CHAPTER II

THE OBJECTIFIED BODY

What a chimera then is man! What a novelty! What a monster, what a chaos, what a contradiction, what a prodigy! Judge of all things, imbecile worm of the earth; depository of truth, a sink of uncertainty and error; the pride and refuse of the universe!

— Pascal

Samuel Beckett's theatre is peopled by characters who testify to this statement. His theatre is not dominated by great heroes of history or heroines of yore, or great personalities of the world; instead one encounters characters who are apparently mere puppets, or victims of the universe, of nature and of man. Man is not in control of his destiny, he is a victim of time and also a victim of man's brutalities to man.
Beckett's characters are not vibrant and enthusiastic, vigorous and active participants of life, but weak and deteriorating in health, body and mind, and on the verge of extinction. Beckett's stage settings too contribute to building up this atmosphere of gloom and doom. Mostly, in all his plays the stage is in total darkness pierced by blazing light or it is a vast expanse, scorched to barrenness, signifying infinity and nothingness. And man, physically ailing, thrown into the expanse seems to be waiting for the end which is inevitable. Much ink has been spilt in exploring this aspect of Beckett's theatre, but very few have dwelt on Beckett's presentation of the human body and what it represents. Frederick Lumley examining Beckett's theatre says,

With Beckett we go beyond into a land unmapped by Dante, for here is neither Paradise, nor Hell nor Purgatory; it is a void, out of space and time, beyond feeling, communication, explanation, even revelation, where the characters seem withered like atomic dust in the infinity of nihilism.

(203)
Martin Esslin defines Beckett's theatre as the "theatre of the absurd" since it breaks all standards of conventional theatre. According to him,

If a good play must have a cleverly constructed story, these have no story or plot to speak of; if a good play is judged by subtlety of characterization and motivation, these are often without recognizable characters and present the audience with almost mechanical puppets; if a good play has to have a fully explained theme, which is neatly exposed and finally solved, these often have neither a beginning nor an end; if a good play is to hold a mirror up to nature and portray the manners and mannerisms of the age in finely observed sketches, these seem often to be reflections of dreams and nightmares; if a good play relies on witty repartee and pointed dialogue, these often consist of incoherent babblings. (Esslin 23)

Beckett's theatre displays all such characteristics and hence Esslin classifies it as the theatre of the absurd. Thus, according to Esslin, Beckett's theatre presents the absurdity of the human
condition in terms of concrete stage images, that is, by means of stage props, characters, stage settings and dialogue. When Esslin looks at Beckett’s theatre as theatre of the absurd, Lalitha Ramakrishna looks at “Beckett’s perception of Time and the relationship of Time to the self as seen in his plays” (1). Michael Robinson examines Beckett’s plays as the “search for a dimension of the self outside both time and words” and this, according to him, is “the main preoccupation of the Beckett hero” (26). David H. Hesla perceives Beckett’s world as a “syzygy” — a world of oppositions. He identifies no finality in Beckett’s world:

For every laugh there is a tear, for every position an opposition, for every thesis 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. (10)

As mentioned above, we notice that Beckett’s critics have explored and analyzed the structure of his plays and also the metaphysical question of man
as envisioned in his plays. But very little has been said about the most striking aspect of his stage, that is, the representation of the human body. In all his works, one notices that the human body is his major obsession. His characters are mostly handicapped as all the characters in *Endgame*, or they physically appear clownish, as Vladimir and Estragon in *Waiting for Godot*. Most of them are aged and waiting for the inevitable end as Krapp in *Krapp's Last Tape*, or the woman in *Rockaby*. Sometimes he presents only a part of the body as the faces in *Play* or as the Mouth in *Not I*. In *Breath* the body vanishes completely from stage and what we witness is just a heap of rubbish. The purpose of this study is to examine the implication behind such a depiction of negation and decrepitude. On a superficial examination his plays can be termed as clownish, eliciting laughter from the audience, bringing alive on stage the concept of mirth — for indeed laughter is aroused by the slipping down of trousers in *Waiting for Godot*. Valerie Topsfield in *The Humour of Samuel Beckett* states that

Beckett has an inbuilt sense of fun. In the early works, especially, he is a master of
wit and wordplay. The childlike humour is a source of relief for the author and reader alike. (1)

Another most obvious aspect beaming through his plays is that it is tragic, since they depict the existential situation of man. As Charles R. Lyons notes,

An extrapolation of Descartes' model; the consciousness of an ageing person grappling with his crowded perception of the space he inhabits, attempting to reconcile images of the past that revolve in his imagination, questioning his own identity and the authenticity of his existence. (7)

On a deeper contemplation of his stage and the human body on it, one finds embedded in it layers of meaning which have been identified as a record of past history, a capturing of the present and indeed prophetic of the future situation. It has been examined as a sign-system, as metaphor or as being symbolic. Audrey McMullan sees Beckett's bodies as images:

The images of Beckett's later plays focus almost entirely on the body. Even the apparently inanimate props that are used such
as the urns in Play, the lamp in A Piece of Monologue or the rocking chair in Rockaby are in a close symbiotic relationship with the body. However, Beckett dissociates the body from the usual indexical function of indicating an individual identity, and focuses instead on the body as image: produced, signifying, perceived. The bodies in his plays tend to be fragmented and denaturalized, mouths or heads suspended in darkness, the stark lighting and stylized costumes or gestures stressing Beckett’s use of the body as visual material rather than as a centre of identity. (Page 86-87)

