CHAPTER - 2

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Drama fascinated the British people right from the beginning. The old kind of morality plays and interludes encouraged the English people to think of the Greek tragedy with enhanced interest. The British, in fact, imitated the Greek drama, and their Renaissance was a wonderful experiment of this. Shakespeare emerged as the greatest playwright of the age, of course, lessor geniuses like Marlowe and Jonson around there. The Restoration period, with Dryden and Congreve and others brought new elements from France. The so called Comedy of Manners triumphed. Then drama made a fast decline upto the times of G. B. Shaw. A few playwrights like Oliver Goldsmith and Richard Sheridan held the stage in between. Of course, Shakespeare’s plays continued to hold the interest of the populace forever.

Modern British writers for the stage include G. B. Shaw, Galsworthy, J. B. Priestly, Coward and Terence Rattigan. The poetic drama of T. S. Eliot and W. B. Yeats continued. The 1950s and 1960s produced John Osborne and Arnold Wesker. Other playwrights of the late 20th century are John Arden, Robert Bolt, Alan Ayckbourn, Joe Orton, Peter Shaffer and others. Another important segment of modern British drama is Absurd Theatre. The pioneers of Absurd Theatre are Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter, N. F. Simpson and Tom Stoppard. These playwrights created a new kind of drama with their manipulations of plot, characterization and language.
1. SAMUEL BECKETT

Samuel Beckett (b 1906) was born in Dublin. His father was a quantity surveyor. He graduated from Trinity College, Dublin, in European languages. When young he had an interest in theatre. He watched Pirandello’s plays, liked experimentalism and modernist writers of Europe. He liked Charlie Chaplin and Laurel and Hardy. He got an award to study at Ecole Normale Superieure at Paris. That was a home for avant-garde in art and literature. Samuel Beckett liked Joyce in Paris. He had him as his model. He made a study of Proust and did some teaching of English. He went to Dublin and did some teaching of French. Then he wandered in London, France and Germany, publishing his articles. Soon he published his book of short stories More Pricks Than Kicks. He published his poems Echo’s Bones. Then he published his first novel Dream of Fair to Middling Women. His first main novel Murphy came up in 1938. In 1937 Beckett settled down in Paris. He wrote his first English play on Dr Johnson’s relations with Mrs Thrale. Soon he married a French pianist Suzanne Dumesnil. The rise of enemy politics in Germany and Italy bogged his mind, though he was apolitical. His view of art as explicit in his book on Proust was subjectivist and anti-realistic. Shortly he found German politics in France rather disgusting. This made him join a secret resistance group. But the same was busted in 1942. Now he and Suzanne escaped to a small mountain village Roussillon where the couple, as farmers, lived for two years. The exact place they lived in was Vaucluse, near Avignon. This appears in the French version of the play Waiting for Godot. The same is called Macon country in the English version. It is
because of Beckett's wandering, most of his characters are tramps. Then he wrote *Watt*, a novel in English. *Watt* deals with a lonely and eccentric individual as the character of Godot. The novel is about man's survivalism amidst uncertainties and ambiguities.

Beckett returned to Paris in 1945. He wrote four novellas (in French), *The End*, *First Love*, *The Calmative* and *The Expelled* and four novels *Mercier and Camier*, *Molly*, *Malone Dies* and *The Unnamable*, two plays *Eletheuria* and *Waiting for Godot*, several poems and some art criticism. *Murphy* and *Eletheuria* mirror Beckett's search for freedom and the right to live his own life. In fact, he purchased a house in Paris in 1937.

Beckett's theme in these works is the dark he had struggled to keep under his control. This had a two-fold implication: firstly 'that all his writings would henceforth begin from within himself,' and secondly 'that no clearly defined fictional character would be needed to tell these stories, as no distancing is necessary between the teller and the tale.' The result: Beckett does not write about reality. The character in his trilogy (*Molloy*, *Malone Dies* and *The Unnamable*) makes use of the first person narrator, often feeling languageless through all his talk. *The Unnamable* is called as a 'zero-book.' *Eleutheria* (Freedom) is about a young man's revolt against his bourgeois family, while *Waiting for Godot* focussing upon human absurdity brought him world-wide fame. In *Waiting for Godot* the process of diminution and disintegration has set in. Here he devises a circular, repetitive form to dramatize a static situation in two identical acts. The play contains a great wealth of gestural and verbal
energy, which makes it an exciting theatrical experience. Beckett projects monologue in the later plays like *Endgame*, *Krapp’s Last Tape*, *Happy Days*, *Not I*, *That Time* and *Play*. Consequently there are no characters, no real dialogue, no setting and no development in them—just an abstract and undefined subject confronting its own subjectivity.

**WAITING FOR GODOT: ITS FORM AND MEANING**

Samuel Beckett wrote *Waiting for Godot* in 1948. It was staged in Paris in 1953 for 400 performances. Roger Blin directed the play playing the role of Pozzo himself. Then it was translated into many languages of the world. Though the play was not understood properly the great writers of the time like Jean Anouilh, Thornton Wilder, Tennessee Williams and William Saroyan appreciated its worth. Now it is world famous.

What is unique about *Waiting for Godot* is its innovative formal design. As he learnt the perfect fusion of structure and content in Proust and Joyce, Beckett used the same in *Waiting for Godot*. He wrote of Joyce’s *Work in Progress*: “Here form is content, content is form. His writing is not about something: it is that something itself.”¹ This he used to convey man’s sense of mystery, bewilderment and anxiety when confronted with his conditions in the modern world. For instance, when, soon after the war, a friend suggested to Beckett that he should write about the heroism of the people fighting against Hitler, Beckett answered: ‘I’m not interested in stories of success, only failure.’

Beckett’s constant search for a new form led him to devise an interiorized and auto-referential style. *Waiting for Godot* is his first successful attempt at this
kind of writings in drama. The play shows his skillful blending of form and meaning, dramaturgic structure and cognitive experience.

