CHAPTER-V

PLAY

With Play (1963) Beckettian dramaturgy extends itself to an irrational existential condition visualized as possible even after death. It subtly manipulates the Spotlight, or, Spot-device, or, simple-spot, to dramatize the tragic perplexity that would possibly prevail even when earth-life is over. The play in fact, creates a no-Hell, no-Heaven kind of situation. The on-stage existential ordeal appears to be some kind of a permanent impasse in which souls, having expiated throughout their lives on earth, the sin of having been born, expiate in perpetuity, the sin of having lived. What is more, Play also confirms such an existential condition on earth.

Earlier, in Waiting for Godot, the aborted and irrational existential Non-ent was dramaturgically shaped into an endless futile Waiting, and in Endgame, as a cruel, harsh, and torturous Ending. In Krapp's Last Tape, drama was given form by telescoping time-past with time-present, and by ending the play in excruciating Silence. In Happy days it is 'a talking I', which, as ritual, literally plunders and lays waste, habit-ridden abstract notions of the ecstasy of prayer and gratitude, and, even the joy of living. But then, these were intense dramaturgic shapes of the existential plight on this woe-begone earth. Play with its repetitive circular movement, contextualizes on stage, a no less futile, irrational condition, which being timeless, shall last eternally. The dead too are unable to escape the stranglehold of the need to keep up speech. It is a state which is still entrapped in grotesque irrationality, and demise too, is not enough succour. The 'talking I' has still to keep up a murmur under a persistent compulsion to express. For one
'dead voice', it was 'strange, darkness best, and the darker the worse', and therefore, 'till all dark then all well' is a profound longing, when it will be 'all dark, all still, all over, wiped out--'. But till then, the torturous trauma is endless. For another 'dead voice', a wild laugh accompanies the idea that she was a 'shade gone, just a shade in the head', though she herself doubted it, and always wanted to do her best. The third 'dead voice', on stage, is also belied, for, it had assumed that after death would come peace, 'all pain, as if... never been'. Of course, the reader is at an advantage, catching each articulation of their babble separately, though the entire piece is lost to the arm-chair critic, when it is this chorus that actually begins, as well as, ends each cycle of the play in performance.

Now, it is no wonder that Play has this dramaturgy of an after-death situation. Eastman, in a Modern Drama article on Happy Days almost forecast Play, although he had thought it would be Beckett's 'ultimate tour de force'. Eastman's article was published in 1964, and a footnote to the article in the Journal says that it was written before 1963, the year Play appeared. Eastman wrote--

One wonders what he [Beckett] will attempt as his ultimate tour de force--- perhaps a dark stage in which the protagonist speaks up from his grave through a snorkel tube.5

This critic was quite near the mark, for the genesis of Play was forever there, in the way the Beckettian oeuvre proceeded from play to play. Eastman finds Beckett dispensing increasingly 'with a definite setting, with particularity or immediacy of detail, with plot issues, with coherent character, with mobility of actor, with consecutive decline'.6 In Waiting for Godot, the two tramps pass quite
some time in a cross-talk about 'dead voices'. The complexity and richness of Beckettian drama, and, also its deceptive simplicity has often made many critics consider this cross-talk very lyrical, even though it is a comic routine, and, even though, at this point in the play, it had different dramaturgic compulsions. For, what Beckett always committedly strived at, was to give dramaturgic shape\(^7\) to a dark and bleak vision of an irrational affliction which in Play persists even after death. Of this, the 'dead voices' of the Godot-play are sure harbingers. In Waiting for Godot, the playwright makes drama shape the tramps' cross-talk so poetically, that in sheer description the 'dead voices' sounded lyrical. This lyrical cross-talk, descriptive of the 'dead voices' in conversation, is later made, as Eastman forecast the content of a full-blown dramaturgic exercise appropriately entitled Play. In this drama, voices speak out of urns, under the compulsive prod of a focused spotlight, or spot, as this analysis chooses to call it, of varying strength and quick arbitrary movement. The dead start with a babble under the spot's pressure, and trail off into the same pathetic prattle followed by a Blackout, and the Curtain, ready for the perpetual 'Repeats' that may continuously follow. Of course, at one performance, one Repeat should be enough to evoke the others through sheer implication.

And so, in Play, Beckett extends his technical art to include in its sweep and range even the after-death ordeal. His drama shapes it into a no less powerful existential condition, purposeless and futile, that, worse still, keeps repeating itself timelessly. In Waiting for Godot, the tramps Vladimir and Estragon, had an inkling that the dead too were perpetual victims of the 'talking I', making sounds like sand, feathers, wings and leaves. These 'dead voices' do not only talk together, that is, all at once, in a chorus but even appear, each to speak to itself, as we shall see in
the ensuing analysis of Play's technique. However, it will not be out of order to quote entire, for re-capitulation, the tramp's cross-talk on the 'dead voices' from Waiting for Godot ----

Estragon: All the dead voices.
Vladimir: They make a noise like wings.
Estragon: Like leaves.
Vladimir: Like sand.
Estragon: Like leaves.
   (Silence.)
Vladimir: They all speak together.
Estragon: Each one to itself.
   (Silence.)
Vladimir: Rather they whisper.
Estragon: They rustle.
Vladimir: They murmur.
Estragon: They rustle.
   (Silence.)
Vladimir: What do they say?
Estragon: They talk about their lives.
Vladimir: To have lived is not enough for them.
Estragon: They have to talk about it.
Vladimir: To be dead is not enough for them.
Estragon: It is not sufficient.
   (Silence.)
Vladimir: They make a noise like feathers.
Estragon: Like leaves.
To come back to the play proper, we find a great reduction of the so-called 'theatrical space'. The stage, as usual in Beckett's theatre is almost bare, save for three identical grey urns which are centre-stage. From the neck of each urn protrudes a head, that is, a man's head in the middle, with two women's on either side. Their faces according to the stage directions are 'so lost to age and aspect, as to seem almost part of urns'; they remain impassive throughout and their voices are toneless. Their speech is each time provoked by a compulsive spotlight, focused unrelentingly on each face, alone, while the other two heads stay in a dark haze on-stage. The light originates from the centre of the footlights. It switches on and off, and, plays over the three faces, allowing only one to speak at a time, except at those moments, when the spotlight is focused on all of them simultaneously. The response to the spotlight, or spot is immediate, so is the light transfer. In fact, there is no rationale in each spot-shift and its movement is quick and arbitrary. Seldom does it bring all three 'speaking' urns into focus. Such simultaneous focuses are only 5, and each is supposed to last 3 seconds. The play begins with a simultaneous faint focus on the three 'speaking heads' protruding out of urns, speaking together in a chorus. It also ends with one such synchronous faint focus, while the three heads, faintly and unintelligibly repeat the confused grotesque prattle that began the drama, whereafter, the drama is put into its 'Repeats'. The last 'Repeat' is followed by a 'Closing Repeat', which is different in content from the 'Repeats', which may be many.
There are 7 Blackouts in the play proper, which, if the drama is allowed only one 'Repeat’, the circularity of 'Repeats' being left to implication, would make the Blackout number 14, followed by the 2 additional Blackouts of the 'Closing Repeat'. Therefore in a single performance, allowing only for one 'Repeat' there would be 14 Blackouts, of which 10 will be 5 seconds long, and, 4 of 3 seconds each. Quite plainly, the Pauses, Maximum Pauses, Long Pauses, and, Silences and Long Silences, which are the dramaturgic devices of the earlier four dramas considered in this thesis, have been replaced by longer and shorter Blackouts, by faint and stronger spot-focuses, and, by a feeble darkness, on stage, that is perpetually there in the background. Also, whereas the simultaneous spotlight-focus reduces the voiced articulations of the dead into a touching jabber and cackle, the quick shift of focus differentiates, and, identifies each voice, and converts what should be a dialogue into a prolonged narrative. These separate narrations become reciprocating episodic commentary on each other. As to how the narrations have overtones of dialogic content, will be considered later. The 'dead voices' are made to begin and close, in an unintelligible but sad chatter, though the 'Closing Repeat' has M, the man’s head, make 2 four-worded short utterances, spaced between Blackouts. The 'dead voices' are of heads out of urns, and, no more. The spotlight unifies, separates, identifies, goads, pressurizes, shifts quickly and arbitrarily, becomes faint or strong, and even tires of its own non-chalance. The play goes into 'Repeats’, and the movement of the play is timeless and circular. The Blackouts abolish, shock, and startle. The darkness engulfs and perpetuates. It pressurizes the imagination. All in all, the irrational pathetic, existential impasse 'there', on stage, is as much a dramaturgic of life, as it is a dramaturgic fact after death. It remains the Non-ent always. Further, even as Beckettian theme and dramaturgy
are obsessed with Silence, and Blackout and Darkness, so also are they almost always pre-occupied with the sense of an absent-presence. Vladimir and Estragon waited for a Godot who never arrived. Winnie felt herself watched. With characteristic Beckettian overtones lurking, Pozzo is made to see human beings in the image of God. In Endgame Hamm had both heredity and divinity cursed forthright, and without much ado put himself easily into the harsh and irrational Man-God-King-Star-performer posture. Nagg had his tailor’s story debunk Creation as too hurried an effort, lasting only 6 days. The young Krapp had often yelped to Providence. And Play does it with its quick, arbitrary play of spotlight, that is repetitious; it brightens and vains, and is demanding, prodding and compulsive. It even tires and suffers blackouts but never ceases to pressurize, at will, the ‘dead voices’, either into an unintelligible babble, or, into a reveal of the timeless narrative of a ‘talking I’, even after death. Be it divinity or an absent presence is not named; it is just a callous spotlight.