Beckett’s work is informed by the Cartesian philosophy of mind/body dualism, but he does not completely adhere to Descartes who philosophized on an absolute distinction between the body and the self, and of their independent existence. Examining Descartes’ theories T. Z. Levine states:

But now I see that according to Descartes my mind and body are utterly, absolutely distinct. As in the universe itself, with its two kinds of substances, mental and physical, there is in me the same absolute,
unbridgeable gulf between mind which occupies no space and body which cannot think. (125)

And he goes on:

Descartes himself tries to tell us in Meditation VI: 'Since on the one hand I have a clear and distinct idea of myself in so far as I am only a thinking thing and not an extended being, and since on the other hand, I have a distinct idea of body in so far as it is only an extended substance which does not think, it is certain that this I (that is to say my soul, by virtue of which I am what I am) is entirely and truly distinct from my body and that it can exist without it.' (125)

Descartes affirms this extreme dualism of an immaterial soul and a material body and their independent existence, while Beckett asserts the presence and importance of the body and of the self, and the self as it is made evident through the body. Therefore, the body is given prime importance on the Beckett stage. He affirms the life of the body and of the self and does not dissociate the two and assign them independent existence. Steven Connor notes that
There is an affirmation of the life of the body with the sounds of panting and exertion, we feel the struggles of the body. . . .it is no longer a matter of dissociation of self and body. . . .for the character is sunk absolutely in the life of the body. (158)

Beckett uses the technique of minimalism in his presentation of the body and through this process of negation and decrepitude he illustrates the objectification of the body, thereby volumizing its presence and making it speak of itself.

Pierre Chabert commenting on the body in Beckett's theatre has this to say:

Rather than regard Beckett's theatre as a portrait gallery of cripples, one must understand it as a deliberate and intense effort to make the body come to light, to give the body its full weight, dimension and its physical presence. (24)

Thus, though Beckett's bodies are fragmented and exist in a state of lack or negation, unable to see, or move or hear, it is precisely this state of lack which gives the body its existence. As Pierre Chabert again observes,
The body in good health with the conventional beauty of the conventional stage does not really exist. As in life so in Beckett’s drama, one’s body exists all the more strongly when it begins to suffer. (24)

Thus in Beckett’s theatre one witnesses the problem of objectification of the body.

Objectification is the reduction of the body or parts of the body to the status of mere instruments or objects. As Sandra Lee Bartky observes,

A person is sexually objectified when her sexual parts or sexual functions are separated out from the rest of her personality and reduced to the status of mere instruments or else regarded as if they were capable of representing her. (26)

This does not mean that Beckett debases the body but through this process of objectification he presents on stage mentally and physically tortured bodies, isolated and lonely bodies, that is, bodies distorted by culture, society or by man. Objectification involves one or more persons, that is, the observer and the observed who can be the same person and the objectified and the objectifier. There are various ways of objectifying
the body. The body can be objectified in victimization, in psychological oppression, in fragmentation, sexual objectification and in psychological ailments like Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia. The body is also objectified in sexual activities, personal and social relationships and the like.

Objectification of the body in physical exploitation and in psychological oppression is exemplified in plays from Waiting for Godot to What Where. The body here becomes a capital for exploitation. It is exploited by the stronger section of society for satisfying their personal needs, to exert their power and authority. Foucault expresses the same idea,

The offender's body becomes a sign of...power; the monarch inscribes — writes — his power upon that body, for all to read: [Torture] must mark the victim: It is intended, either by the scar it leaves on the body, or by the spectacle that accompanies it...on the very body of the condemned man. (Guest 1)
The bodies are then transformed into mere material objects in the hands of the objectifier. Stephen Regan makes the observation that,

Nothing is more fashionable in modern cultural theory than talk of objectifying the body, feeling somehow that it is not my own; but though plenty of objectionable objectification goes on, not least in sexual conduct, the fact remains that the human body is indeed a mere material object, and that this is an essential component of anything more creative we get up to. Unless you can objectify me, there can be no question of relationship between us. The body which lays me open to exploitation is also the ground of all possible communication. (159)

Psychological oppression, which is the after-effect of physical exploitation, is another way of objectifying the body. In psychological oppression the subject is mentally tortured through verbal violence and emotional pain. Sandra Lee Bartky in her book Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression speaks of psychological oppression thus:
When we describe the people as oppressed, what we have in mind most often is an oppression hat is economic and political in character. . . . It is impossible to be oppressed in ways that need involve neither physical deprivation, legal inequality, nor economic exploitation; we can be oppressed psychologically — the 'psychic' alienation of which Fanon speaks. To be psychologically oppressed is to be weighed down in your mind. (22)

All of Beckett's characters are psychologically oppressed in one way or the other and this is one way of objectifying the body — the body treated as an object with no human feelings and deserving of no respect or dignity.

Beckett illustrates this concept of exploitation in Waiting for Godot. Pozzo and Lucky enact a master-slave relationship where Lucky the slave is exploited by his master Pozzo.