According to Javed Malick, "The play is formulated in such a way that, on the one hand, there is a certain emptiness precisely at those places—such as plot, character, dramatic speech, setting etc—where one would conventionally look for meaning, and, on the other, the cognitive emphasis moves from the immediate dramatic interest to some ultimate philosophical horizon beyond history and society. There is an indefinite place for an uncertain appointment with somebody called Godot who never comes. His identity—indeed, the very reality of his existence—is in serious doubt. In the course of the play, he is perceived in various ways: saviour, god, a vindictive tyrant, a rich employer, somebody who has the tramp's future in his hand...at least (their) immediate future." Martin Esslin thinks Beckett’s plays lack plot even more completely than other works of the Theatre of the Absurd. Critics asked Beckett as to who Godot would be. But the author said, if he knew who Godot was he would have said so in the play. In fact, Godot does not represent any one idea, ideal, and person, as he represents an absence. The play is about waiting. It is observed "Yet whether Godot is meant to suggest the intervention of a supernatural agency, or whether he stands for a mythical human being whose arrival is expected to change the situation, or both of these possibilities combined, his exact nature is of secondary importance. The subject of the play is not Godot but waiting, the act of waiting as an essential and characteristic aspect of the human condition. Throughout our lives we always wait for something, and Godot
simply represents the objective of our waiting – an event, a thing, a person, death.”3 Like the boy outside in *Endgame*, he is the absent figure whose non-presence is the play’s centre. He is the name for that emptiness. He is the void that Beckett perceives at the center of human existence after he removed the center of the socio-historical context of life.

Likewise the tramps who wait for Godot and the two wayfarers who they encounter have no fixed individual identities, barring a few biological, temperamental and situational traits. They are perceived “at this place, at this moment of time,” not as four distinct personalities but as two radically truncated and generalized images of all mankind, which in Lucky’s phrase is seen to waste and pine.”4 Incapable of any significant action or initiative, they imply an utter pessimistic view of man as a helpless victim of his ontological existentialistic fate.

The play *Waiting for Godot* has a symmetrical structure as if a formula. This is the device of coupling. It has sets of binaries. It has two acts, showing two consecutive evenings in the life of its central characters. It has two sets of characters and each set is a pair. Even the messenger boy has a brother. Next, the relation between and within these pairs is not one of identity and harmony but one of contradictions and tensions. This leads to a pattern of binary oppositions. Both Estragon and Vladimir are conceived so indivisibly that they function as separate units: while Pozzo and Lucky are physically tied to each other. Vladimir and Estragon cannot part company though they want it. So the play has two agential units and the two units are in contrast to each other, each
epitomizing a mode of being which is counterpoised to the other. The tramps are in perpetual waiting as if imprisoned in space. Pozzo and Lucky are in perpetual wandering as if confined in a temporal prison. If the tramps have mutual love and care for each other, the other two exploit each other.

All couples have some tension. Estragon’s easy defeatism and despair and preoccupations with basic needs like hunger and sleep are contrasted to Vladimir’s optimism and philosophical preoccupations. This contrast makes them mutually complementary. Pozzo is a domineering, bullying master, Lucky, treacherous and obedient. Likewise, the boy who tends goats is contrasted with his brother who tends sheep. The first is loved and the second is disliked. It is said, “The binary opposition that underlies the play and organizes all the other oppositions into a unified experience of absolute ambivalence is that between hope and despair.”  

Critics feel there is a crucial difference between St Augustine’s theological formulation and Beckett’s non-theological one. St Augustine’s formulation has faith in divinity. But Beckett’s non-theological formulation has no hopes. Imprisoned within a closed situation, Didi and Godo perpetually alternate between assurance and doubt. Are they at the right place? On the right day? Is the tree really a willow? Are the boots in the second act Estragon’s? Is Pozzo Godot? Is Vladimir’s name Mr Albert?…Almost everything in the play is in doubt, and nothing is conclusively resolved.
The sense of closure and nullity is reinforced by the presence of repetitive rhythm. As Ruby Cohn thinks the play is woven with repetition. This book offers a detailed discussion of various forms of repetition in the play. Act Two is a repetition of Act One. In each act the tramps reunite, wait, contrive ways of passing time, encounter Pozzo and Lucky, receive Godot’s disappointing message, contemplate suicide, decide to leave and do not move. Variations of the tree and tramps’ physical condition are negligible. The play has a variety of verbal repetitions/refrains (ex; ‘We’re waiting for Godot.’)

Once Samuel Beckett said he wrote it in two acts because one act would be little and three acts would be more. It is repetition and infinitum, the process being mechanical and meaningless. It would be repetition ad absurdum.

Beckett’s play Waiting for Godot is unrealistic. It does not have a fixed location. He says the location is a road, but there is nothing special about it except a surrealistic tree. Its spatio-temporal location in Kenner’s phrase is ‘nowhere-nowhen.’ This helps us no social reality. The stage is indescribable. It is like nothing. There is nothing. The strange rise of moon, sprouting of leaves and arbitrary behaviour lead to abstract setting. So Vladimir asks ‘And where were we yesterday evening according to you?—Estrogen says: ‘How do I know?’”7 Once Didi says, “In an instant all will vanish and we’ll be alone. Once more, in the midst of nothingness.”8 This is why the tramps do not know where to go. So they do not move at the end. They have nowhere to go. Nothingness is ‘absolute emptiness, a vacuum, an absence. And Godot is the reigning deity of this nothingness. There is a kind of claustrophobia. Beckett’s characters are
imprisoned in a little space. His characters are trapped. They exist, have bad
dreams and exhaustion.

Time is in tension with space in Beckett’s drama. Time does not exist for
them. His characters exist in static, perpetual present. They contrive many games
and routines to experience the passage of time. They wait for the night. They
want deliverance. Martin Esslin thinks Vladimir and Estragon live in hope: they
wait for Godot, whose coming will bring the flow of time to a stop. “‘Tonight
perhaps we shall sleep in his place, in the warmth, dry, our bellies full, on the
straw. It is worth waiting for, is it not?’”

So time is a source of hope and despair. Hours are long. Time is a habit
and deadener though it is repetitive and cyclical.

In *Waiting for Godot* there is a space-time contrast between the tramps
and visitors. If the tramps are tied to space, time decides Pozzo and Lucky’s
mobility. Pozzo changes from a tyrant to a blind, while Lucky changes from an
intellectual to a babbler. Time moves to loss, devitalization and death. So man
wastes and pines. Pozzo and Lucky are trapped in circular time. The tramps are
trapped in day and night cyclically.

For example,

-- “But night doesn’t fall.

-- It’ll fall all of a sudden, like yesterday.

-- Then it’ll be night.