And so, the curtain rises. There is a dark haze the urns being just discernible. After a few seconds, there is a faint spotlight simultaneously focused on three faces, which are of heads, protruding out of the urns. The spotlight appears to prod them to speak together. Their ‘dead’ voices are faint and hardly intelligible, and their utterances are different. They are supposed to come out as a chorus, but should sound more of a muddled prattle with a random articulation achieving clarity. This lasts for 3 seconds. The chorus or babble confirms that the pathetic irrationality of the sad existential condition shall be ‘there’, even after death. Thus, complete darkness never takes over. It is ‘the darker’ that sustains, which is worse, though the inordinate hope persists that ‘time will come’. The profound wish to shake off a perpetual absent-presence is always
there too, and with it the much belied wish that all should be 'dark, all still, all over, all wiped out--' . But this wish is, however, cut off in mid-narrative, as are the other two, with the implication that the ordeal now being outside time, is timeless, and therefore so much the worse. There is apprehension that one 'dead voice' is a 'shade gone, just a shade, in the head, though the 'dead voice' itself doubts this, and the doubt too is left in mid-narration. Finally, there is the disillusionment about peace, when 'all the pain, all as if... never been--', though the hope persists still, but it is, as usual, accompanied by the dramaturgic commentary of a 'hiccup'. This opening Chorus or unintelligible though poignant cackle, is incidentally also the closing piece of the play, before a 'Repeat' of it sets in. This Chorus should be quoted entire---

[Together]

W1: Yes, strange, darkness best, and the darker the worse, till all dark, then all well, for the time, but it will come, the time will come, the thing is there, you'll see it, get off me, keep off me, all dark, all still, all over, wiped out--

W2: Some might say, poor thing, a shade gone, just a shade, in the head--- (Faint wild laugh)--- just a shade, but I doubt it, I doubt it, not really, I'm all right, still all right, do my best, all I can---

M: Yes, peace, one assumed, all out, all the pain, all as if.... never been, it will come... [Hiccup]-- Pardon, no sense in this, Oh I know... nonetheless, one assumed, peace... I mean... not merely all over, but as if... never been... (p.147,148)

There is a 5 second Blackout, after which, the spot focuses synchronously again on the three faces. They all speak together once more but this time their voices are at
normal strength, and the Chorus or babble has fewer words, and its dramaturgy introduces the adultery theme—-

[Together]

W1: I said to him, give her up---

W2: One morning as I was sitting---

M: We were not long together --- (p.148)

Now, Kenner begins his critical commentary on the assumption that there is no mistake about the adultery, though Laughlin prefers to arrive at the dialogic content of the episodic narratives through close critical analysis. Be that as it may, for the moment it shall suffice to state, that the stage directions, and, the 2 choruses help situate, on-stage, 'there', an irrational after death perplexity which the two tramps in Waiting for Godot had visualized as the rustle of wings, leaves, feathers, and the movements of sand---

Estragon: All the dead voices.

Vladimir: They make a noise like wings.

Estragon: Like leaves.

Vladimir: Like sand.

Estragon: Like leaves.

(Silence.) (Waiting for Godot Act II, p.62)

With such an after-death tragic impasse dramaturgically contextualized on stage, the spot next focuses, singly on W1, one of the two women, and initiates the play's 'narrations', for, each of the three faces speaks only for
himself, or, herself, camouflaging the play's covert dialogic movement---

I said to him. Give her up. I swore by all I held most sacred --- (p.148)

This W1 utterance is the first intelligible line spoken in the play so far. It is a dead woman's voice, telling 'him', perhaps the husband, 'to give her up', a mistress perhaps. The spotlight shifts, and W1 is not allowed to complete her speech. The spot now arbitrarily switches on to W2, the other woman, who at once says---

One morning as I was sitting stitching by the open window she burst in and flew at me. Give him up, she screamed, he's mine. Her photographs were kind to her. Seeing her now for the first time full length in the flesh I understood, why he preferred me. (p.148)

This is probably the mistress W1 spoke of. W2 was aware of her physical beauty. However, she was now a 'dead voice' merely, and barely a face; and that too projects out of an urn. W2's toneless 'dead voice' makes her words about flesh and physical beauty sound absurd and meaningless. In the first part of the play, the 'narration' of each of the three voices, has more to speak about the other two. The third voice is that of M, the male in the adulterous triangle. W2 is not allowed further speech, for the spot shifts, this time to M, whose dead voice is heard saying---

We were not long together when she smelled the rat. Give up that whore, she said, or i'll cut my throat -- [Hiccup.] -- pardon -- so help me God. I knew she could have no proof. So, I told her I did not know what she was talking about. (p.148)

M's dead voice confirms an erstwhile adultery. The 'dead voices' appear to be out of a limbo and re-count, under
an existential compulsion to keep up speech, the predicament they lived through on earth, only that now, a spotlight appears to excercise overt and arbitrary dramaturgic control, and the audience hear them, each entrapped in his or her 'talking I'.

From the first sequence of the play, what manifests itself, so far, on stage, is that there are three 'dead voices' which are not aware of the presence of each other, the individual focus of the spot keeping them dramaturgically separate. There is no overt dialogue between them. Each voice, therefore appears to speak as an immediate response to the compulsive, arbitrary prod of the spot, which seems to be playing the role of an 'inquisitor'. However, it is a non-chalant 'inquisitor', who does not appear interested in knowing the truth at all, for, it does not give the 'dead voices' a full hearing, cutting them off in mid-narrative, and, sometimes even in the middle of a word. Even the few times that the focus is simultaneous, the 'dead voices' speak only for themselves, but, because caught speaking together, produce the effect of a chorus, or, babble. The first sequence thus confirms the impression of the Godot tramps that the 'dead voices', speak together and individually—

(Silence.)

Vladimir: They all speak together.

Estragon: Each one to itself.

(Silence.)' (Act II, pp.62-63)

The 'dead voices' speak from a limbo, as it were, about their lives on earth. They talk of an adulterous relationship, in which they were caught on earth, as in a trap. It was an absurd irrationality, a poignant existential condition and the torture suffered by each, is carried over even to their after-death situation. Having been born was
sin enough, having lived was worse. Therefore, it was a cruel expiation all through. Vladimir and Estragon had had their inkling---

**Vladimir:** What do they say?

**Estragon:** They talk about their lives.

**Vladimir:** To have lived is not enough for them.

**Estragon:** They have to talk about it.

**Vladimir:** To be dead is not enough for them.

**Estragon:** It is not sufficient.

(Silence.) (Act II, p.63)

Now, the spotlight dramatically disjuncts dialogue into an apparent narration, though interpenetration of 'language themes' and context, resuscitates the strong dialogic content about which much will be said later. For the moment, let the utterances continue as 'narration'; each 'dead voice' telling the same story, but only from his or her own point of view. So, when the spot is next on W2, she immediately continues her story, the wife of her lover asking her to 'give him up', because, he belonged to her. However, there was no proof, and W2 denied the adulterous relationship. 'Someone yours? Give up whom?', she had said, while stitching away, sitting by an open window. The spot once again shifts arbitrarily and next switches on W1, whose 'narration' is heard saying that she hired a detective to find out the truth. And, since no proof was forthcoming she had wondered if the husband was not accused unjustly. However, the spot hardly appeared to care. It switched off, and focused itself on M who at his 'narration' is heard to have tried to convince and cajole his wife and had even been emotional and affectionate. He had also felt sorry for her.
However, he had taken care and left no proof, and had even bribed the detective. Spotlight is next on W2, who too therefore continues her story. The wife of her lover had come, asking her to leave her husband, and had horrified her by her violence. She 'had her shown out'. When next, M is at the spot's focus he is heard to say that his wife was not convinced, 'I smell her off you', she had kept telling him, and, M's embraces and oaths were repulsed. The spotlight does not give M any more time and switches on W1, who is heard to express astonishment at her husband's confession!