[Enter POZZO and LUCKY. POZZO drives LUCKY by means of a rope passed round his neck, so that LUCKY is the first to appear, followed by the rope which is long enough to allow him to reach the middle of the stage before POZZO]
appears. LUCKY carries a heavy bag, a folding stool, a picnic basket and a great coat. POZZO a whip. [22-23]

Pozzo, as we are told later in the play, is on his way to the market to sell Lucky. To Vladimir’s question “You want to get rid of him? ” [32], Pozzo replies,

I’m bringing him to the fair, where I hope to get a good price for him. The truth is you can’t drive such creatures away. [32]

Pozzo is a cruel and tyrannical master who “chucks” Lucky “away like a banana skin” (to quote Vladimir’s words) “after having sucked all the good out of him” [33]. Lucky is not given a human treatment and he sags under the heavy load he has to carry. He has a “running sore” [26] round his neck caused by the rubbing of the rope. The picture that is created of him is of a donkey driven by his master with a heavy load on his back. He is fed on the remains of Pozzo’s food. Pozzo throws him the chicken bone after having gorged on the chicken, saying, “in theory the bones go to the carrier” [27]. He is also ordered about: “Up Pig! . . . Up Hog! [Noise of LUCKY getting up and picking up his baggage. POZZO jerks the rope.]” [24]. But in spite
of Lucky's absolute dedication to his master, "an old and faithful servant," according to Vladimir, Pozzo is inhuman towards Lucky.

Pozzo decides and orders Lucky's every movement and action. He is also in command and control of Lucky's mind. Frederick Lumley observes: "He is completely the slave, responding to orders from Pozzo to dance and think" (205). Lucky's body thus becomes an instrument, an object in Pozzo's hands. He is tied to the Absolute, that is, Pozzo, and he has no identity of his own, he is toyed by Pozzo and his body is used and exploited by him. Pozzo exercises much the same kind of power over Lucky as the interventionist God of the Occasionalist exercised over man. He manipulates Lucky's body the way he would a marionette. "Stop! (LUCKY stops) Forward! (LUCKY advances) Stop! (LUCKY stops) ... Back (LUCKY moves back) Turn! (LUCKY turns...)' (28). He can also order him to 'Think Pig!',

Human cruelty, and a few of its manifestations in drives towards power are acted out in the two appearances of Pozzo and Lucky" (21).
Exploitation in master-slave relationship is examined in *Endgame* in the relationship between Hamm and Clov. Hamm, the protagonist in the play, is in many ways like Pozzo. He is the king of the scene and he orders about his servant Clove. Hamm cannot stand or walk and Clove cannot sit, and hence Hamm exploits him to the maximum. Clov’s body, though not ill-treated like Lucky’s, is debased by Hamm in terms of basic human dignity. Charles R. Lyons comments that “the characterized image of master and slave subsumes the image of space” (55). He goes on to quote a piece of dialogue between Hamm and Clov about bicycles, and adds:

These unelaborated references suggest that their relationship holds a variety of socio-political and psychological dimensions. The notion of rounds and paupers indicates an extensive ownership of property, and the denial of Clov’s bicycle points towards a capricious bestowal and refusal of favours — the kind of arbitrary benevolence and cruelty that engenders acute resentment as well as obligation in its victims. (55-56)

Like Lucky, Clov is a slave compelled to obey his hated master. Hamm orders Clov to get his
painkillers, to feed his parents, to check out the window and a host of other things. At this level, this is a case of considering the body as object to be exploited to satisfy the owner's needs. Clov's body is thus objectified under Hamm's authority. Despite the exploitation at the physical level, Clov is also oppressed psychologically. Hamm takes pleasure in creating a horrifying picture of the future situation for Clov. This is his attempt to get Clov to do things for him rather than repudiate his remarks. He prophesies:

One day you'll be blind, like me. You'll be sitting there, a speck in the void. .. you'll say, I'm hungry, I'll get up and get something to eat. But you won't get up. You'll say, I shouldn't have sat down. .. Infinite emptiness will be around you, all the resurrected dead of all the ages wouldn't fill it, and there you'll be like a little bit of grit in the middle of the steppe. (109-110)

This is his way of psychologically oppressing Clov. Hamm's authoritarian and tyrannical nature is also evident in his relationship and pitiless attitude towards his parents Nagg and Nell who are
handicapped and confined in dustbins. No bond of love and affection is evident in the relationship between parents and son, rather what is witnessed on stage is shocking. Nagg telling Nell stories, to keep themselves entertained and as a sign of concern and affection is brutally interrupted by Hamm.

HAMM: [Exasperated.] Have you not finished? Will you never finish? [With sudden fury.] Will this never finish? [NAGG disappears into his bin, closes the lid behind him. NELL does not move. Frenziedly.] My kingdom for a nightman! [He whistles. Enter CLOV.] Clear away this muck! Chuck it in the sea! [CLOV goes to bins, halts.]

...

HAMM: What? What's she blathering about?

...

CLOV: I didn't understand.

HAMM: Have you bottled her?

CLOV: Yes.

HAMM: Are they both bottled?

CLOV: Yes.

HAMM: Screw down the lids. (103)
There is no place in the play for filial gratitude. Notions of compassion are ridiculed, and what is in the forefront is the play of power and authority and what it implies for the body as an objectified entity.