-- And we can go.
-- Then it'll be day again. (Pause, despairing). What'll we do, what'll we do?\textsuperscript{10}

This temporal circulatory is known as stasis, a meaningless repetition of time. Pozzo’s speech runs thus: ‘Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time! One day, is that not enough for you, one day like any other day...’\textsuperscript{11}

As for the synthesis between the two pairs of characters in the play Martin Esslin comments “…it might be argued that Vladimir and Estragon, who are waiting for Godot, are shown as clearly superior to Pozzo and Lucky, who have no appointment, no objective, and are wholly egocentric, wholly wrapped up in their sadomasochistic relationship. Is it not their faith that puts the two tramps on to a higher plane?"\textsuperscript{12}

THEATRICALITY:

The \textit{sine quanon} of dramatic writings is the theatre. Aeschylus said plays should be written for stage. Plays communicate in performance. This is because of the reason that theatre’s language employs a variety of means—sign-systems, setting, lighting, movement and gesture. These are non-verbal means or stage directions. In so far, \textit{Waiting for Godot} is concerned, verbal text is very sparse with pauses. Only the gestural elements must refill the play’s performance. The actors should be resourceful. The play includes vaudeville and circus items such as cringing, crouching, huddling, staggering, tumbling and falling. Music hall experience, verbal duets, enacting conjugal situations as those of Laurel and Hardy interest spectators. For ex:
-- Poor Pozzo.

-- I knew it was him.

-- Who?

-- Godot.

-- But it's not Godot.

-- It is not Godot?

-- It is not Godot.

-- Then who is it?

-- It's Pozzo" 13

The characters abuse each other and do child-play. Pozzo's performance, and Lucky's dancing and thinking are a kind of micro-performance. Ibsen, Brecht and Pirandello propounded all this.

READING BECKETT HISTORICALLY:

We cannot read Waiting for Godot in terms of conventional plot, character, dialogue, description and meaning. There is both formal and semantic nothingness in the play. The tramps and visitors try to fill it. The spectators\readres experience a similar kind of emptiness. And this is a kind of metaphysical emptiness. In Beckettian drama—with all places and all times empty, the couples appear 'pseudo couples' with all of mankind. This experience is offered as a universal phenomenon, or as the human condition. An Indian widow, a Pakistani Hindu, or Vietnamese peasant or an American businessman may experience this kind of anguish and emptiness. Beckettian vision is abstract and ahistorical. It is an individual flight, a metaphysical abstraction.
In case, *Waiting for Godot* is not a universal experience, whose experience is it? Kenneth Tynan says Beckett—Ionesco plays are “essentially western, addressed to and written by members of a sophisticated intelligentsia in countries with a high standard of living. The question they pose could be summarized thus: once a man’s physical needs are satisfied, what is the purpose of living?”  

Indeed, avant garde writers are anti-bourgeois, writing about man’s anguish and alienation. Modern writing, it is said, is about a world that seem to be falling apart, in the wake of capitalism, rampant individualism, loss of family and community life, world wars, nuclear holocaust, decline in traditions of hope and faith in man’s innate goodness, rationality and progress. As a result, three kinds of writings came back. The first mythico-religious response as seen in Yeats and Eliot’s writings, finding hope in a revival of religious faith; the second historical-materialistic writings as seen in Shaw, Brecht and others believing in the best of the world; and the third, a subjective—idealistic response, finding the world unchangeable. The third response, to which Beckett belongs, ends up in meaninglessness, loneliness and disintegration as indivisible parts of human existence. Absurdist (Existentialist) position of Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre and Schopenhauer influenced him. It is felt in the feeling of angst, boredom, alienation, meaninglessness and fear. People, Beckett thought, were totally alone; there was no community of thought and feeling, only the inner man had any importance. Each was an alien to all others as to a protoplast or god, incapable of loving or hating anyone but himself. Beckett in his essay
Les Deux Besoins (The Two Needs) asserts that “art results from the artist’s quest to rid himself of extraneous knowledge in order to refine his perception into a clear, distilled vision of the fundamental inner being: art comes from the abandonment of the fundamental of the macrocosm for the pursuit of the microcosm.”\textsuperscript{15} This ends in rejection. Beckett’s subjectivism led him to a morbid preoccupation with nothingness, “that there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express.”\textsuperscript{16}

The story of the play may be summarized thus:

There is a roadside tree. The time is an evening of a summer. Estragon meets Vladimir and says ‘Nothing to be done.’ Actually Vladimir wanted to say the same. They are happy to meet each other again. They embrace. Vladimir asks where Estragon spent the previous night. Estragon says he spent the previous night in a ditch and some beat him. Estragon says he has some pain in his toes. He suffers. He is helpless too. Vladimir looks at his hat funnily. Estragon looks at his boot funnily.

Vladimir says a thief was saved. They adopt nicknames. Vladimir is Didi and Estrogen is Gogo. Vladimir wants to tell the story to pass time. Estragon says they should go. Vladimir says ‘They’re waiting for Godot.’ They don’t know whether they had to wait at the spot, where to wait, whom to wait and why to wait. Estragon sleeps.
Vladimir cannot tolerate loneliness. Estragon dreams. Both tell stories to pass time. They want to speak to each other. But they do not have enough interest. They want to commit suicide. Truly Estrogen wants to hang himself. But he does not want to die first. Vladimir is also weak. He says Estragon is his only hope. Vladimir asks ‘what do we do?’ Estrogen says nothing. Vladimir says they have to wait. ‘For whom?’ Estragon asks. Vladimir says for Godot. Vladimir gives the impression that they have met Godot previously, though they do not remember it properly. Godot for them appears a human figure. Later Estragon falls (a fright). Vladimir believes Godot is nearly, shouting to his horse. Estragon feels hungry, eats a turnip and carrot. He says he asked Vladimir a question. But he does not know what was that. Estragon feels as if tied to Godot. Vladimir does not know whether the man to come is Godot.

Now Pozzo and Lucky appear. Estragon wants to know whether Lucky is Godot. Vladimir says no. Pozzo introduces himself, though Vladimir says he knew him. Pozzo is proud of his status, land and knowledge. He wants some recognition. He makes Lucky dance and think. Lucky kicks Estragon. Vladimir puts a hat to Lucky so that he may think. Once they depart, Vladimir and Estragon talk of waiting. A boy comes. The tramps seem to go home. They are together for 50 years.