The shifts of spotlight disjunct each 'dead voice' from the next, and the impression is that each voice keeps up only his or her compulsive narration of a 'talking I' from the limbo, as a tragic grotesquie, quite the same as was kept up, as speech, when they had lived on earth, quarrelling over their own versions of the adultery trap. Of course, after death there was no dialogue. This is achieved by making the lighting device play the role of an 'inquisitor'. Thus, when M was swearing that he had no relationship with another lady, spotlight prompted W1 to mention his confession. The spot exposes M also when he was saying how he had bribed the detective to silence, and, switches on to W2, when she was heard saying that M had moaned to her about his home life. Infact, spotlight, despite all its arbitrariness, establishes that M had little, or, no feeling at all for either W1, or, W2, and was inconsistent, absurd and irrational. Also, as W2 says, there was no danger of M being 'the... spiritual thing'. He could have even loved his wife only for her money as W2's 'narration' would have us believe. This narrative technique is quite a transformed dramaturgy. It disjuncts dialogue into a narration; shows the light device indifferent and arbitrary; and with the help of three human heads jutting out of urns, creates the stage impression of three 'dead voices' each trapped in his, or, her own compulsive 'talking
I'. Each speaks at a stretch, from out of a limbo, and the effect at first is that of a narration, though the effect acquires ambivalence as the narrations gradually take on dialogics colour. And so, the entrapped constriction on earth continues in the limbo, even after death. Life, and, after-life, were each part of a grotesque existential condition, and speech be it on earth, or, in the limbo was a compulsive irrational bane, the perpetual obligation to express, a permanent curse.

Thus, 'spotlight dramaturgy' is exploited by the playwright to experiment quite a few theatrical effects and also give new variety to his 'language theme'. Firstly, it exploits 3 independent narrations to give the dramaturgic effect of a dialogue. To put it the other way, it converts the apparent dialogue of a drama into 3 separate, independent narrations. In this way, though the genre is drama, which on the face of it should have a dialogic content, the effect is at first that of 3 disjunct narrations in progress. This tantamounts to saying that even apparently separate narrations, if given a random mix can become dialogic, if the narrations have a common theme. Therefore, drama need not have an overt dialogue, and, a random mix of independent narratives, on a common theme, can very much become dialogic. This is one achievement of the play's dramaturgy and, a further extension of his 'language theme', that, narration and dialogue can both be ambivalent. Secondly, the narravatives being separate and independent, create the impression of the three 'dead voice' personae, being afflicted by a 'talking I' syndrome, and an on stage situation of 'dead voices'. The effect of converting dialogue into prolonged independent narrations is tremendous. The conversation of the Godot tramps on 'dead voices' stands vindicated. These were two gains of 'spot dramaturgy'. The third is that the random play of spot earns it the character
of an 'inquisitor', indifferent and callous, though very particular in har assing the three 'dead' into 'speech-revelations' their 'talking I' being compulsively perpetual. The Spot is shifting, repetitious, and uncertain, it is the typical version of a deity, from out of the Beckettian ouevre. The present play is the better for this dramatic exploitation. When Spot sets up activity, the three 'dead voices', if under simultaneous focus, start off into a babble. After a Blackout, and one more simultaneous Spot there is a less worded chatter. The first babble, situates on stage the passive toneless voices as those of the 'dead'. The second babble, initiates the adultery theme. There is a Blackout, after which, Spot each 'dead voice', at an independent 'narration'. The Spot shifts at will, and the narrations, while remaining separate and independent, dwell on two common themes. At first it is the theme of adultery, and concretizes on stage the emotional crisis which entrapped the three on earth. Later, the theme is the after-death pathetic irrational perplexity which the three suffer together, timelessly!

The narrations continue the theme of adultery, till, the suggestion is that the three had died in different ways, and, were now the play's three 'dead voices'. For, as the individual narrations continue, and appear at the compulsive prod of the Spot, there comes a time in the play, when W2's 'dead voice' speaks of a plan that she and M, had made when alive on earth, to leave the town. However, instead, M had stopped coming, although W2 was 'prepared' for the journey. Of course, there being no story, there is no elaboration, and in any case, the Spot shifts were random and arbitrary. However, it is not long after, when the Spot being on M, he is heard saying---

Finally it was all too much, I simply could no longer--- (p.151)
But M is cut in mid-narrative, and the audience remain in the dark as to what he 'could no longer'? Was it that he could not go on living like that? Had he then committed suicide? Perhaps, yes! Kenner would have no critical qualms about such a conclusion, for he takes up the adultery theme directly.\textsuperscript{15}

Next, the spot is focused on W1, and she is heard to say--

Before I could do anything he disappeared. That meant she had won. That slut! I couldn't credit it. I lay stricken for weeks. Then I drove over to her place. It was all bolted and barred. All grey with frozen dew. On the way back by Ash and Snodland... (p.151).

M was already heard to have stopped visiting W2. And now W1 says 'he disappeared'. It is a clear indication that the man had perhaps committed suicide. However, for W1 it meant that the other lady 'had won'. And so, she had driven over to her place which she had found 'bolted and barred!' What had happened to her 'on the way back by Ash and Snodland'. Was it a road accident?! About this conclusion also, Kenner would have had no critical qualms. After the man had stopped coming, W2 too is heard to say---

I made bundle of his things and burnt them. It was November and the bonfire was going. All night I smelt them smouldering. (p.151).

Here too, the audience are not told why she burnt his things. But she did smell the smoke all night! Had she suffocated to death!? There is no elaboration, for spotlight switches off, and there is a 5 second Blackout. Yet again, about this forthright conclusion, Kenner would not have any hesitation. The conflict was perhaps too severe, and M 'could no longer---' endure the situation, and so, perhaps, had
committed suicide. W1 had perhaps died heart-broken, realizing that she could not keep M away from W2. An accident had killed her 'on the way back by Ash and Snodland'. And, finally W2, who had 'smelt the smoke all night', was suffocated by the smoke from the fire she had set to M’s belongings, when, despite a promise to elope with her, M had not returned. The three then had died, and were after death 'there' on stage, still entrapped in an existential predicament, heads jutting out of urns, engulfed by the haze that was as yet not fully dark.

Now, the theme of adultery, common to the three disjuncted recounts, helps give their apparently separate narrations a dialogic content or is it, that the narrations acquire ambivalence as remarked earlier. Merely a sentence like 'I said to him. Give her up' could give sufficient clue that the theme of the wrenched narration was adultery. Some lines quoted below illustrate clearly, that it is the simplicity of the theme selected that helps understand a situation, otherwise narrated in disjunct pieces, the same thrust imparting to the separate utterances a dialogic characteristic---

She burst in and flew at me, Give him up, she screamed, he is mine (p.148).

Or---

We were not long together when she smelled the rat. Give up that whore, she said; or i’ll cut my throat---’ (p.148)

Or---

Or---

What have you to complain of? I said'. Have I been neglecting you? How could we be together in the way we are if there were someone else? Loving her as I did, with all my heart. I could not but feel sorry for her (pp.148-149).

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To return to the play then the spot is suddenly focused simultaneously on the three faces, after a 5 second Blackout. Once again the three speak together. Their voices, though toneless, are now 'proportionately lower'. And therefore, this time they produce a different kind of babble---

[Together]

W1: Mercy, mercy—

W2: To say I am—

M: When first this change—(p.152)

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After the babble another 5 second Blackout ensues. The spotlight focuses on M's face who is prodded to immediately say---

When first this change I actually thanked God. I thought, it is done, it is said, now all is going out--- (p.152).

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A change is supposed to have taken place, but it did not, and what is on stage remains an after-death tragic impasse. However, 'when first this change' remains vague. Was it the relaxation he got during the two Blackouts? And what did he, actually thank God for? What is it, that is 'said' and 'done'? Was he referring to his situation now, that is, after death?! It can be sensed however, that M is talking about an experience which is totally different from whatever that had preceded it. For, what M says does not continue the
adultery theme. M's last words before the last two Blackouts were 'I simply could no longer---', and, it was a 'change' that he was now talking about. But the fact of the matter is that in their current existential condition Spotlight does not change! It still sticks to its habit of arbitrary focus in order to switch on, or, switch off the heard sound of human speech; because the tragedy is that the 'talking I' is persistent. The Spot only apparently silences M, and make him disappear into the darkness. It next has W1 in focus, who is heard to plead for mercy---

Mercy, mercy, tongue still hanging out for mercy. It will come. You haven't seen me. But you'll. Then it will come --- (p.152).

It should be noticed that W1's words do not continue the theme of a faithless husband. Instead, she pleads for 'mercy'. But from whom, from the Spot which hence forward may be given a capital 'S', for, could it be some version of divinity! Of course, there is no elaboration, but the suggestion is that it is shifting and hostile. The audience do not just know what does W1 expect to 'come', and whom she is addressing by 'you haven't seen me?' Was she seen by somebody, if so, who? What was to come in anycase? Was it some Truth, or, Peace, or, Darkness! The callous Spot which remains as careless as ever, switches her off, and as carelessly switches over to W2, who is heard to say---

To say I am not disappointed, no, I am, I had anticipated something better. More restful. (p.152).

Again, W2's words also do not continue the adultery theme. The audience is still not sure about the cause of her 'disappointment'. Nevertheless, after death, she perhaps anticipated a more restful life, perhaps a kind of no-life at all. Instead, she found herself in an urn, with only
the head out, and under the constant interrogation of a non-chalant Spotlight. She can neither switch the Spot off, nor, being at a perpetual ‘talking I’ can she be silent when it is projected on her face. It is a trapped condition.