The confinement of Nagg and Nell in dustbins is also indicative of this fact. Taking into consideration their physical condition it is obvious that they would not have got into it on their own accord — but the horrifying fact beams large when we contemplate on the other option, that is, that they must have been chucked in there doomed to breathe their last. Objectifying takes place at a very cruel level here in the play. Parents become victims of son’s cruelty. Hamm has no sense of pity for his parents and no compassion for their physical situation. He insults them when they request for their "pap." "Guzzle, guzzle that’s all they think of" (96). He says back, and he calls them "accursed progenitor" and "accursed fornicator." This, though it causes intense emotional pain for his parents, is no important subject for Hamm. He is devoid of any human feelings and notions of humanism are devalued in him. Hamm is the objectifier here and he has his
parents under his control and his servant at his command.

*Catastrophe* is solely about the theme of objectifying the body and of the exploitation of it. The body of the protagonist (P) is the objectified body and he is made to stand on a black block 18 inch high. The assistant (A) manipulates the body in order to achieve the image that satisfies the director (D). He shouts orders at the assistant to develop the image.

D: So so. [Pause.] Why the plinth?
A: To let the stalls see the feet.

[Pause.]
D: Why the hat?
A: To help hide the face.

[Pause.]
D: Why the gown?
A: To have him all black. (457)

The basic human feelings of the protagonist are not taken into consideration. He is a mere object in the hands of the director, moulded according to his mind's desire.

It is, however, the body-as-object: faceless, silent, and wearing garments that mark it as private, even shameful. The on-stage
characters who speak are fully — perhaps excessively — clothed while the wordless protagonist, in robe and pajamas, seems humiliatingly undressed. (Rabillard 106)

Rosemary Poutney too makes a similar observation. "The protagonist in Catastrophe appears entirely divorced from his surroundings — a cross between a statue and a puppet" (226).

The Director orders the figure to be stripped revealing: P in old grey pajamas, head bowed fists clenched. A comments that P is shivering, but D is unmoved: "Not all that." He orders the hat to be removed and both head and hands to be whitened, thus presenting a stronger image. Michael Guest in "Act of Creation in Beckett's Catastrophe" notes that the Director whitens all flesh for the Protagonist "to be created in the image of death" (3). A deathlike image is what he requires and thus he literally kills the Protagonist by oppressing him psychologically and exploiting him physically. A unclenches the hands and timidly suggests joining them, so that the figure stands on the plinth as if in prayer. When she again comments that P is shivering, D explodes, "Bless his heart"
However her suggestion that there might be a little...gag leaves him screaming in anger.

D: For God's sake! This craze for explicitation! Every i dotted to death! Little gag! For God's sake!

A: Sure he won't utter?

D: Not a squeak. (459)

Audrey McMullan writes:

His body, his only remaining text, has been stolen from him and turned into pure spectacle in the service of representation. The transformation of the body into visual signifying material — the anatomical references, the process of 'whitening all flesh' — is presented as a process of appropriation and subjection. As in psychoanalytic theory the image of the body represents a fixed but alienating identity which cannot express the subject's emotional and physical experience of fragmentation and desire, the body in representation is reproduced as a conditioned image in accordance with the dominant laws, while any attempt on the part of the powerless to speak or gesture is repressed. (Page 88)
Thus the body of the Protagonist which is the material of the Director is not only subjected to the gaze of the Director but also to the gaze of the real audience. Through this presentation Beckett succeeds in illustrating the case of bodily exploitation and psychological oppression. As Linda Ben Zvi comments,

In the play *Catastrophe* Beckett goes to considerable lengths to illustrate how sexual harassment invariably accompanies political suppression and is another example of the catastrophe of a patriarchal, dictatorial regime. (xiii)

*Happy Days* reveals Winnie buried up to her waist in a mound of earth at the centre of the stage and behind the mound her husband Willie embedded in a hole. There is no building of dramatic situation of conflict of characters, it consists of futile actions by Winnie intended to kill time. When the curtain rises Winnie is discovered sleeping and the bell awakens her. The fact that the bell rings and Winnie responds to it shows that whoever rings the bell is her master, her dominator, and her possessor. The bell is not
just any waking bell because it does not ring just once but until she wakes up.

A bell rings piercingly, say ten seconds, stops. She does not move. Pause. Bell more piercingly, say five seconds. She wakes. Bell stops. (138)

This makes us aware that it is no mechanical device, but an invisible, intentional and determined power that has Winnie under control and victimizes her.

