Great writers leave us not just their works but a way of looking at things.

— Elizabeth Janeway.

A significant and influential literary figure of the twentieth century, Samuel Beckett's fame is moving into the twenty-first century with his works being interpreted within the structure of contemporary theories. The probability of such an interpretation does not limit him as primarily a writer of the theatre of the absurd but secures for him a place in the contemporary theoretical scenario. The relevance of his works, it can be concluded, lies not just for his age but has equal or more importance even after his death. He has left us with his works, which portray the problems of the present-day man.

Beckett's bodies offer an insight into the state of life on this planet. The analysis of his bodies within the context of contemporary theoretical formulations — feminist,
psychoanalytic and post-colonial — privileges the body over the spirit or soul. Conventional criticism had devalued the body while mind or soul was considered as more permanent, more noble and closer to the sphere of divinity. In lieu of such formulations Beckett's critics too viewed his bodies as insignificant, symbolizing the fact of the nothingness and meaninglessness of existence. This was in keeping with the existential philosophy. But a rereading of Beckett according to the contemporary line of thinking has revealed the prominence of the body. Adhering to the technique of minimalism and negation, Beckett has attempted to give the body its full weight and significance. Through the process of annihilation and reductionism he does not debase the body and consider it as a mere material object that houses the soul, but he highlights the importance of the body and the need to live in the life of the body. It had been stated by earlier Beckett critics that his bodies emerge as a thing less valued, but a study of them in the light of the works of return-to-body theorists has illuminated its prominence for man in this earthly life.
A retrospect into the history of the body from the historic times to the present has disclosed a cyclic change in attitude towards the body. From the body-centered religion of the Paleolithic and Neolithic age there was a shift to the soul and its superior position during the period of Socrates. This fluctuation in attitude kept recurring through the centuries influenced by socio-political changes in society. In conventional theory and criticism the concept of the body was always formed in opposition to that of the mind or soul. And a survey into the contemporary scene showed a major endeavour to rejuvenate the body from its dismantled past. The body emerged as the recurrent theme in writing, poetry and the arts and one observes a celebration of the body in every field of art.

A superficial observation of Beckett's bodies and a statement that his bodies adhere to the theories of contemporary body theorists raises important questions as to how can the crippled, deformed and decaying bodies be representative of the concept of rejuvenated bodies of the twentieth century. But it has been critically deduced that through the technique of negation, he has
highlighted the negative factors of life and what it can do to the body, thereby laying emphasis on the idea that giving importance to the physical, emotional and psychological needs of the body is an essential factor in one's life on earth. Neglecting any one aspect of the body — physical, sexual, emotional, psychological or intellectual — would signal the death of the body. Krapp, Hamm, Clov, Willie and Winnie are all symbols of failures, caused by the failure to live in the life of the body. Apart from these the cherishing of moral and social values — the failure of which is an indirect game on the body of one's fellow being — is also emphasized. The cruelties of Pozzo, the dictatorial nature of the Director (D), the inhumaness of the goad in 'Rough for Theatre II', the loss of filial gratitude in Hamm and the sexual immorality between W1, M1 and W2 are symbolic.

Objectification is evident on his stage in victimization, in psychological oppression, in fragmentation and in sexual objectification. An observation of the existence of these ills in the Beckettian world illustrates the degeneracy that the world has been plagued with and also the disintegration of the concept of man as a social
being. The disintegration of values in society and of the break-up of basic human relationships channel the spectator's mind towards the fact of the mental framework of the people and also denote the downfall of that culture and civilization. A step by step analysis of the degraded body thus leads to this conclusion: Body → self → culture. Body as mirror of the self and self as bearing a mark of the culture. The presentation of the body thus reflects the state of mind of the characters and this in turn reflects the cultural background of the society.

The body on Beckett's stage is the most powerful medium and does not signify nothingness and meaninglessness in its distorted form; rather it conveys the message of the urgent need to revive the body — the life of the body and the socio-cultural values which determine its wholesome existence and thereby ascertain the survival of the society. In this sense his plays have a universal appeal not limiting its influence to a particular period in history or to a specific movement in literature. His bizzare creations symbolise a truly degenerated world devoid of meaning where nothing means anything to anyone anymore. Such a
presentation of the existing state of affairs, termed as "satirical magnification" by Martin Esslin (360), illustrates a deeper realization of the world that is in its gradual decline and the need for bringing about a change on which rests the future of the world.

Pierre Chabert states that "In Beckett's theatre, the body is the object of an exploitation and a dramatization in theoretical history" (28). Indeed it is an innovative technique devised by Beckett an exploitation and a dramatization of the body conveying a message to the world which speaks volumes against the minimizing of all stage props and the dialogue. Beckett's bodies are not the '0' signifying nothingness but the '0' which contains all.