What has been concretized on stage, so far, is an after death irrational existential condition which is now worse, because it is timeless; all the more uncertain, and, all the more confused. Incorrigible hope is at its usual worst; the hope is still prolonged; the end yet not anywhere near; and, the ‘talking I’ not ever quiet!

Spotlight next switches over to W1, who has already, in the first round, asked for mercy, and said that ‘it will come’. Now she goes on to say -- 'Or you will weary of me'. It could be a reference to the Spotlight, which one day might weary of her and leave for ever as her husband did! However, just then the Spot shifts to M who once again thanks God for ‘this change’ in which all was going down ‘into the dark’. He also had expected ‘peace’; that the after-death plight would be better. But as usual, he too is cut in mid-narrative for the Spot transfers itself to W2, who also had anticipated ‘something better’ and ‘more restful’. She appears now ‘less confused and less confusing’. She also prefers ‘this’ to --- the other thing’ and finds her present predicament more preferable than the plight she was entrapped in on earth. This was one more version of the death wish on earth, though, death too is now found to be no softner! But then, W2 did have her after-death ‘endurable moments’. Perhaps these were those moments in which the Spot was either off, or, on someone else’s face. Because, given the harassing Spotlight, only such moments could be ‘restful’. The Spot briefly shifts focus to M who manages only to say, ‘I thought’, after which it is again on W2 whose ‘dead voice’ thinks that when the Spot ‘goes out’, she will go out too. And, also that a
day will come when the Spot will tire of her, and after all, 'go out for good'. Just then the Spot shifts to W1 who is just then saying 'Hellish half-light'; but immediately after the Spot is again on M's face, who, had earlier, been only able to say 'I thought...'. Given more attention M is heard longer speaking of 'peace, yes, I suppose, a kind of peace and all that pain as if ... never been'. The three 'dead souls' seem to refer to their current existential situation, and it is felt that the dead souls' reaction to their after-death existential condition differs only slightly from their on-earth existential predicament. Death may have appeared some kind of relief from the irrationality of the on-earth plight, however, it had brought very little succour. Infact, W2 is desperate and says---

Give me up, as a bad job. Go away and start poking and pecking at some one else. (p.152)

And, W1 is also weary---

Get off me! Get off me. (p.153).

The 'dead female voices' appear tired of the arbitrarily willful Spotlight and want it to leave them in peace. However, the Spot also appears no less weary and even impatient, because its focus is made to appear no less weary and impatient, and is on now for shorter durations. Infact, was it not impatient even earlier, when it had arbitrarily cut them off in mid-narrative? As at the end of Sartre's The Flies, Zeus and Man are both forlorn and weary in their lonesome freedoms!

The 'dead voices' soon become particularly specific about their after-death existential quandary, trapped as they now were in a timeless eternity. Was the Spot looking for
some kind of truth? Once when its focus was on M he is heard to say---

It will come. Must come. There is no future in this. (p.153).

Was it a state of inordinate hope still persisting for all the four, including the Spotlight? The possibilities could be worse, because when once the Spot was at W1, she had said---

On the other hand things may disimprove, there is that danger (p.153).

Death was some kind of an improvement on the live existential impasse on earth. Yet the after-death condition was also a 'darker the worse' predicament. M understands somewhat---

Oh ofcourse I know now--- (p.153).

When the Spot is next on W1, she is heard weary and seems to want it off, or, was it that she did not tell the Spot the truth! It is a hapless and helpless Non-ent existential situation, either pre-death, or, after-death, and dramaturgy has it shaped well with the 'inquisitor' Spotlight an over-night divinity, impatient, arbitrary, harsh and callous, and, itself getting tired and weary and yet caught in an irrational trap of its own, or, so it appears. No less weary are its victims, for would it leave focussing on W1, if she were to tell the truth! Ofcourse the Spot does not answer back and yet it persisted with its compulsive focuses. Its shifts are irrational, which is terrible, and shows up its utter indifference to the kept up compulsive narrative of each 'talking I', in death, as before death!
W2 is apprehensive of the Spot's anger, because once she is heard to say—

You might get angry and blaze me clean out of my wits. Mightn't you? (p.153).

Later, when the Spot chooses M as its focus, we have M having realized that life on earth, or, was it the play of the Spot after death, just 'play'—

I know now, all that was just ... play. And all this? When will all this ... (p.153).

Was death no succour then, and only a matter of falling from the pan into the fire? 'That' was just play, meaningless and absurd. And 'this', the predicament of an after life! There is disillusion and pain in his 'And all this. When will all this ...' However he is cut off in mid-narrative. A little later another 'just ... play' from M gets a random, 'Is it that?' from W1 fixated by the changing narrative into a chance articulation. When next the arbitrary Spot is on W2, she is at her re-iteration of 'Mightn't you?', that is, might not the Spot blast her out of her wits. Here also an outright single narration takes on the colour of a chance utterance, because W2 spoke 'Mightn't you' just when a mention of being blasted out of wits was made by W1. As remarked earlier it is a hapless condition of a Non-ent and Beckettian dramaturg; shapes it into just that as an on-stage, after-death existential quandary, 'there'. The difference is that, these are some of the 'dead voices', the two tramps had visualized in Waiting for Godot, and already quoted earlier. By this time, the 'dead voice' of M has also started wearying and when focussed on by the Spot is heard to say—

All this when will all this have been ... Just play? (p.153).
Life on earth had earlier been realized as 'just....play'. Death took over, and yet an inordinate hope was as persistent as a 'talking I'. Though W2, had a lurking fear that the situation may 'disimprove', and the pre-death irrational existential bind may again set in, yet the disenchantment with the after-death existential condition is no less acute. Infact the condition is no better, and there is that weariness in it too, which hopelessly wishes it to become 'a have been', that is, 'just play'. However 'this is a timeless predicament, repetitious and circular, with no escape whatever from! There was no succour of a death either. And therefore, when will all be 'a have been.....just play?'

Now, the 'dead voice' of W1 also appears obsessed by the thought of the woman who tried to seduce her husband; 'I can hear her poor thing', W2 is saying, when next Spot gives her the opportunity to be heard. The Spot shifts immediately and alights on M whose 'dead voice' is still talking about Lipton tea; a tragic grotesquerie it becomes because an apparently 'dead voice' with its head out of an urn is speaking expressionlessly, its preference for a particular tea.

W2, is of the thinking kind, worried about herself being a 'shade gone', and, 'how the mind works still'. She speaks of 'all fallen from the beginning on empty air. Nothing being asked at all. No one is asking me anything at all!' Hers too is a toneless voice, be-moaning an after-death existential imbroglio that being now outside time, was a timeless condition! However, W2 does not take kindly to others regret for her, as being an expressionless 'dead voice' merely, because being 'dead' she had at least escaped the pre-death, irrational, existential strait on earth. And therefore, those that are still embroiled in the aborted futile condition are the ones to be truly regretted for. Not that, the after-life existential perplexity would be any better, but at least the on-earth mess is got rid of, for it is
a thoroughly Absurd and Irrational condition, so that the living could be pitied even by the dead. The living still kiss their 'sour kisses'. The dead voices of W1, W2 and M are in a trans-life, trans-death state, concretized 'there' on-stage as a timeless trap, which in any case appears to have an over-view of the existential impasse of the living on earth. M also pities them and considers his condition, however worse, still blessed, for, at least the Absurd, on earth has been escaped from. Therefore, dramaturgic strategy has all humanity on stage, in both its after-life and pre-death existential state, neither predicament worth anybody's while at all, though the timeLess after-life condition, is just a jot better, in as much as the abortion that existence was on earth, was at least got away from.

The mentality of which W2 appears quite a protagonist, revolts even though it be a 'dead voice' that speaks. It revolts against the after-death situation, because the 'darker the worse' state still persists. The Spot, which with indifference switches the speakers off and on, as it were, also persists. A simultaneous focus, an individual Spot, a Blackout; stronger and, weaker Spots; as well as the Spot's irrational shifts; a cut-off in mid-narrative, even in mid-word, were all too whimsical and had no rationale whatever. The light device helps situate on-stage an existential affliction, which is haunted and harassed by the callous 'divinity' of a light, that keeps the 'dead voices' in a perpetual 'darker the worse' strait, and, the solace of Blackouts is of very short durations, at best of 5 seconds each. From the vantage point of an after-death predicament, the 'dead voices' could of course pity the aborted existence on earth. However, the non-chalance of the 'inquisitor' light is no less intriguing. It is indifferent; it just does not care, it shifts focus at will; its will is a whim; its movement is quick; its focus is a hurting, harsh, prod to continue speaking; it tires also; it vains; it is repetitious, always a-coming; circular. In short, it is an
appropriate dramaturgic device in Beckettian hands to situate on stage, 'there' a presentational compulsive 'talking I' predicament as an excruciatingly cruel phenomenon even after death. The toneless 'dead voice' of W2 insists that the Spot must let her know what does it do when it goes out---

What do you do when you go out? Sift? (p.155)