This is followed by Winnie's monologue and occasional promptings by Willie. We learn that their relationship is not an intimate one. Winnie dominates the scene and is in control of Willie. She has him responding at her beck and call and she repeatedly does so to her advantage. He is the witness to her existence and she keeps communicating to him to convince her of her existence. Objectification takes place here in the sense that Winnie has no human feelings towards Willie, but uses him for her ends. G. C. Barnard makes this observation

Winnie's relationship with Willie is not one of love, in spite of her many sentimental phrases, for in fact she mocks him cruelly
and alludes rather bitterly to his unresponsiveness 'Oh I know you were never one to talk, I worship you Winnie, be mine, and then nothing from that day forth only titbits from Reynolds News.' But although Willie is so uncommunicative and moreover is placed so inconveniently that she has to bend back sideways to see him at all, yet he is absolutely necessary to her, for he is the indispensable witness to her own personal existence; without him she would lose her identity. 'Just to know that in theory you can hear me though in fact you don't is all I need.' (122)

She controls his every movement and considers him as her possession. It is a selfish manipulation of relationship for one's personal benefit — Willie's physical presence is a kind of assurance for her sustenance and existence. And she has him at her command as she would her pet dog. She tells him

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.] That's it... right round... now... back in [Pause.] (147)

Willie is subjected to a humiliating position of obeying the command of a woman and crawling on all fours back into his hole and this is oppression both physically and mentally. He retreats to his hole completely only when her verbal goadings become intolerable. He supplicates to her orders since he is the weaker both in body and mind.

Objectification is also evident in the incident where a man by name Mr. Shower or Cooker appears with his wife and stands gaping at Winnie, and commenting on her queer situation. They then go on their way making no attempt whatsoever to rescue her from her terrible situation. Their indifferent attitude reveals that they see Winnie as just an object in a strange situation. They do not see her as a human being like them with human feelings, sorrow and suffering and hence make no attempt to rescue her. To them she is just a thing out in the
blazing sun, a victim to her cursed situation. G. C. Barnard again notes,

The incident is meant as a phantasy symbolizing the indifference of the outside world to another person's misfortune (123)

Winnie's mound in which she is trapped, rather than seeing it literally as an earth mound, can be perceived symbolically as the aggressor of Winnie, entrapping her and reducing her to a helpless situation. The mound, whatever forces of nature or man it is, has her under control and destroys her inch by inch. The body of Winnie is thus exploited by this force and encaged by it.

Act Without Words I too portrays a similar situation where the objectifier is not visible on stage in person. But we are made aware that the character is objectified by a brutal and inhuman external power. The stage directions indicate that,

The man is flung backwards on the stage from right wing. He falls, gets up immediately, dusts himself, turns aside, reflects. Whistle from right wing. He reflects, goes out right. Immediately flung back on stage he falls. (203)
This action is repeated thrice on stage, and the man is made to look helpless and is ridiculed. This is a perfect instance of objectification of the body: the man's body an object in the hands of an invisible, or inscrutable, objectifier. Beckett's stage directions state very clearly that the man is flung on stage, meaning that he does not jump on stage or walks on his own accord, which obviously attests the fact that there is an external force — his aggressor or manipulator, treating him as an object and not as a human being.

The man is later confronted with various other objects which when he is about to reach them disappear and remain just above his reach. This is a game of psychological torture and physical mockery. There descends from the flies first a tree, whose shade-giving tuft of leaves closes up when he sits down under it. Then a pair of tailor's scissors and a tiny carafe of water appear but remain just above his reach. After this, three cubes of different sizes appear, but when he stands on them to reach the water the carafe is raised so that he cannot grasp it. After this a rope descends, but as he climbs it this too is drawn up, so that he has to cut it in order to fall back on
the ground. Having now a length of rope he wishes to hang himself on the bough of the tree, but is once more foiled as the bough immediately folds itself down against the trunk. He next turns to the scissors, hoping to cut his throat, but they, together with the cubes, disappear up into the flies. The man here is thus just an object of ridicule toyed with by the objectifier. It reminds us of Gloucster's despairing cry in King Lear, "As flies to wanton boys are we to the Gods, they kill us for their sport" (Shakespeare IV. 1. 35-36). Here however he is not killed but mocked at and ridiculed. Man is here depicted as a helpless being at the mercy of the powers that be. All his actions, efforts and struggles are confronted with failure, signifying the futility of self-willed attempt in encountering the hurdles of life. The fact of the futility of all actions fills man with a sense of meaninglessness of existence so it is with the case of the man in the play. His body thus ridiculed becomes representative of this absurdity.

In Act Without Words II the two characters are provoked to action by a goad. The men in the play are slavish victims of the goad. They pray, take pills, eat carrots etc. at the instigation of the
goad. They are even compelled to move out of the sack at its command. Though they are victims of it, they are not in fearful, immediate obedience to it. They at first resist its powers, but respond to it only after much oppression. A and B respond after constant physical pressure from the goad. This physical pressure is not only a means of physical oppression but becomes a psychological oppressor simultaneously.

Enter goad right, strictly horizontal. The point stops a foot shot of sack A. Pause. The point draws back, pauses, darts forward into sack, withdraws, recoils to a foot short of sack. Pause. The sack does not move. The point draws back again, a little further than before, pauses, darts forward again into sack, withdraws, recoils to a foot short of sack. Pause. The sack moves. Exit goad. (209)

A similar technique is played out with B, and B too responds to its power. Like the bell in Happy Days, the goad here controls the action of the two men. They are in fact victims of it and forced to respond to it.

Taken symbolically the goad is not literally the goad, it could stand to mean a great and
stronger power which controls men and has victimized them. The men are objectified by the goad or the power for which it stands and the bodies of the men are a prey to it. Ruby Cohn observes in Back to Beckett: "A is goaded into his day's activities... B is goaded into his day's activities" (177).

