of desire. Linda Ben Zvi comments:

Time has been constructed as woman's particular enemy — that which robs her of youth, beauty and sexual attractiveness . . . Holding up her mirror to put on her lipstick, Winnie asks, "What is that wonderful line? Oh fleeting joys — oh something lasting woe" (274). The image of the woman holding the mirror to her face is all too familiarly
female. Does she hold the mirror to confirm that she is still the "fairest of them all" as the wicked queen asked her mirror? Is it to determine whether telltale signs of ageing have disappeared after a good night sleep! Is it to see whether the process of deterioration has worsened since yesterday? Is it to confirm that she is still alive?

Thus Winnie's self-adornment and beautification of her face and body and her constant observation of herself in the mirror communicate to the spectator her endeavour to preserve her youth and beauty to maintain her image and also of her struggle against the claws of time which lays its mark on the body and from whose clutches nobody escapes.

Other than representing the fact of alienation from oneself, from society and family and of the downfall of patriarchy, the physically degenerated, paralyzed and diseased bodies on stage are also illustrative of various other aspects of life. As has been observed earlier, a majority of Beckett's bodies are physically handicapped bodies, imprisoned in dustbins, or urns and sacks, wasting,
shrinking and dwindling on the face of the earth. These could be the consequence of the cruelties of time and ageing. But what is Beckett trying to convey through such depiction throughout all his plays? The body becomes the text on stage, the signifier of meaning. Deboarah R. Geis in "Wordscapes of the Body: Performative Language as Gestus," a reading of Maria Irene Fornes's plays, comments thus on Julia's paralysis:

She is at once unable to resist and to acquire, and her paralysis between the two is reflected in the physical paralysis which confines her to a wheelchair. To some extent, Julia's condition is a representation of the oppression suffered by all of the women in the play; in this sense her paralysis has a gestic quality. (Keyssar 174)

Similarly the physical paralysis of the characters in Endgame is also reflective. Hamm, Clov, Nagg and Nell are all handicapped in one way or the other and are victims in a world which is nearing its end. Their physical deformity leaves them immobile. Their physical deformity mirrors their disillusioned souls trapped in the world, suffering the curse of having been born.
Michael Robinson states: "It is a unique, a terrifying insight into the loveless of the human world at the close of its career" (261). The confinement of the disabled Nagg and Nell in dustbins betokens the loss of filial gratitude in a degenerating world. The cruel and tyrannical nature of Hamm is made evident.

Entrapment in urns and confinement in mounds is seen in Play and Happy Days. The message that Beckett tries to convey is the same as that of Endgame revealing the disillusioned souls of the characters. The Irish painter Francis Bacon has said that it is only by "smudging the image" (Kroker and Kroker 23) that we can capture the essence. Beckett distorts the physical image of his characters to capture the slow physical decay of the bodies and he simultaneously captures the breakdown of their inner self or soul. In Play the faces are "lost to age and aspect as to seem almost part of urns" (307). Winnie's teeth are also in the process of decay.

WINNIE: [Inspects teeth in mirror] — poor, dear Willie — [testing upper front teeth with thumb, indistinctly] — good Lord! — [pulling back upper lip to inspect gums, do.]
— good God! — [pulling back corner of mouth, mouth open, do.] — ah well — [other corner, do.] — no worse — [abandons inspection, normal speech] — no better, no worse — [lays down mirror] — no change. (139)

So too is Krapp, a “Wearish old man” with “disordered grey hair,” “very near-sighted”, “hard of hearing,” with a “cracked voice” and “laborious walk.” Nagg has also lost tooth and is nearing blindness. He declares: “I’ve lost my tooth” (99), and later: “Our sight has failed.” Pozzo in Waiting for Godot turns blind at the beginning of Act II. In Rough for Theatre I A is blind. Thus as the curtains rise on each of Beckett’s play we observe that there is not a single complete human being, either it is a fragment of the body that he presents or if ever the body is revealed completely it is handicapped in some way or the other. Each of these fragmented and decreased bodies symbolize ageing and the process of gradual extinction. As Stravinsky once described it, ageing is “the ever shrinking perimeter of pleasure” (Scarry 32). Yes, there is no joy, happiness or pleasure in Beckett’s world, everything shrinks and dwindles to extinction. And the physical condition of the
bodies is a manifestation of the soul, which is disillusioned and suffers gradual extinction. The mother in Footfalls is on the verge of death. She is helpless physically and cannot survive without another's help. So is the woman in Rockaby. "Prematurely old . . . white hands holding ends of armrest." The speaker in A piece of Monologue has white hair, so also do the Listener and Reader in Ohio Impromptu. These are all signs of ageing and decay and disintegration in body, which infers the soul. The body and the soul are not separate entities here but each a manifestation of the other. Beckett's theatre is from the Descartesian philosophy of the separation of body and soul and assigning it complete separate existence. Beckett affirms the life of the body and of the soul in parallel existence. Steven Connor elaborates:

The affirmation of the body in the theatre has a self-reflexive dimension as well. For the drama doesn't merely present bodies on stage; rather the metaphor of body and soul is what constitutes and sustains the drama, even calls it into being. (159)

Thus the dismembered and fragmented bodies on Beckett's stage essay the state of the soul which
is also equally shattered through its experiences in life, the pain of rejection from loved ones, the bitter experiences of living life with all its misery and suffering and the frustration that results from the failure to live life in its wholeness. Beckett's bodies thus mirror the soul of the person on stage.