Let us now observe the dramaturgy of the play a little more closely, for there is the stage-direction of 'Repeat play' and, at the end of the last 'Repeat' of the play, there is to be a 'Closing Repeat' also. Therefore, if one 'Repeat' of the play is thought dramatically sufficient to establish the timeless circularity of the on-stage, existential condition, the play will have had one 'Original' on-stage performance, the next, a 'Repeat' of it, and, this 'Repeat play' will be followed by a 'Closing Repeat'. Of course there may be two or more 'Repeat plays', but, as it appears from the stage-direction, only one 'Closing Repeat' will follow at the end of the last of the 'Repeat play'. Therefore, ordinarily there will be one 'Original' one 'Repeat', and one 'Closing Repeat' at any one performance of the play. In effect, therefore, the performance of the play will have these three broad divisions. Now, the Blackouts in the 'Original' are 5, five second events, and 2, three second events. Therefore, an 'Original' piece has 7 Blackouts, and if there is to be a 'Repeat', there will be 7 more, that is in all 14 Blackouts. To this, add the 3 five second Blackouts of the 'Closing Repeat'. And, in this way, one 'Original', one 'Repeat' and one 'Closing Repeat' will have in all 17 Blackouts, of which 13 will be of 5 second duration, and 4, of three second duration. The Blackouts and the Spot's simultaneous focuses go together. Therefore, before commenting on the dramaturgy of Blackouts let us consider the simultaneous focuses. There are 4 simultaneous Spot-focuses in the 'Original' part. That will make 8 simultaneous focuses in one 'Original' and a 'Repeat'. There is one simultaneous
focus in the 'Closing Repeat' also. Therefore, altogether there will be 9 simultaneous focuses, each of three second duration. Of these, the first and the last are of strong focus, the rest are faint, with the 'dead voices' getting lower and fainter also. A simultaneous focus has the three 'dead' speaking together. This has also been referred to earlier. Each performance starts with this confused babble and also ends with it. A textual analysis has the advantage of not only catching each word of the prattle distinctly, but also, of picking up the slant of each 'dead-utterance' individually. Of course, the reader misses the collective dramaturgic effect of these dead-utterances. The longer pieces, spoken as a chorus, have already been quoted earlier. However, since the dramaturgy of the 'Original', 'Repeat', and 'Closing Repeat' is being considered is one movement at a single performance, let us also look at the different choruses again, as distinct dramatic devices. In the choruses which repeat many times the first has W1 speak of the 'darker the worse' condition, and, her 'dead voice' wishes it all dark, 'all over, wiped out --'. It is weary of the Spot, and, wants it to get off and keep off. In her timeless existential quandary, she still speaks of a 'time will come', and the 'thing is there, you'll see it'. On the other hand, the 'dead voice' of W2 is obsessed with the idea that others may think her 'a shade gone', though her 'dead voice' doubts it. Finally, M speaks of 'a peace, one assumed, 'peace ...I mean ... not merely all over, but as if ... never been'. All in all, it is a sorry state of earnest after-death expectation that is belied. And this, to begin with is concretized on-stage very effectively. The second simultaneous exposure has a very small, almost, a word each chorus. This initiates the adultery theme, with each of the three 'dead' beginning with his or her own version of it inorder add to the existential after-life condition, the Being-on-earth bind. The third simultaneous exposure reverts to the predicament of the dead and finds them speaking lower, a lesser number of words. However, as in the second chorus,
they have the same 3 dramaturgic seconds to speak a lesser number of words. Thus, whereas W1 pleads for 'Mercy', W2 only says 'To say that I am ---', recounting her obsession of being a 'shade gone' in the mind. Of course M introduces the word 'Change', possibly, that was expected after death, and various versions of this expected 'change' find expression as part of Beckett's 'language theme' over a whole page of differently directed W1-W2-M narratives. Of the spread of the word 'change' as a 'language theme' much will be said shortly. The fourth and last simultaneous Spot-exposure has the three 'dead' again participating in the babble that began the play, and re-institutes the death-theme, as a presentational, after-death existential condition 'there' on stage. The 'Closing Repeat' has its own simultaneous Spot focus, in which the 3 'dead' repeat the second short babble, and each initiates his or her own version of the adultery theme. And as one Repeat goes into another, round and round, the movement of the play becomes a timeless spin almost. However, the three broad-divisions of a single performance remain an 'Original', a 'Repeat', and a 'Closing Repeat'. Together the three position on the proscenium a timeless, repetitious, circularity, out of which there is no escape whatever, because W1, W2 and M being already dead, could not even think of dying in order to redeem themselves the more.

To return to the dramaturgy of the Blackouts in Play, they are found to replace the strategy of Pauses and Silences put to tremendous effect in the earlier plays. Blackouts generally follow the 'dead voice' babble after a simultaneous Spotlight focus. Thus a Blackout each precedes and succeeds the first chorus of the three 'dead'. These are 5 second Blackouts, and cup the babble of the 'dead' trapped in an after-death quandary, in which to repeat, W1 is heard speaking of a 'darker the worse' predicament, and expressing an inordinate hope of 'it will come', the dark, that is, when all will be 'over' and 'wiped out'. And the dead voice of W2
is to heard to doubt that she is ‘a shade gone’ in the mind. Finally, the deceased M also inordinately hopes for an after-death peace, when all will not only be over but will be ‘as if ... never been’. Therefore the first 5 second-Blackout-couple, which hedges on either side the first dead cackle concretizes an after-death ‘talking I’ constriction of a Non-ent still. These ‘dead voices’ are faint, and so is the simultaneous Spot on them, that catches them in the midst of speech and leaves them in mid-narrative too. Each ‘dead’ begins with a ‘Yes’, as if he or she was already in speech and the compulsion to express continued even after-death, so that even an earthly demise would fail to silence the ‘talking I’ of the trapped existential strait. This chorus, has more words in it and is spoken faster, than the babble that immediately follows after a 3 second Blackout.

Once again, two Blackouts hedge on either side the prattle of the deceased. It is a very short chorused articulation and dramatically initiates the adultery-theme of the three dead who appear to have been involved in an intrigue when on earth, a condition equally hopeless and hapless. Each ‘dead’ keeps to his or her own narrative, and, a personal version both of the adultery theme, as well as to the after-death existential ensnare. The dialogic content of the three independent narratives is caught only in situational or language overtones or language ‘themes’. However, the two sets of Blackouts, that is, the 5 second-pair, as well as the 3-second pair, with the individual chorus contents within, help initiate the twin-themes of the play: that of a timeless, after-death existential constriction; and, that of a pre-death adulterous imbroglio, which is no less an existential entanglement. That is, the two sets of Blackouts help contextualize the ‘there’, after-death predicament, and, initiate the adultery theme. Thus one pair of Blackouts specifically marks-off the drama of the adultery-theme, spoken and staged as a persistent ‘talking I’ personal narration of each of the three ‘dead’. Yet another set of Blackouts again hedges a dead voice’s prattle, and each
Blackout is of 5 second duration. The chorus-content of the speech of the 'dead' spaced within this set of Blackouts is smaller but powerful, and is voiced because of a simultaneous 3 second Spot-focus. The significant call in this chorus is of 'Mercy', the dead W1 re-iterating it twice. The life- bereft head of W2 still speaks of her apprehension of being thought 'a shade' gone mentally, and the lifeless M inordinately hopes for a change. The Blackouts then emphasise not only the on-stage semi-dark, but also the glare or vain of the simultaneous Spot that is spaced in between. They also intensify the spoken themes, after providing an effective dramaturgy for their initiation. They help telescope the existential, on-earth, adulterous, Non-ent predicament with the constricted-in-urns after-death persistent 'talking I', Non-ent condition. This second set of 5 second Blackouts punctuates the tragedy with poignant calls of 'Mercy', with apprehension of insanity and with an unusually lingering hope of a peace, when all will be over 'as if never been'.

Now let us return to the play, and leave the other Blackouts to be commented upon as and when they occur. For the moment, the play has been picked up from the idea of 'change', which the dead M harbours as a condition, that should have followed the decease on earth, which takes the drama directly to the after-death existential ensnarement. And therefore, the three 'talking I' narratives now have overtones, not so much of their versions of adultery in which they were entrapped when they lived on earth, but, of the after-decease existential irrationality in which each voices individually, his or her own predilection not only towards change, but also Truth; and Play, Mind, Sorrow and Speech; and, Penitence and Atonement; as also Silence, Darkness, Drift, and Fantasies. The final dramaturgic concentration is on Spotlight itself, which M repeatedly admonishes as---

Mere eye. Just Looking. At my face. On and off. (p.157)
By then, W1 has too become weary and even obsessed about the shifting, and hurting Spotlight, and, wants it off; and, W2 is eerie with her wild laugh and her repeated speculation of 'a shade gone in the head'. The next pair of Blackouts, is at the end of the 'Original' part of a performance and before the 'Repeat' of it starts, when M heard to say---

Mere eye. No mind. Opening and shutting on me. Am I as much--- (p.157)

The Spot leaves M inconclusive. A Blackout of 3 seconds ensues. The Spot is again on M when he is saying---

Am I as much as... being seen? (p.157)

The Blackout-pair that follows, is once again at the border-edge of a speech content chorused by the dead W1, W2 and M. It is the same chorused prattle which had initiated the play in which W1 is heard wanting 'a dark' when 'all will be over and wiped out', and, W2 is apprehensive of insanity; and the dead M is inordinately waiting for peace, when all will be over 'as if... never been'. That 5 second each, Blackout pair, culminates the 'Original' part of a single performance. However, it also initiates the 'Repeat' of the play so far performed, whereafter the drama is all set to position on-stage once again, whatever had transpired on it in the 'Original', as part of a 3-Division drama beginning with the 'Original', and with as many 'Repeats' as directed, to establish, an on-stage timeless circularity, though the last 'Repeat' is followed by a 'Closing Repeat' to conclude the play.