In Rough for Theatre II A and B are in a sixth floor apartment to investigate the past life of a person who is present on stage, but remain totally silent throughout, and is on the verge of jumping out of the window. The task of the two investigators is to check the book of the person before he kills himself and to instil confidence in him to help him against his decision. But as the play progresses we comprehend that they are not serious about their task nor do they value the man's life. His pain and suffering which has dragged him to this point has in the least affected them. To them, he is just an object of ridicule or mockery. He is not given respect due a human being. B states, "He has only to land on his arse, the way he lived. The spine snaps and the tripes explode" (238). Commenting on this, James Knowlson and John Pilling have this to say: "the pain of the
subject is . . . treated with indifference or even mockery" (232).

A and B indulge in sharp, lively repartee and get involved in a misunderstanding about a "heirless" or "hairless" aunt. All this indicates the fact that they consider the man's life as trivial. In one sense it can be stated that his life is in their hands, it is upto them to help him out of his disillusionment, but they treat him with indifference as is always the case with the objectifier and objectified, the victimizer and victim.

In Play Beckett has the three characters trapped in urns with only the heads protruding out. Three characters, a man his wife and his mistress are involved in a triangular relationship. They speak only when solicited like the characters in Act Without Words II where they move only when goaded. The goading force here is the spotlight — their physical and mental tormentor. It is their interrogator and has them in complete obedience. On interrogation they speak of their clandestine meetings, domestic squabbles, partings and recriminations. James Knowlson and John Pilling observe that Beckett makes "the spotlight into an
'inquirer' and the three figures into 'victims' compelled to go over again and again the events of their previous relationship" (112).

The stage direction states that "Their speech is provoked by a spotlight projected on faces alone" (307). The light here is thus the controlling force, victimizing the characters and forcing them to speak out their personal secrets. Here in this case it is not the physical weakness of the characters that has the objectifier under advantage, but their moral weaknesses. We know that the characters are not mourning over their situation, or expressing their pitiable plight since the stage directions indicate "Faces impassive throughout. Voices toneless except where an expression is indicated" (307). They have no feelings or emotions whatsoever, because they are not speaking under their own impulses but are forced to by this external light.

*Not I* narrates the case of a girl born into suffering for no fault of hers. She was prematurely born:

out...into this world...before her time...
godforsaken hole called...called...no matter... parents unknown...unheard of...he
having vanished...thin air...no sooner buttoned up his breeches...she similarly...eight months later...almost to the tick...so no love... (376)

She is the product, and victim, of a passionate moment, condemned to live her life an orphan, without love and without happiness. The instance of objectification narrated here is quite different from the previous ones. The pain of rejection at birth, abandoned by her father at conception and her mother at birth, and the pain of a lonely existence there after, at the mercy of the religious people, her physical exploitation later and the interrogation scene at the court are all indications of the fact that life has been one long liturgy of oppression. She is thus reduced to a machine body, leading a mechanical life. She leads a cursed existence with no place for feelings or emotion, she exists as a mere thing, an object, for that is the way life and circumstances in the world have shaped her existence. Benedict Nightingale notes that “She has in short consented to the reduction of herself to a ‘she’, almost an it, a thing” (284).
What Where, Beckett's last piece for the theatre, focuses mainly on the subject of victim and victimizer. Bam reports his failure to extract the requisite secret from his victim whom he has given the works. Feeling that Bom is trying to keep the secret to himself, Bam puts Bim on Bom to give him the works and thus get the secret out of him. Bim is confident that he will succeed but returns a failure. At this Bem is asked to take over as tormentor of Bim but he too fares no better.

BAM: And you didn't revive him?

BIM: I tried.

BAM: Well?

BIM: I couldn't.

...

BAM: [To BEM.] Are you free?

BEM: Yes.

BAM: Take him away and give him the works until he confesses. (475)

Bam is the archetypal objectifier who is dissatisfied with his victims and tortures them mentally. Commenting on this, Ahuja Chaman states that "Like a catastrophe in a catastrophe or a dream within a dream, in What Where we see torturers being tortured" (131).
Beckett's bodies are thus victims of torturers, both mentally and physically. The process of tormenting continues in the world from one generation to the next and it is this that always forms the subject of a Beckett play. Objectification of the body takes place on the stage at this level, bodies as victims. Ahuja Chaman makes the apt observation that on Beckett's stage "men are all... torturing one another and being tortured in return. . . ." (132).

Other than the case of objectification of the body by man and society in terms of power politics, the body is also objectified as a sexual object, that is, when the parts of the body are reduced to mere instruments to be gazed on. The Mouth in Not I is an instance of sexual objectification. Only this part (that is mouth) of the body of the character is exposed on stage, the other parts being hidden in darkness. And this large wide-open mouth on stage, though not a sexual organ, is a part of the body involved in intimate sexual relationship. A deeper contemplation gives it the image of a large open vagina. It is the site where the process of life-generation takes place and it is the organ which spits man out into the world to be doomed and
to die. It is the entrance to the womb and the exit way to the world. The Mouth on stage is thus sexually objectified. This observation was made by Beckett while watching the BBC television version.