ENDGAME:

Samuel Beckett has written many important plays that depict the theme of modern man’s failure. Endgame is one of them. Endgame is interesting as it reads like a one-actor -- the characters displaying many aspects of a single
individual. One actor that is Hamm dominates the play from the beginning to the end. Hamm is a unique character of the modern absurd theatre. That way he resembles William Shakespeare’s Hamlet. The first performance of the play was given in French under its original title of _FIN DE PARTIE_ (1957) at the Royal Court Theatre, Sloane Square, London, on 3rd April 1957. Roger Blin directed the play, with décor by Jacques Boel. The play was followed by the mime _Act Without Words_ (_Acte Sans Paroles_) which was played and directed by Deryk Mendel. Beckett’s cousin John Beckett played music.

If _Waiting for Godot_ deals with two tramps waiting for a man called Godot _Endgame_ deals with the theme of the ‘endgame’ of life. The play takes place in a claustrophobic interior. _Waiting for Godot_ has two symmetrical movements that balance each other while only one act dominates the theme of _Endgame_. Yet the characters are grouped in a symmetrical pair.

Two characters Hamm and Clov stay in a bare room. Hamm is a blind man, always sitting. He is paralyzed. So he cannot stand. His servant Clov is unable to sit down. Their room has two windows and there are two ash cans. Hamm’s parents are legless and they are in the cans. The four characters think that some grave catastrophe has finished the world. So they think they are the only survivors. The text alludes to the room as a ‘shelter,’ outside of which is death. So we can imagine a fallout shelter, perhaps and the last hours of the last morsels of human life, after perhaps an H-bomb explosion. The bomb was much on the mind of Europe in 1957 when Beckett wrote the play. It is observed, “Again, the world of Genesis called up by Hamm’s name and the desolation of
The earth outside the shelter which is the little world of Hamm will only operate partially as metaphor. If Hamm is Ham, son of Noe, then Nagg will be Noe, but he is not. None the less, we do feel the resonance of the simple genesis story in vi. 9—13:

“9. This is the story of Noe. Noe was a just man, blameless among the men of his day.


11. The earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and it was filled with violence.

12. God saw that the earth was corrupt; for all men lived corruptly on the earth.

13. And God said to Noe, ‘The end of all creatures of flesh is in my mind; the earth is full of violence because of them. I will destroy them with the earth.’

We feel that violence and corruption and ‘the end of all creatures of flesh’ is in our minds in the play.”

The main characters Hamm and Clov resemble Pozzo and Lucky. Hamm is the master while Clov is his servant. Hamm is selfish, sensuous and domineering. Clov hates Hamm and wants to leave him though he has to obey his orders: “Do this, do that, and I do it. I never refuse. Why?” Clove does not have the courage to desert his master and the same is the source of dramatic tension. The very desertion is likely to cause Hamm’s death. Clov, however,
wants to go. Yet he fails to go as the tramps of the play *Waiting for Godot*. G. C. Bernard observes, "*Endgame* harks back rather to *Godot* than forward to the plays of the sixties. The four characters of *Godot* are here condensed into two, Hamm and Clov. Hamm is in many ways a fusion of the tyrant Pozzo with the poet Estragon. Like Pozzo he is cruel, tyrannical, devoid of pity, and blind. He is a self-conscious actor, composing and declaiming a story with an artificial narrative voice and in Pozzo-like phraseology. However, he also has elements of Estragon, being imaginative and inward-looking, constantly wanting to sleep and dream romantic dreams. At one point he tells Clov "'I was never there...absent, always. It all happened without me. I don’t know what’s happened.' This is very like Estragon denying that he was ever in the Macon country with Vladimir and then adding ‘It’s possible. I didn’t notice anything.’ Neither Estragon nor Hamm are fully alive to the outer world."¹⁹

Likewise Clov resembles Vladimir. He assists him for everything practically. The material dependence of the two couples in *Godot* is, naturally, carried on here.

Hamm is a blind man who tells stories. If we are thinking of Shakespeare, his blindness is like Lear’s. Or he is like Homer, a blind man who told stories. Or he is like a dying god of whom we have been hearing ever since Nietzsche’s Zarathustra. He worries about the death of people. He imagines once a father begged him to take in his child. It appears that the child should be Clov. He was brought to him when he was a small boy. Hamm was a father to him, or, as he himself puts it, "But for me...no father. But for Hamm...no home."²⁰ In Martin
Esslin’s view, “The situation in *Endgame* is the reverse of that in Joyce’s *Ulysses*, where a father finds a substitute for a lost son. Here a foster son is trying to leave his foster father.”21 Clov wants to leave Hamm right from the time of his joining him. Hamm has some guilt. He has frightened many people. One of them is old Mother Pegg who as he deserted him died of darkness. Now Hamm himself is not happy. He is scarred of deprivation. His store of food is running out. It is said, “Something is taking its course.”22

Critics say Hamm is childish. True he plays with a three-legged toy dog. Clov serves him as his sensory mechanism. At regular intervals he is asked to survey the outside world from the two tiny windows high up in the wall. The right-hand window looks out on land, the left-hand onto the sea. But the tides of sea are stopped.

Hamm loves disorder while Clov loves an order.

Hamm has a father called Negg and a mother called Nell. Hamm does not like them. They seem to have lost their legs in an accident in Ardennes on their tandem on the road to Sedan. They remember the day they went rowing on Lake Como – the day after they became engaged – one April afternoon, and Nagg, in the tones of an Edwardian raconteur, retells the funny story that made his bride then and that he has since repeated *ad nauseam*.

What a wonder? Hamm hates his parents. So do they. Nell secretly urges Clov to desert Hamm. Nagg scolds Hamm: “Whom did you call when you were a tiny boy, and were frightened in the dark? Your mother? No. Me.”23 But Hamm reveals how he ignored these calls:
"We let you cry. Then we moved out our earshot, so that we might sleep in peace...I hope the day will come when you'll really need to have me listen to you...Yes, I hope I'll live till then, to hear you calling me like when you were a tiny little boy, and were frightened, in the dark, and I was your only hope." As Martin Esslin observes, "As the end approaches, Hamm imagines what will happen when Clov leaves him. He confines Nagg's forecast: "There I'll be in the old shelter, alone against the silence and...the stillness...I'll have called my father and I'll have called my...my son," which indicates that he does indeed regard Clov as his son. It is observed at any rate this Clov gone or gone so far as Hamm can tell, for he is blind, Hamm utters his last soliloquy, complete with 'a little poetry,' the phrasing carefully polished. The final form runs, "You cried for night; it falls: now cry in darkness,' and like God who saw that it was good, he comments, 'Nicely put, that.' Then another haunting cadence: 'Moments for nothing, now as always, time was never and time is over, reckoning closed and story ended.'"