Now, assuming that there is only one 'Repeat', the dramaturgy of the 'Closing Repeat' will begin where the first 'dead voice' chorus, which had began the play, ends the
'Repeat Play'. Thereafter the Spot would temporarily concentrate on M who would be found repeating—

Am I as much as .... being seen (p.157)

A 5 second Blackout would ensure, followed by a strong, 3 second, simultaneous focus when the there voices, in normal strength, would speak what is the second successive chorus at the play's beginning. This small chorus, initiates the overtones of the adultery theme. In this dramaturgic fashion the after-death and pre-death existential predicaments are again telescoped however summarily, as existential Non-ents, with death hardly helping to achieve any solace or succour. The escape from the first of the two irrational states, only led into a timeless trap of the after-death existential irrationality. The 'Closing Repeat' therefore re-states the after-death condition of an—

Am I as much as... being seen? (p.157)

and dramaturgically re-initiates the on-earth adultery trap—

[Together]

W1: I said to him. Give her up--

W2: One morning as I was sitting--

M: We were not long together--(p.158)

There is the second Blackout in the 'Closing Repeat' after which the Spot alights on M whose words hint again at the theme of adultery, about which the persistent 'talking I' narrations were so insistent in the 'Original' part of the 3-Division circular performance. This slight hint is dramatically sufficient to revive the irrational on-earth imbroglio which had entrapped the three dead. And so, in
between the last pair of Blackouts of the 'Closing Repeat', M is heard to say---

We were not long together--- (p.158)

There is the last Blackout and then the Curtain.

There is another dramaturgic movement that can be perceived to extend till the stage-direction for a 'Repeat play'. It is the 'Original' move of the drama and has 4 parts. The first part begins with the rise of the Curtain, when on the proscenium 'there' is a presentational, after-death, irrational, existential condition with 3 heads found protruding out of 3 urns, and just discernible on a semi-darkened stage. The first 'dead' prattle adds voiced-articulation to the after-death, 'existential' trauma and reminiscences the 'dead voices' visualized by the Godot tramps. It is a 'time will come' when all will be dark 'all over, wiped out', though it wearies of something that harasses it. It is also a state that appears to be apprehensive of 'perhaps, a shade gone, in the head'. Finally, it inordinately hopes of peace when all will not only be 'all over, but as if.. Never been'. That is the dramaturgic context of the first W1-W2-M chorus, hedged before and after for intense effect between two Blackouts. After this the Spot once more catches them at a babble, in which each dead voice is at his or her own version of the adultery theme. A Blackout ensues and when the Spot is again alight at is not simultaneous but individual, and Beckett is found at his 'language theme' once more, writing disjunct narration where there should be dialogue, and showing it as much capable of dialogic content. There only need be a common conceptual theme. Further, as yet another extension to his 'language theme', the playwright has the articulated words themselves, for example pronouns carry some of the burden of converting apparent narrations to dialogue. Of
this later; what are here shorn of boundaries are 'narration' and 'dialogue' as bearers of specific well-defined meaning's. Therefore, where there should be a dialogue, a narration will do, and even independent narratives can have dialogic character. And so, the 'dead' at first do not appear therefore to engage in a dialogue, and seem to be talking on their own, at a tangent to each other, so much so that Laughlin, in a Modern Drama article, sets out to locate the dialogic content of the three off-hand independent narrations. Laughlin opts out of the simple adultery theme, to concentrate more on semantic shifts and inter 'illocutionary force',\textsuperscript{22} and, in the process diminishes the outright commitment the playwright has to his Non-ent theme and is visualized by him as a persistent irrational condition even after death. Kenner chooses to take up the adultery theme directly.\textsuperscript{23} However, the fact that even separate narratives, can be creatively turned into dialogue, is a different matter altogether. Thus, individual narrations, being on the same theme, can have a tendency to telescope into each other because, if nothing, as remarked earlier the pronouns may overlap. For example, the 'him' and 'her' of the W1 opening line, extend into the 'him' and 'she' of the opening W2 lines---

W1: I said to him, Give her up, I swore...

W2: .... Give him up, she screamed... (p.148)

Therefore, apparently independent narratives can intertwine, through pronouns, so that the first 4 narrations of W1, and, the first 5 of W2 and, as also, the first 5 M narrations have a constant W1 dramaturgic presence made manifest through their many interlocking pronouns. This continues for two pages almost. For example, the first M narrations speak of 'she' smelled the rat, of 'Give up that whore 'she' said', of M telling 'her' that M did not know what 'she' meant. The 'she' pronouns in the quick succeeding narrations could all be for W1, particularly because they do
not appear to apply to W2. Then the 'your' and 'hers' pronouns take over, and once again, the quick succeeding narrative, the common theme of adultery, and, the fact that W2, in any case is not meant, make all the 'you' and 'her' pronouns, also appear to refer to W1. For example, 'you' as in, 'What have you to complain of?', after which the 'you' changes to 'her' in 'loving her as I did', and so feeling sorry for 'her'. These M narrations are each followed by a W2 narrative, which has its own W1-pronoun presences. Thus, 'Fearing she' was about to offer me violence', W2 had 'her' shown out. Again, W2 speaks of 'Her' parting words, and about being alarmed when W1 had said that 'she' would settle W2's hash. Similarly, the dramaturgic W1 pronoun-presence continues when M takes over from W2 immediately after. For M speaks of 'she' was not convinced, and of 'she' kept saying, and of 'So I took 'her' into my arms', of telling W1 that he could not live without 'her'. And, immediately after, as if to confirm, W1 herself speaks, but when the Spot has the 'talking I' of M over, it is again a 'she' who had put a blood-hound on M. Quite similarly, there is a constant dramaturgic M-presence amid the adultery-theme disjunct narrations. Thus, after M has spoken of W1 having put a blood-hound after him, W2 takes over because the Spot arbitrarily alights on her, and quite independent of the immediately preceding M narration, W2 speaks of 'Why don't you get out', and, of how, 'he' had started moaning about 'his' home life, to which the immediately succeeding, though disjunct W1 narration adds---

I confess my first feeling was one of wonderment. What a male!--- (p.149).

This is not a lone example, for the constant M-dramaturgic - pronoun - presence is still there when W2 is heard to speak of 'he' said, and 'ofcourse with 'him' no danger of the .... spiritual thing', and 'why don't 'you' get out?'; and also when W2 wonders if 'he' was not living
with 'her' for 'her' money. The pronouns are put within quotes for convenience.

This dramaturgic inter-twining and telescoping of apparently disjunct narrations continues because the entire 'narration length' of the adultery-theme extends for two more pages, till the next Blackout, followed by a small chorus in which the 'dead voice' of W1 calls repeatedly for 'Mercy', while W2 doubts her loss of mental balance, and, M speaks of 'a change'. However, a little more about Beckett's pleasure in the use of certain voiced-sounds which grammar cares to call pronouns. Words are often mere meaningless articulations, arbitrarily fixated with dubious meanings. M's play with 'hers' and 'yours', is one very fine example, creating its own conflict, uncertainty, and, of course finales---

Not yours? she said. No, I aid hers.
We had fun trying to work this out . (p.150)

We can call it a 'pronoun dramaturgy' or, one more variation on the playwright's favourite 'language theme' or, whatever, but the point is that Beckett's dramaturgic imagination readily plays, as here on the facility available in the part of speech called 'pronoun', as he does elsewhere and all over his ouevre with the language phenomenon or 'theme' generally, so much so, that on occasion it becomes the tragedy of a writer's perpetual obligation to keep up expression. Of course language and the drama inherent in it never ceases to fascinate Beckett. Apart from language drama, Beckett is very responsive and alert to the subtleties of drama and dramaturgy generally. As in Endgame, there is Hamm's memorable yawn---

Me - (he Yawns) - to play. (p.12)
Or, in *Happy Days*, the timely turn, of a newspaper page by Willie, just when Winnie is at some crucial point in her speech, or in the break-up of the word 'Pardon' in *Play*---

M: ... Par--
(Spot from M to W2)

W2: No.
(Spot from W2 to M)

M: -don-. (p.156)

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These example are the very warp of the playwright's dramaturgy, always at its quiet play with language, disjuncting mischievously, as in this case the very word a callous and indifferent authority may appear very fond of; the voiced-sound so long associated with condescending forgiveness.