James Knowlson and John Pilling quotes

Beckett displayed no trace of displeasure as watching the BBC television version, he realized that Mouth had the appearance of a large gaping vagina. (200)

The bodies on Beckett's stage are also degendered or desexed. Through this process he obliterates sex in the figure, in order to obliterate the identity of the figure. In the earlier writings, there is gender identity in sexed figures, but there is desexing in later works like Not I, Ohio Impromptu, What Where, and Rockaby. This, according to Peter Gidal, is meant to "dehumanize the figure" (Ben Zvi 186). The anti-humanist thrust in Beckett illustrates the theme of dehumanization of the human body. In What Where the sexual identity of the characters is not specified. Instead, the stage directions state that "Players as alike as possible." (469). This again denies the bodies a gender or individual identity, thereby dehumanizing them. In Rockaby, though the sex of
the character is mentioned, there is a complete
denial of the body. The same is followed in Not I,
Footfalls, Ohio Impromptu and Play.

Other than objectification of the body by people
and society, the body is victimized by the great
inevitable, external, and invisible force, that is,
Time. Time has been written with a capital 'T'
because it is a protagonist on stage with immense
power inherent in its being. It victimizes man with
its tooth and claws and leaves him at its mercy
with no option of recovering, other than to wait
without hope for the end which is inevitable.
Almost all of Beckett's characters are dilapidated
old people, sick or diseased or paralyzed. Among
his plays Endgame is the most striking in its
depiction of the bodies of characters as victimized
by Time. The opening scene of the play sets an
atmosphere of gloom and doom. The dustbins of Nagg
and Nell are covered with old sheets and so too is
Hamm. Hamm is crippled, he cannot stand and is in
his wheel chair. He is blind too and is completely
dependent on Clov who cannot sit. Time seems to
have placed its claws on these characters since
they seem to be suffering all the ailments that
accompany age. Hamm seems to be going blind as he
says, "It seems they've gone all white." He is also suffering from intense physical pain as there is a reminder four or five times in the play for his painkillers. Stage directions call for "Very red face" for Hamm and Clov, and "Very white face" for Nagg and Nell. According to David H. Hesla,

Their faces are very white not simply because they are pieces in a chess game, but because they at one time composed an energy system. . . . but is now dead, nearly dead, their faces white and cold as ice. . . . As befits energy systems which are younger, Hamm's face and Clov's face are very red. (157)

But later in the play Hamm too turns white and he becomes very conscious and worried about it. He asks Clov, "Am I very white? [Pause. Angrily.] I'm asking you am I very white!" (123). Time seems to be placing its horrifying hands on Hamm. Lalitha Ramakrishna says that Hamm is suffering from Hemophilia.

The blood dripping within his head indicates the slow ebbing out of energy and life. Clov feels very cold and Hamm says he is freezing. (12)
Most of the characters in Beckettland have very white faces as symptoms of age and decay and signifying the victimization by Time. Krapp in Krapp's Last Tape has a "White face," is "Very near-sighted. . . .Hard of hearing," has a "Cracked voice" and a "Laborious walk". He seems to be sailing in the same boat as Hamm going through a process of gradual decline goaded by Time the invisible monster. The woman in Rockaby is another victim of the cruelties of Time. She is stated as having "Huge eyes in white expressionless face. White hands holding ends of armrests." (433). So too does the Director in Catastrophe bark orders at his Assistant to "Whiten hands"(459) and later "Whiten all flesh"(460) of the protagonist. The Director does this to attain a figure of decay. Whiteness of flesh typifies the draining out of blood, which constitutes energy systems, and also signals the onrush of death caused by age.

Commenting on Beckett's plays, Lalitha Ramakrishna states that "The settings of the plays have an eschatological frame and the focus is on Time's inexorable progress of destruction in the phenomenal world" (11). She quotes a line from Beckett's poem "Tempus Edax Rerum" which is built
around this theme and has the image of Time the eater "gnawing away insatiably and indiscriminately at the world and the body" (11). Time's imprint is also made apparent in the white hair of the victimized bodies. White hair is a sign of age and deterioration and a majority of his characters have white or grey hair. Blindness, another trait of age, with which most of his characters are afflicted is the work of Time. Krapp has "Disordered grey hair" and is "Very near sighted" and so is May (M) in Footfalls. The speaker in A Piece of Monologue too has "White hair" and so does the woman in Rockaby. The Listener and Reader in Ohio Impromptu have "Long white hair" whereas Bam, Bem, Bim and Bom in What Where have "Same long grey hair". All these characters, we learn from their appearance, are nearing death and are under the clutches of Time's inescapable claws. Man's body is thus a mere instrument moulded according to the power of Time, which lays its hands on all irrespective of status or gender.

The work of Time on human bodies is also captured in images of blindness and crippling diseases. Pozzo in the first act of Waiting for Godot is proud of his body and walks in a
dictatorial manner, but the second act reveals him as helpless and blind, a victim of Time. In *Endgame* Hamm’s enquiry to Clov, “How are your eyes?” has him reply “Bad” indicating the same. Clov is afflicted with acathisia and cannot sit or ride a bicycle. Time’s destructive work is made visible in Nagg and Nell who are already white. During the course of the play Nagg loses his tooth and gradually loses sight.