After some time Clov says he would go. He bursts: "I open the door of the cell and go. I am so bowed I only see my feet, if I open my eyes, and between my legs a little trail of black dust. I say to myself that the earth is extinguished, though I never saw it lit...It's easy going...When I fall I'll weep for happiness." And as blind Hamm indulges in a last monologue of reminiscence and self-pity, Clov appears dressed for departure. Yet he does not move. Martin Esslin thinks that the play resembles Nikolai Evreinov's play The Theatre of the Soul where a melodrama takes place inside a human being and...
shows the constituent parts of his ego, his emotional self and his rational self all in conflict with one another. The parallels are quite striking. Here in *Endgame* Hamm appears to have just his body, Clove serves him for his sensory organs, while Hamm’s legless parents are subordinate. So there is an element of melodrama in the play. Hamm describes a memory that is strangely reminiscent of the situation in *Endgame*:

“I once knew a madman who thought the end of the world had come. He was a painter – an engraver....I used to go and see him in the asylum. I’d take him by the hand and drag him to the window. Look! There! All that rising corn! And there! Look! The sails of the herring fleet! All that loveliness!...He’d snatch away his hand and go back into his corner. Appalled. All he had seen was ashes....He alone had been spared. Forgotten...It appears the case is...was not so...so unusual.” Hamm’s own world resembles the delusions of the mad painter.

Hamm thinks that there is no nature. So the work of attrition goes on:

“We breathe, we change! We lose our hair, our teeth! Our bloom! Our ideals! There is a kind of desolation. The sea is calm the lights are grey. The man in the chair does not imagine any nirvana. In fact, there is no nirvana. Francis Doherty comments “Behind all these metaphors in the play lie precise allusions to suffering both in the Old and New testaments which are introduced by the opening words of Clov and Hamm. “Finished, it’s finished, nearly finished it must be nearly finished.” It is seen clearly enough as a distorted echo of Christ’s *Consummatum Est* on the Cross, while Hamm says ‘can there be
misery—(he yawns)—loftier than mine?30 It seems to echo the lamentations of Jeremiah a type of Christ:

“O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow: for he hath made a vintage of me, as the Lord spoke in the day of his fierce anger.”31

But, lest we walk in the steps of the unwary character of cross-references and judge the play as though it were Christian, we are presented, two-thirds of the way through the play, with the attempt to pray to God. Of course, there is no divine intervention; and so Hamm explodes:

‘The bastard! He doesn’t exist!’32

Critics are divided about the thematic aspects of the play. Some say the play Endgame is a monodrama. Another interpretation is that it is a morality play about the death of a rich man. But the peculiarity is that as Pozzo and Lucky are subordinate to each other, Hamm and Clov are subordinate to each other. There is what may be said mutual interdependence between the two. “Nec tecum nec te,” is the frequent situation among people—married couples, for example—but it is also an image of the interrelatedness of the elements within a single personality, particularly if the personality is in conflict with itself.

Likewise, Beckett depicts a similar situation in his first play Eleutheria where the hero, a young man wants to leave his house. In fact, he does it at the end. Clov’s wish to leave is depicted here significantly. Critics feel Endgame is an exercise in conscious or subconscious autobiography. Some critics particularly Lionel Abel, say that the characters like Pozzo-Lucky and Hamm-
Clov resemble Beckett and James Joyce. We know that Beckett remained subordinate to Joyce intellectually. For example, Lucky’s speech in *Waiting for Godot* is a parody of Joyce’s style. Joyce, after he became blind, became inarticulate. Here Hamm expresses his sense of guilt about his behavior at the time of the great mysterious calamity, when he refused to save his neighbors. Clov, on the other hand, is shown as totally uninterested in Hamm’s “Work in Progress,” so that Hamm has to bribe his senile father to listen to it—surely a situation as unlike that of Joyce and Beckett as can be imagined.

It is observed that the play depicts something more than Beckett’s autobiography. It displays man’s experience of temporality and evanescence; his sense of the tragic difficulty of becoming aware of one’s own self in the kindless world of experiments. There is the difficulty of communication. The play depicts the fact that all relationships fail finally. Martin Esslin observes, “In *Endgame* we are also certainly confronted with a very powerful expression of the sense of deadness, of leaden heaviness and hopelessness, that is experienced in states of deep depression: the world outside goes dead for the victim of such states, but inside his mind there is ceaseless argument between parts of his personality that have become autonomous entities.”33 The play witnesses conflicts between man’s fears and anxieties.

Francis Doherty observes, “The play never reveals what exists ‘outside,’” though it is death outside, and, teasingly, Clov almost introduces Hamm’s dreaded ‘complications’ of a ‘sub-plot’ by spotting a small boy. Beckett presumably thought that the French original *Fin de Partie* was too open to
specific Biblical interpretation and reduced the status of the boy as seen by Clov. Originally reference to Moses might have indicated a mock-salvation, and the possibility that Clov is deceiving Hamm is firmly implanted. Now, though that possibility is open, the boy's existence for Hamm is no problem.\textsuperscript{34}

The "Act Without Words" at the end gives some clues about the interrelation between material wants and a feeling of restlessness and futility. The scene is a desert onto which a man is "flung backwards." Martin Esslin observes that "Here again we find man flung onto the stage of life, at first obeying the call of a number of impulses, having his attention drawn to the pursuit of illusory objectives by whistles from the wings, but finding peace only when he has learned his lesson and refuses any of the material satisfactions dangled before him. The pursuit of objectives that forever recede as they are attained—inevitably so through the action of time, which changes us in the process of reaching what we crave—can find release only in the recognition of that nothingness which is the only reality. The whistle that sounds from the wings resembles the whistle with which Hamm summons Clov to minister to his material needs. And the final, immobile position of the man in \textit{Act Without Words} recalls the posture of the little boy in the original version of \textit{Endgame}.\textsuperscript{35}