To get back to the play, and to the second thrust of the dramaturgic movement in it that extends till the stage-direction for a 'Repeat Play'. It starts from the second simultaneous focus of Spotlight upon the three faces of W1, W2 and M, after which they go into a babble, which has W1's thrice repeated cries of 'Mercy' as its main dramatic component. There is a Blackout, and after it begin, the page-length, independent 'voice narrations' which are linked by the many overtones of the word 'change', as a 'language theme'. Where this ends begins the third thrust of the drama. This section has the play add concretions, on stage, 'there', to the already contextualized after-death, existential irrationality. This dramaturgic movement concentrates specifically on 'Absurd Themes', and itself has two sub-movements. The fourth part of this dramatic movement re-stages the first thrust of the play and then goes into a 'Repeat', which is followed by the 'Closing Repeat'. This is followed by the Curtain. This, four part, drama movement is different from the pattern, earlier broadly described as 'Original', a 'Repeat Play', and the 'Closing Repeat'.

The word 'change' needs particular attention. It is first mentioned by M in the chorus that precedes the page-length exercise, where W1 had repeatedly called for 'Mercy'. W1 echoes change in her 'it', that is, change, will come. W2 speaks of having 'anticipated' something better, 'more restful', and the implication is that the 'change' was a disappointment. W1 is next heard weary of the Spot-focus; and M visualizes that a 'peace is coming', and says 'I was right, after all, thank God, when first this change...'. For W2, change was a matter of becoming 'less confused ...'. less confusing', and a preference for 'this to ... other thing'. M is of course still directly at his thought about 'the change'. Next, W2 is also heard weary of the Spot-focus, and wishes that someday the Spot 'will tire, go out, for good'. The change is now got dramaturgically identified with the detestable Spot-focus. W1 and W2 are already weary. M, however, still contemplates that change will usher in peace and 'all that pain as if ... never been'. But Spot-weary W2 wishes it away and have it 'poking and pecking at someone else'. The irrationality of an after-death existential predicament is thus concretized, as an on-stage plight, 'there', with the 'change' longed for not even a distant possibility. With heads sticking out of urns, and a callous, divinity of a Spotlight holding them at irrational bay, the dead too are prisoners of a timeless existential constriction. And yet, though W1 wishes the Spot to get off her, W2 still fears that the situation 'may disimprove'; her demise on earth being a possible improvement. W1 even thinks the Spot suspicious of her veracity. But then, did W1 at all know what the truth was? Beckett does not fail to exploit the opportunity to make this dramatically obvious, though as narrative only---

Is it that I do not tell the truth, is that it, that someday somehow I may tell the truth at last and then no more light at last, for the truth?. (p.153)
The rhetorical re-iteration of the word 'truth' with the conditional 'may' and the possibility 'someday somehow' are tell-tale. The play is now well on into the first part of its 'Absurd Themes' and its third dramaturgic thrust. The 'dead voices' of both W1 and W2 are absolutely weary of the 'inquisitor divinity' of an after-death Spotlight --

You might get angry and blaze me clean out of my wits. Mightn't you? (p.153)

Ofcourse M's 'dead voice' is still at his inordinate hopeful 'worst', though the first signs of discomfitude appear when he realizes it all to be just 'play'---

I know now, all that was just ... play. And all this? When will all this ... (p.153).

However, he is cut in mid narrative by the impotent Spot, which immediately after alights on W1, and we have almost a semi-dialogue. For, her 'Is that it?', comes like an answer to M, when he calls 'that' just 'play', and 'this' he expresses some weariness of; the 'that' and 'this' being pre-death and after-death irrational existential predicaments. Ofcourse M was stopped in mid-narrative and even he, the inordinately hopeful, is found weary---

All this, when will all this have been ... just play? (p.153).

The first half of the third dramaturgic movement of the play had made accretions to the Absurd, positioned on stage, an irrational 'something' itself,\textsuperscript{24} and had ended in a Blackout, immediately before which, W2 spoke of the timeless, existential impasse. It was like---

Like dragging a great roller, on a scorching day. The strain .. to get it moving ... (p.155).
While the third dramaturgic movement lasts, the 'dead voice' of W1 voices its existential plight in—

How the mind works still! (p.153).

And, when her mind had said all that it could---

But I have said all I can. All you let me. All I---. (p.153)

And still in the lines below when it cannot help but weep---

Is it something I should do with my face, other than utter? Weep? (p.154)

Or, when it wants the Spot to bite off her tongue and swallow it--

Bite off my tongue and swallow it? Spit it out. Would that placate you? How the mind works still to be sure! (p.154)

Similarly, when it discovers that there was no sense in it either---

If only I could think. There is no sense in this ... either, none whatsoever. I can't (p.154).

Or, it had felt as if falling on empty air, right from the beginning---

... that all is falling, all fallen, from the beginning on empty air. (p.154)

It had even felt that it was not being asked anything--

Nothing being asked at all. No one asking me for anything at all. (p.154)
Infact, W1 is insistent with her 'I can't---

I can't. The mind won't have it. It would have to go. Yes. (p.155).

Such was the after-death existential irrationality, and it had been contextualized and shaped on stage, 'there', as a presentational dramaturgic experience. Of course, W2 is also not way behind. Her 'dead voice' insists that she was 'doing her best'. She had been mistaken looking for sense---

Looking for sense where possibly there is none. (p.154).

And though reminiscent of Pozzo, the 'dead voice' of W2 longs to be heard, and seen, and bothered about, though its poignant questions remain unanswered---

Are you listening to me? Is anyone listening to me? Is anyone looking at me? Is anyone bothering about me at all? (p.154).

As the voice of a mistress, it felt itself taboo, though it thought this wrong. It even pitied its rival---

Am I taboo, I wonder. Not necessarily, now that all danger averted. That poor creature -- I can hear her -- that poor creature. (p.154).

Then comes an assertion from the 'dead voice' of W2 that takes in its sweep and range the audience also, as is often usual in Beckett. It pities those that pity it for its predicament, the existential condition on earth deserving more compassion---

They might even feel sorry for me, if they could see me. But never so sorry as I for them-- (p.155).
This was because the living, according to W2's dead voice kept on---

Kissing their sour kisses (p.155).

Finally, before her 'dragging a great roller' comment, W2 ridicules the perpetually focusing and shifting Spotlight, as if, questioning a veritable inquisitor divinity--

What do you do when you go out? Sift? (p.155).

Of course, the 'dead' M is as yet only at 'play'. Existence-on-earth as 'that' was just 'play', though it is uncertain still when will 'this', the after-death existential plight be just 'play' also. The 'dead voice' of M speaks of sorrow. Of course the overtones are of the on-earth adultery trap. It even reminiscences M's taste for Lipton tea. However, like W2, M also pitied the living. And yet, for all his inordinate optimism, the after-death bind being timeless, the dead M is found gradually becoming unsure and sceptical, wishing 'this' to be just the 'play' which 'that' was---

Am I hiding something? Have I lost.. (p.155).

The 'dead voice' of M finds itself lost and thinks the Spot questionable---

Have I lost ... the thing you want? Why go out? Why go --- (p.155).

The second set of 'Absurd themes' comes after the Blackout that follows W2 speaking of 'dragging a roller on a scorching day'. It has M's 'dead voice' losing its inordinate hope and devastatingly chastising the Spotlight as 'Mere eye' and 'No mind'. However, let us follow the apparently disjunct narrations of the three 'dead voices', who on earth were trapped in an adulterous imbroglio, but who were even now,
that is, after death, victims of a timeless, existential quandary. The on-earth adultery-trap still haunted. Neither atonement nor penitence was ever the relevant point. It was instead the existential Non-ent, be it before, or, after death, which was by now the obsession. And W2 was feeling herself a little 'unhinged already', a 'shade gone in the head', just a shade though, for, as yet she doubted it! However, the strain of the tragic grotesquerie even on her 'dead voice' is severe, and therefore, she re-iterates her doubt about having lost her head, and after a pause goes into a peal of wild laughter, which the Spot smotheres by its arbitrary shift; but the laughter resumes when the Spot again concentrates its last focus on her. Meanwhile the 'dead voice' of W1 is speaking of a---

Silence and darkness were all I craved. Well I get a certain amount of both. They being one. Perhaps it is more wickedness to pray for more. (p.156)

Therefore, for the dead W1 darker was a 'worse' predicament. She is convulsed at the Spot and retaliates calling it---

Hellish half-light! (p.156)

This is why W1 fervently longs for a complete dark, for though strange, 'the darker' was indeed a worse condition---

Dying for dark --- and the darker the worse. Strange? (p.157)

Be it W1, W2, or M, it is a tragic grotesquerie all through, an after-death, 'mere voice' existential bind, in a timeless 'talking I' condition. The craving was for peace, and even darkness; and the apprehension was of insanity. For, according to Beckettian surmise, a timeless existential irrationality will prevail even after death, from the trap of which, escape would be out of question. The three 'dead' are
weary of the Spot-play, and want the 'inquisitor divinity' off their faces.