NAGG: Can you see me?
NELL: Hardly. And you?
NAGG: What?
NELL: Can you see me?
NAGG: Hardly.
NELL: So much the better, so much the better.
NAGG: Don’t say that. [Pause.] Our sight has failed. (99)

Objectification of bodies by Time happens on stage and the victims are helpless against its power. It is a pitiable situation where the characters watch their bodies decay.

Winnie is also its powerful influence. She too is nearing blindness and is physically decaying.

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. (139)

To add to this ailment her vision too diminishes.

WINNIE: [examines handle, reads] — genuine...
... pure... what? — [Lays down brush] — blind next. (139)

Time the eater seems to be spreading its tentacles and engulfing the bodies within its clutches, injecting its poison into every part of the body and destroying it at its own slow pace. Willie’s painful crawl in and out of his hole dramatizes the same situation.

Images of pain and suffering caused by age and illness are evoked in Footfalls too. The scene is that of a mother in the last stages of her life, taken care of by her daughter who is also thoroughly disillusioned. Through her suggestions and enquires, May tries to ease the suffering and pain of her mother caused by Time. Her questions, apart from evoking human concern, reveal to the audience the cruelties caused by Time. May’s
mother's body is a helpless victim to it. The following extract reveals her helplessness.

M: Would you like me to inject you again?
V: Yes, but it is too soon.

[Pause.]
M: Would you like me to change your position again?
V: Yes, but it is too soon.

[Pause.]

The mother, we learn, is a victim of Time and Time has completely eaten her up and destroyed her being. Bodies are just objects, toyed with by this external, invisible and inevitable force. It can be described as an evil and monstrous being, gnawing at man's bones and reducing him to a heap, "the impossible heap," as Clov says in Endgame. Lalitha Ramakrishnan notes:

In addition to Time as causing physical debility, Beckett dramatizes it in its
destructive capacity, thus directing our attention to Time as death-dealing rather than life-promoting. (18)

The characters popping painkillers into their mouth or demanding painkillers at intervals in the course of the play is another sign of disease and pain caused by age. They do not experience a slow extinction but a painful slow extinction. Three times during the course of the play, Hamm enquires about his painkillers, an indication that he is going through intense suffering and pain.

CLOV: Have you bled?

Hamm: Less. [Pause.] Is it not time for my painkiller? (95)

Later:

Hamm: [Pause.] Is it not time for my painkiller? (115)

Much Later:

Hamm: Is it not time for my painkiller? (127)

Time the victimizer and destroyer seems to be working his way towards the destruction of Hamm. May’s question to her mother, “Would you like me to inject you again?” (400) speaks of the fact of her pain. A in Act Without Words II too swallows a pill
when goaded out of his sack — another victim of time’s cruelties.

Impotence, which accompanies age, is another of Beckett’s obsessive themes. Almost all his characters are physically on the decline, lacking in strength and vigour. At this level the body is objectified on stage, where it becomes a victim of Time. Age and the atrocities of age leave man impotent. Beckett himself has stated in an interview with Israel Shenker that his works deal with impotence: “I’m working with impotence, ignorance. I don’t think impotence has been exploited in the past” (Fletcher and Spurling 41). The physical appearance of his characters and their incapacity for locomotion and other bodily activities are indications of their impotence. Vladimir and Estragon are physically weak and impotent. It is evident from the following extract where they get excited at the thought of an erection.

ESTRAGON: What about hanging ourselves?

VLADIMIR: Hmm. It’d give us an erection!

ESTRAGON: [Highly excited.] An erection!

...
ESTRAGON: Let's hang ourselves immediately!

(18)

Their deterioration in physical strength is indicated from their own affirmation of it when Vladimir says, "Hand in hand from the top of the Eiffel Tower, among the first. We were presentable in those days. Now it's too late. They wouldn't even let us up" (12). Hamm living on painkillers and in a wheelchair and Clov afflicted with acathasia are examples of deteriorated bodies. Willie is also completely drained out of energy and vitality and can barely move in and out of his hole. But he cherishes in him a desire for sex, which is beyond his physical capacity. This is evident from his relishing the post cards which are presumably pornographic. We understand it is so from Winnie's remarks:

[WINNIE turns back front and examines card.]

Heavens what are they up to! ... No but this is just genuine pure filth! ... Make any nice-minded person want to vomit! ... What does that creature in the background think he's doing? ... Oh no really!... Pah! ... Take it away! (144)
Willie's arm appears and takes it away. "[During what follows WILLIE continues to relish card, varying angles and distance from his eyes.]" (144). The other physically deteriorating characters are Krapp and the Old Man in That Time. Like his male characters, his female characters too are deteriorating physically like Winnie, the Woman in Rockaby, the mother in Footfalls and the Mouth in Not I.

Objectification of the body is thus a major feature of Beckett's theatre. Bodies are objectified in man's exercise of power and speak of man's inhumanity to man where the physically, socially and economically superior dominates, controls and possesses the weaker. It is observed that in such instances, man fails to see the other as a fellow human being and considers him as an object and the body is subjected to the power of the exploiter. The body as a victim of Time and its entropic process is still another strand of objectification. Impotence, frigidity and all the ills which accompany old age are seen as the handiwork of Time. In this manner the bodies on Beckett's stage are exposed to the ills of man, of society and of the invisible power of Time.