The mime, with a first-class actor, can be a fine piece of comic clowning. But the significance of the act is that it symbolizes in concrete visible terms Gloucester's despairing cry: "As flies to wanton boys are we to the Gods."\textsuperscript{36}
KRAPP'S LAST TAPE:

Beckett wrote the playlet *Krapp's Last Tape* and published it in 1958. The play was staged at the Royal Court Theatre, London in the same year. *Krapp's Last Tape* has only one character, that is Krapp. The time is a late evening. It is at Krapp's den. Krapp is sitting at a table. There is a tape recorder on the table. He is a disillusioned old man looking back on a life of failure. As Martin Esslin thinks "The play deals with the flow of time and the instability of the self."37 His negligent dress, the dirty white shirt with no collar, the dirty white boots, the unshaven face all show that he has no interest in life whatsoever.

The play opens with Krapp sitting at a table. He walks to and fro. He takes a banana. He eats it. He goes to the edge of the stage and he returns to the table again. He opens a box that contains some tapes. There are forty-five tapes called 'spools.' We find that he is seventy-five and he celebrated his birth day yearly. Krapp switches on this tape and listens to the comments of his thirty-nine-year-old self on the past year. He was evidently at that time an introspective solitary man, serious minded, concerned with his bodily health and intellectual powers. He resembles Murphy.

Now Krapp starts the tape as if to demonstrate the elusiveness of human personality. The latter speaks of his past when he was 39. We come to know that he fell in love with a girl then. Soon he takes some respite and switches the tape again. He listens to the fact that he was grief-stricken when his mother died years ago. Krapp stops it and starts it. Now he listens to a love episode of his
life. He says, "I lay down across her with my face in her breasts and my hand on her. We lay there without moving." At thirty-nine Krapp was quite himself.

G. C. Bernard comments: "Krapp can recall nothing significant to record about the past year; he has only sat outside in the park once or twice in the summer, sold seventeen copies of his book, and shed bitter tears reading Effie—which seems to be not only the title of a book (his own?) but also the name of the girl with whom he could have been happy." He thinks of abandoning the tape. Yet he listens to the love scene again. But suddenly he tears the tape. So there is dejection in Krapp. Critics feel this is the tragedy of the play. Now he broods:

"Perhaps my best years have gone. When there was a chance of happiness. But I wouldn't want them back. Not with the fire in me now. No, I wouldn't want them back." It is observed: "Krapp indeed is Beckett's Peer Gynt. His birthday tapes enshrine a series of discarded false selves, like the layers which Peer stripped off the onion in the vain hope of finding the central kernel. But Beckett does not allow the Solveig whom Krapp rejected to be found waiting faithfully for him in old age. Krapp will die as he has lived, alone."

**SAMUEL BECKETT'S RADIO PLAYS:**

Samuel Beckett was a versatile playwright. He wrote world famous plays that earned him an immortality. We have known the greatness of his full-length plays like *Waiting for Godot, Endgame* and *Krappa's Last Tape*. Beckett also wrote small plays for radio. Yet his radio plays did not become as popular as his
full length plays. One reason for this is that his radio plays did not get enough staging. Or they were not published in time. The BBC took its own initiation to stage them frequently. Katharine Worth in her article “Beckett and the radio medium” observes, “The BBC superbly fulfilled its role as a national theatre of the air in giving Beckett the opportunity to create these rare masterpieces.”

The first of Beckett’s radio plays, *All That Fall* was broadcast by the BBC in 1957. It was also his first published play in English. Beckett wrote more plays for the radio: *Embers* in 1959 and *Words and Music* in 1962. The next play *Cascando*, was written in French and produced by RTF in Paris in 1964. Later Beckett translated it into English. In fact, he wrote most of these plays in French and then he himself translated them into English. Beckett’s English version of *Radio 1* was published in *Ends and Odds* in 1977. Its companion piece in the English collection *Radio 2*, was broadcast by the BBC as *Rough for Radio* in 1976. The production of these plays was quite difficult for the BBC. For example, when it had to produce the play *All That Fall* it had to conduct a workshop for its faculty. Of course, there was a swelling audience for Beckett’s radio plays as his full length plays influenced them. Donald McWhinnie, who was Beckett plays’ radio producer was invited to Germany for producing the play *All That Fall*. Beckett’s play *Embers* was awarded the Italia Prize in 1959. Later playwrights like Harold Pinter and Tom Stoppard have derived much inspiration from Beckett’s plays. So Beckett’s impact is felt in the later day’s experiment.
Beckett made use of this new medium for excelling himself in the theatre world. Richard Hugh's play *A Comedy of Danger* might have inspired him. Beckett makes use of the blind. It is observed, "Beckett's handling of blindness takes us into a much more dream-like territory. The blind man's stick tapping the way in *All That Fall* contributes to a strange melody in which human voices, animal sounds, and the music of Schubert create the atmosphere of an inner landscape. A cryptic allusion to an old blind man in *Embers* heralds a mediumistic evocation of the invisible. Our attention as listeners is drawn to our own inability we share with the characters, to 'see' in a different way, with the eye of the mind."42

Beckett makes use of radio devices like pauses and silences. This is seen in connection with Mrs Rooney in *All That Fall* and in several places in *Embers*. In *Cascando* Beckett distinguishes between a pause and a silence with an exactness which matches the rhythm of the speaking voice. Silence is a nerve-racking technique. Donald McWhinnie says, "Silence lies at the heart of the radio experience."43

After silence it is music used by Beckett as a theatrical device. Martin Esslin has pointed out that "*Words and Music* is 'so totally radiogenic' that 'the printed page cannot represent it...the third character, Music, in every way of equal importance with the other two, is of necessity absent on the printed page.'44 Some of the innovations Beckett has brought to radio plays are his avoidance of montage. He shows how it depends on style. One wrong sound and the whole airy structure is liable to collapse, as Maddy Rooney feels herself
becoming 'dead' when she overhears her own unconvincing language: "No, no, I am agog, tell me all, then we shall press on and never pause, never pause, till we come safe to haven." So the sound effects are important for interiorizing.