The 'dead voice' of M had hopes of peace when his pain would be as if it had never been. Like Vladimir he comes around to it too, a veritable loser that he had forever been. 'That' was just play. Would that 'this' too would be 'just play' also. However, quite sometimes, M does have his fantasies, imagining little dinghies, oars, air-pillows and sheets, and drifting! But this was not for long, because very soon, even this becomes a matter of---

Such fantasies. Then. And now--- (p.157).

Earlier, it was 'that', the pre-death condition; and now, a 'this', the 'dead voice' state, but 'that' and 'this' become a 'then' and 'now'. The 'then' was just 'fantasies', and also 'play'! The problem was that the 'this' and 'now' was also proving itself a no less pitiless condition. M becomes severe at the Spotlight---

And now, that you are ... mere eye. Just looking, At my face. On and off (p.157).

Like the weary W1 and W2, even the 'dead voice' of M finds itself in a timeless trap, looked upon by an eye, that kept itself arbitrarily focused on his face, and switched off and on willfully, and, with callous indifference. It was not a Winnie of *Happy Days* who, however ironically, was often in ecstacies because she felt herself watched. Therefore, M is severe at the 'inquisitor divinity' that the Spotlight was---

Looking for something. In my face. Some truth. In my eyes. Not even --- (p.157).

And when the Spot focuses next on the face of M again, he actually retaliates---

Mere eye. No mind. Opening and shutting on me. Am I as much ---. (p.157)
But Spot hardly seems to care. It shifts. There is a Blackout after which it again alights on the 'dead' face of M, who is heard conjecture—

Am I as much as ... being seen? (p.157)

Another Blackout ensues, then Spot is again simultaneous but faint on the three faces whose 'dead voices', unintelligibly go into a babble that is identical with the opening chorus, in which W1 spoke of a 'darker the worse' condition, and, of a time that 'will come', when all will be dark 'all will be still, all over, wiped out—'. In this chorus also W2 was heard apprehensive of being a 'shade gone in the head', a 'little unhinged' as she had said later. And of course the 'dead voice' of M repeats its hope of a peace, a time, that is, when all pain will be as if it had never been. This ends both the fourth dramaturgic thrust of the play and also its 'Original' part of a single performance, and the stage direction calls for a 'Repeat Play'. This would perpetuate the on-stage, after-death, 'there' existential entrapment of the three 'dead'. as a timeless condition. Being out of Time, it will last eternally. The 'inquisitor divinity' that the Spot is, though itself weary, will keep the 'talking I-s' at the receiving end of its focussed 'prod'. One 'Repeat' of the 'Original' movement would suffice to reinforce the thrust of the play at situating on the proscenium an after death Non-ent condition. At the end of the 'Closing Repeat' M is heard saying—

Am I as much as... being seen? (p.157)

A Blackout ensues. Spot is then simultaneous and strong on the faces of the 'dead' W1, W2 and M. In normal voice the three .repeat the second chorus, which had, at the play's beginning initiated the adultery theme. One more Blackout ensues, and the Spot resumes its focus on M, whose 'dead voice' is again heard tonelessly refer to the adulterous
imbroglio on earth, linking dramaturgically the grotesquely pathetic pre-death and after-death existential situations---

We were not long together. (p.158)

There is a 5 second Blackout and the Curtain drops.

To conclude, in Play, Beckett extends his technical art to include in its sweep and range even the after-death existential ordeal. His drama shapes it into a no less palpable condition, purposeless and futile. Worse still, it was timeless. In Waiting for Godot, the tramps Vladimir and Estragon had had this inkling; the dead too were perpetual victims of the 'talking I', making sounds like sand, feathers, wings and leaves.

The stage, as usual in Beckett’s theatre is almost bare, save for three identical urns, which are centre-stage. It is semi-dark, and the protruding heads-out-of-urns condition situates on the proscenium an after-death predicament, which is intensified by a shifting Spot-light focus that is arbitrary and cruel. It is sometimes simultaneous, but on most occasions is unrelentingly on individual faces. It catches them at their ‘talking I’, which becomes a babble when the focus is on all three faces, and a personal, non-stop narration, when the Spot is only alone on a single face. The Spot originates from the centre of the foot-lights. It switches on and off at will. That is the immediate stage-context, the predicament of a limbo situation. The ‘language theme’ takes over from there, and operates between Blackouts, or when the Spot is at focus.

The response to the Spotlight appears as an immediate reaction to a compulsive prod, though the Spot could also be only catching the dead at their ‘talking I’, which in Beckett is an entrapped state of perpetual expression, in which, there being nothing to express, it is only the impossibility
of expression that gets expressed. This predicament is a condition as much before as after death.

The play uses the stage-direction of a 'Repeat Play' which can be many, and, ends at a 'Closing Repeat' which concludes in a Blackout and the Curtain. If the play is allowed only one 'Repeat', the drama will have had one 'Original', one 'Repeat Play', and a 'Closing Repeat'. This is the overt structure of the play.

Play uses choruses also. There are two choruses to begin with, the first much larger than the second. The first chorus states as a babble the after-death existential predicament, the second initiates the adultery theme. The 'talking I' of the three dead becomes a chorus when the Spot-focus is simultaneous, but when the focus is individual, the 'talking I' of each dead is heard as a personal narration. In between is a small chorus, in which the articulations that come through are appeals for mercy and the desire for change. Before the stage-direction for a 'Repeat Play', there is again a simultaneous focus and the three dead are heard at the words of their first babble which was in effect a statement of their irrational condition once more, and re-starts the 'Repeat Play'. However, if it is to be the last Repeat the words of this first babble about the existential limpo condition concludes it. The 'Closing Repeat' uses the chorus to re-state the adultery theme and briefly ends at M just heard at 'We were not long together' and there is a final Blackout and the Curtain.

Dramatic devices, such as Pauses and Silences used in the earlier plays considered in this thesis, have been replaced, in Play, by longer and shorter Blackouts, by faint and stronger Spot-focuses, and, by a feeble darkness that is perpetually there in the background. And, whereas the simultaneous Spotlight-focus reduces the voiced-articulations of the dead, into a touching jabber and cackle, the quick
shift of focus differentiates and identifies each voice, and converts what should be a dialogue into a prolonged narrative. These separate narrations become reciprocating episodic commentary on each of the other two, that are for the moment, either not focused, or if simultaneously focused, talk in a chorus.

There are 7 Blackouts in the play proper, which, if the play is allowed only one 'Repeat', the circularity of 'Repeats' being left to implication, would make the Blackouts 14, followed by 2 additional Blackouts of the 'Closing Repeat'. Therefore in a single performance, allowing for one 'Repeat' only, there would be 14 Blackouts, of which 10 will be 5 seconds long, and, 4 of 3 second each.

The Spot or Spotlight is also an altogether new theatric device exploited to create powerful Non-ent effects. Its play is made quick and arbitrary. It is repetitious; it brightens and vains and appears demanding, prodding and compulsive. The Spot even tires and suffers blackouts, but though it catches the dead at their 'talking I', it seems to be pressuring them either into an unintelligible babble, or, an independent, personal narrative, even after death. Be the Spot a divinity or an absent-presence, for it is not given a name; its actions are callous, irreverent, and harsh.

Spotlight 'dramaturgy' it creates quite a few theatrical effects. First is an ambivalence, for its converts what should have been a dialogue into separate narrations, and, helped by the common adultery theme, and the ambiguous play of pronouns, makes the independent narrations take on dialogic character. In this way, the dividing line between a dialogic and an independent narration is made razor-thin. The final effect is of a dialogue as well as three disjunct narrations in progress. This tantamounts to saying that even apparently separate narrations, if given a random mix can become dialogic, if the narrations have some common themes.
Therefore, drama need not have an overt dialogue, for even separate narration would do, only some overflow of one into the other narration is sufficient to give the effort of a dialogue. This is one significant aspect of the new dramaturgy experimented in Play. Secondly, the narratives as narratives, communicate the effective feel of three 'dead voices' afflicted by a 'talking I' syndrome. And, if the contextulized, on-stage situation, is an after-death tragic existential plight, the effort at converting dialogue, into prolonged, independent narrations is a significant success. Thirdly, the random and arbitrary play of Spot earns it the character of an 'inquisitor', with indifferent non-chalance, harassing the three 'dead' into 'heard speech'. Shifting, repetitious, selfish and uncertain, the Spot is a typical 'diety' from out of the Beckettian ouevre. The play is the better for this dramaturgic exploitation.

Finally, the narrations/dialogue are not banal cross-talk. Nor are they de-constructed speech deliveries. Play has made its own experiments with the 'language theme' even as it prefers Blackouts and choruses for Pauses and Silences, and, the tape-recorder to a Spot-light focus. Also, tableaux, pantomimes and songs are dispensed with and so are the play at 'games'.
References:

6. Ibid., p.422.
19. Ibid., p.35.