Another important aspect that the distorted and fragmented bodies represent is the fact of pain, both physical and emotional. Apart from reflecting the fact of the alienation of the body from oneself, from society and from family, the downfall of patriarchy and the struggle to preserve the body against time, the body deformed and dilapidated, voices the intense pain of the subject — the pain of loneliness, the pain caused by age, sickness and disease, the pain of torture and victimization, the pain of one's estrangement from family and the disillusionment that seeps in as a result and the confrontation with the horrifying fact of an isolated existence in the world. An intense physical and emotional experience of pain always leaves the subject in a state of inexpressibility. It destroys his capacity to express or describe and he remains silent and mute. At this juncture his
body mirrors his experience. This bodily expression becomes more powerful than words. Elain Scarry observes that "pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it" (32), leaving the subject silent at the point of inexpressibility. And Beckett's chronic obsession is how to express the inexpressible. For this he finds the conventional stage techniques inadequate and adopts his own methods to bring out the essence.

Finding the traditional media unhelpful in this exercise he had to undo the straitjacket of tradition by divorcing plot from character, character from dialogue, dialogue from words, words from gestures, gestures from action, action from significance and so on. Normally these things go together because they supplement one another. (Chaman 90)

But Beckett reworked the elements of theatre to concentrate on some of them.

Thus in certain plays he has used pure narrators, ... such plays have words without action. On the other hand, in some plays we have pure actors whose whole being is contained in the act of acting with the help of very few words. The underlying idea was
that if language was inadequate or redundant, it should be dispensed with completely so that the essence of man could be perceived intuitively rather than cognitively. (Chaman 90)

Thus he introduces mime on stage to express the pain of the tragic life of the protagonists in Act Without Words I and Act Without Words II. By facilitating minimalism and reductionism, the pantomime epitomizes the essence of human condition. No words could better express the tragic plight of the tramp in Act Without Words I than his clowning. The pain at being a helpless victim of the powers of nature or of man itself is depicted here. The man is flung on stage from which ever side he tries to escape, later confronted with various tantalizing situations and makes a baffoon of him in the end. The pain of mockery and humiliation which is inexpressible through words is revealed by his actions and by the fact that towards the end he lies immobilized exposing himself to whatever more is to torture him.

Act Without Words II is also an exploration of silence. Silence which is more powerful than words expresses the despair of A and B forced to act at
the instigation of a goad which would be any external force which has them under control. Intense pain, which crosses the limits of all language, echoes through the power of silence. Thus bodily actions and silence reflect the pain of the protagonist.

Breath is another powerful play on the subject of pain. Beckett dispenses all dramatic elements and hence there are no actors and no words, only the cry on stage, which conveys Beckett's constant obsession. A cry accompanied by inspiration is followed by another cry accompanying expiration. Chaman Ahuja says that the first cry is possibly an echo of Lear's exclamation. "When we are born we cry that we are come to this great stage of fools" (Shakespeare 99). And the second cry could possibly be a signification of an individual's sorrow at his departure from the world. The cries signify the fact that man is reluctant to come into the world from the safety of his mother's womb as much as he is hesitant to re-enter the darkness of non-being, which follows death. Life is a stretch of intense sorrow, pain and misery from birth to death, of which the individual has no choice but to live the life imposed on him. The stage is littered "with
miscellaneous rubbish" indicating the ruin and destruction of the world. As Elaine Scarry says,

It is the intense pain that destroys a person's self and world, a destruction experienced spatially as... the contraction of the universe down to the immediate vicinity of the body... Intense pain is also language destroying: as the content of one's world disintegrates, so the content of one's language disintegrates; as the self disintegrates, so that which would express and project the self is robbed of its source and its subject. (35)

The cry on stage indicates the pain experienced by the subject. Pain thus not only resists language but destroys it and brings about a reversion to a state opposed to language, that is, to the sounds and cry a human being makes before language is learned.

Apart from these plays which are absolutely deprived of speech, silences and pauses alternate the dialogues or monologues in the other plays. Though pain pervades the entire body of Beckett's works it transcends normal speech in its expressibility and fails verbal depiction. Hence
silences or pauses are contained at the point of inexpressibility or disillusionment. And we feel the emotional and physical pain of the characters through silence and bodily experience. Pain caused by the decay of age is revealed through their "laborious walk" as that of Krapp, the crawl of Willie, or the immobility of the crippled characters in Endgame. Blindness, which is a major handicap since it leaves one at the mercy of others for survival, is another cause of emotional pain. Pozzo is blind so is Hamm and A in Rough for Theatre I, Winnie is nearing blindness and so is Krapp. B in Rough for Theatre II is crippled and is confined to a wheelchair. Suffering, pain and anguish pervade the conversation between May and her mother in Footfalls, and May's silent pacing up and down reveals her mental turmoil. Lucky's sagging posture and silence creates the appearance of one tormented and suffering. Thus the entire body of Beckett's work is an exploration of the subject of pain.

The strategies of representation deployed in Beckett, thus, shatter the dualistic view of body and soul and exemplify the theory that the body mirrors the soul or mind. The distorted, crippled,
weary and worn-out bodies reflect the disillusioned, distressed and frustrated mind of the characters.