Beckett's radio plays have created a sort of history in British drama. As they became popular he began writing them first in English and then translating them into French. He wrote only Cascando in English first. His position of the English language is complex. He said English, of course, his mother tongue, had too much of tonality. So it is clear that the soundscape represents an inner landscape. In his TV play but the clouds... (1976) he depicts such an evocation. A brief survey of Beckett's radio plays is worth studying here.

ALL THAT FALL:

Beckett's first radio play is All That Fall (the title is taken from Psalm 145: 'The Lord upholdeth all that fall and raiseth up all those that he bowed down). He wrote it in 1957. The BBC had commissioned the play. It was broadcast in the same year. The play consists of characters like Mrs Rooney, a lady in her seventies, Christy, a carter, Mr Tyler, a retired bill-broker, Mr Slocum, a clerk of the racecourse, Tommy, a porter, Mr Barrel, a station-master, Miss fitt, a lady in her thirties, Dolly, a small girl, Mr Rooney, Mrs Rooney's husband and a small boy called Jerry. Mrs Rooney is the protagonist of the play. The play is about a journey. Mrs Rooney, elderly and childless, makes a laborious progress to meet her blind husband and bring him home. In the journey she comes across a variety of neighbours who help or harass her; there is a talk of the race meeting others, some are travelling to and fro, speaking of the
inexplicable lateness of the expected train. When they return they are almost to
themselves except Jerry, a boy sometimes with them. Jerry brings a mysterious
object he has dropped and tells the reason for the train’s delay, a child’s death on
the line. This is the bare detail. The play sounds like a Gothic soundscape. As
Beckett said to Nancy Cunard: “It was a new sort of inspiration: ‘Never thought
about a radio play technique, but in the dead t’other night got a nicely gruesome
idea full of cartwheels and dragging feet and puffing and panting which may or
may not lead to something.”46 This sets the tone, one may say. Though the
incidents take place day time, Mrs Rooney finds them to be harassing. The aura
of dream and mystery is strong in the initial. A woman’s voice is heard as if in
woes. All alone in that ruinous old house. Then in comes the noise of Christy
with his donkey cart, and a soldier, more homely soundscape begins to take
shape. It seems we are moving into the real world as the road fills up with local
worthies who stop their vehicles – donkey cart, bicycle, car, -- to chat with Mrs
Rooney, offer lifts, indulge in sexual rallying, share lugubrious news of illness
and operations. The play is known for its realism. It is Irish in its social
colouring. The play is full of Irish talk of Mr Barrell’s ‘That’s enough old guff
out of you.” Katharine Worth says, “Yet all this naturalness is there only because
it has impinged on the medium, been taken up into the mental landscape and in
the process moved quite a distance from everyday reality.”47 For, after all, the
characters Mrs Rooney meets on the road are happy family figures: Mr Barrel,
the station master, Mr Tyler, the retired bill-broker, Mr Slocum, the clerk of the
racecourse; and their encounters very soon take off into a dream-like farcical
freedom. Mrs Rooney accepts Mr Slocum’s lift in a car and rally with his sexual dallying. The situation of Christy and Mr Tyler appear farcical. Farce is used to puncture the sentimentality into which Mrs Rooney so readily falls. She lies awake at night brooding on the world’s wretchedness. But when she comes up against a disaster on the road, the sunning over of the hen her sentimentality takes an unexpected turn. She is well aware of sound images. She listens to all others. She is interested in the people she meets, draws out their stories, and is herself an extremely racy and inventive raconteuse, with a fine line in sarcastic jokes. Her mental landscape is depicted. The external world has vivid place there, as it registers on her acute senses. Only Mr Rooney slips into occasional lapses. He suffers from absent-mindedness as he is blind.

EMBERS:

The next play Embers was specifically written for broadcasting. It was first performed in the Third Programme on 24th June 1959. The characters of the play are Henry, his wife Ada, his daughter Addie, their Music Master and Riding Masters and a Pianist. Embers did not become as popular as All That Fall. One reason for the play’s failure was that it lacked realism. The characters of the play are dream-like. Of all Beckett’s radio plays Embers is the closest to The Words Upon the Window-Pane in making so overwhelming an impression. In the first place Henry functions as controller of the radio medium. His problem, in fact, the crux of the problem of the play, is that Henry has lost his father. He does not know how. As he knows his father has died mostly by drowning into the sea. Of
course, his body is not seen by any. Yet the son Henry wants to know about his death. The dead father is his obsession. It is shown:

“That sound you hear is the sea.

(Pause. Louder) I say that sound you hear is the sea, we are sitting on the strand. (Pause) I mention it because the sound is so strange, so unlike the sound of the sea, that if you didn’t see what it was you wouldn’t know what it was (Pause)”48

**WORDS AND MUSIC:**

Beckett wrote the radio play *Words and Music* probably a year before it was broadcast on 13th November 1962. It is a small play with a few characters Croak and Words. Michael Bakewell produced it. *Words and Music*, like the previous play *Embers*, is an evocation. When the play opens the characters Words and Music are milling around in the dark, playing sterile variations on well-known themes. ‘Sloth’ is the current theme, an amusing pointer to what Beckett especially explores in the play. Words says aptly: “Sloth is of all passions the most powerful than the passion of sloth, this is the mode in which the mind is most affected and indeed--.”49 Later he says “Love is of all the passions the most powerful passion and indeed no passion is more powerful than the passion of love.”50 Croak is the directing force taking a long time to get going. We hear him shuffling slowly. He is a comic tyrant, now propitiating his agents, ‘Joe. Bob. My balms,’ and at other times threatening them with his club. He has something he wants to express, but he can only refer incoherently to a
face glimpsed on the stairs of his tower. Beckett has fun here with the notion of
the ivory tower among other kinds of towers occupied by poets and lovers.

CASCANDO:

*Cascando* is a radio piece for Music and Voice. The play was first
performed in French on RTF. The characters are Opener and Voice. Roger Blin
directed it. As is characteristic of absurd theatre, language is devalued in
Beckett's radio plays. An instance of which can be Voice's beginning address:

VOICE: (low, panting). - story...if you could finish it...you could
rest...sleep...not before...oh I know...the ones I've finished...thousands and
one...all I ever did...in my life...with my life...saying to myself...finish this
one...it's the right one...then rest...sleep...no more stories...no more
words...and finished it.... 51

Some kind of mysterious story is narrated in the play. Opener is a
dominant character. The relation of Voice and Music is not tense, personal and
changeable. The character of Music is something of a mystery. The relation
between the other two perplexes Opener. His problem is the opposite of Croak's;
he does not have to exert himself. He has only to open and there is the tale of
Woeburn, an elusive individual, in midstream. The two speakers reveal that they
have something in common by being so completely taken up with their function
- the same one, to project a story. Voice has no sense of listeners. His business is
to find him in the dark to see him to say him for whom that's it no matter. 52

The characters speak of a Woeburn who never appears in the play. It is an
image, as he says, though not quite as he also claims 'like any other,' for in
choosing to envisage his creative activity as a journey, he is linking himself with those other travellers, Voice and Woburn. Critics like Katharine Worth comments that “Beckett brings us to the point where we cannot miss the possibility that Opener, Voice and Woburn are one.”

ROUGH FOR RADIO:

This new play staged by the BBC recently is a grotesque work. The arrangement of the play is inquisitorial: Animator and his Stenographer, with the aid of Dick, who is mute but wields an audible puzzle, try to wring out their victim, Fox, with some magic word which must be fresh, never used before by him. We learn from the Animator’s opening dialogue with Stenographer that in between sessions Fox is kept tied up, gagged, and hooded so that there is no chance of his letting drop in solitude.

The Animator is a bookman. The examination of Fox proceeds with business-like blandness, punctuated unpleasantly by the sound of Dick functioning, and drolly by the exchange of courtesies between Animator and his recording angel. The experience of the play is purgatorial. Fox suffers. So does Animator. In course of time Fox loses consciousness. Katharine Worth observes, "Freshness is the goal in Rough for Radio, and a fresh view is what we are given in all the plays I have been discussing: a fresh view of the medium and its possibilities and of our own capacity to follow the artist in his mysterious task of summoning up worlds out of thin air."
EH JOE:

In 1966 the BBC TV produced Beckett's playlet *Eh Joe*, which stresses on human suffering. We see Joe, a disheveled aging man, alone in his bedroom closing the window, drawing the curtain, locking all doors and peering under the bed to ensure that there is no witness to his existence; and then he sits on the bed, closes his eyes and waits for oblivion. A voice of woman comes telling Joe that he listened the persons of his parents when they died. He also listened to the people when they died. And these people were the people who loved Joe. The voice says that a lady who loved Joe committed suicide as he did not love her in turn. Finally she bursts: "'There's love for you...wouldn't you say?...compared to us...compared to Him...Eh Joe?'"55

HAPPY DAYS:

Beckett's play *Happy Days* is about two old couple, Willie and Winnie. We find Winnie being hidden upto the breast in a mound, while her husband Willie dwells in a hole. They try to kill time by chatting and philosophizing. Winnie is more dominant than Willie. She has a bag in one hand and a revolver in another. Critics think the revolver indicates of the lady's frustrations. So she thinks of committing suicide at times.

*Happy Days* depicts the theme of happiness for the characters. Winnie thinks life is good for her. At the opening she appears to be sleeping while Willie is reading a newspaper. He is a docile man. Winnie's relationship with Wille is not one of love. Still she is pond of him. She speaks to him, asks him for
information and likes him as a companion. She is known for her story-telling or remembering poetry.

**PLAY:**

It is a one act play. This is meant for radio. The first performance of *Play* was in German and was given at the Ulmer Theatre, Ulm-Donau. The characters include W1 (First Woman), W2 (Second Woman) and M (Man). The play was staged in London in 1964. Unlike all of Beckett’s other plays, *Play* is unique in the sense that it is set in Limbo and its characters are the psi-components of the deceased people. All action, movement, gesture and facial expression are abolished; the three actors are imprisoned in funerary urns with their heads visible and they are instructed that their faces are to remain passive. Why passive one wonders. It seems Beckett wants to use the technique of depersonalization for the sake of exposing pseudo-people.

**FILM:**

As usual Beckett wrote a small play called *Film*. It was produced in 1964 and won Prix Filmcritica at Venice in 1965 and also the Special Jury Prize at the International Film Festival at Tours in 1966. The play has characters like E and O. Martin Esslin comments: “The manuscript of the film opens with the statement: ‘Esse est percipi. All extraneous perception suppressed, animal, human, divine, self-perception maintains in being.’”

**COME AND GO:**

The miniature playlet *Come and Go* deals with the theme of our reluctance to face our own predicament, while we are eager to gossip about our
fellow people. The play has three female characters called Flo, Vi and Ru. Each of
these leaves in turn allowing the two remaining characters to inform each other of some impending disaster. They define themselves; they have a past in common; and they share a fantasy. The play is made up of what may be said silence, silences! What a wonder the play goes for three minutes. It has 121 words, 23 speeches and 12 silences.

THAT TIME:

Beckett’s play That Time was first performed at the Royal Court Theatre in the spring of 1976 during a season mounted to mark the author’s seventieth birthday. The play abounds in moments of one and the same voice A B C relaying one another without any solution of continuity. The voices A B C are one’s own coming to him from both sides and above.

NOT I:

Beckett published the play Not I in 1973. It is that of a MOUTH suspended in mid-stage, surrounded by total darkness, from which the voice of an old woman emerges in a rapid stream of jumbled words, listens at the side of the stage and occasionally makes a silent, deprecatory gesture. As house lights down MOUTH’s voice is unintelligible behind curtain. Voice continues unintelligible behind curtain, 10 seconds. With rise of curtain ad-libbing from text as required leading when curtain fully up and attention sufficient too. MOUTH starts:“...out...into this world...this world...tiny little thing...before its time...in a godfor...what?...girl?...yes...tiny little girl...into this...out into
this...called...no matter...parents unknown...unheard of...he having vanished...thin air...”57

FOOTFALLS:

Footfalls, another of Beckett’s play, first performed at the Royal Theatre, London, is about a strange situation. Here the eyes of the audience are concentrated upon a strip of light on the floor, over which the feet of an elderly woman are seen passing to and fro, while her voice and that of her mother, who remains invisible, are heard.

ELEUTHERIA:

Eleutheria (written in French shortly after the war, but so far unpublished and unperformed) is also concerned with a young man’s efforts to cut himself loose from his bed, apathetic and passive. As Martin Esslin says his family and friends discuss his case without ever directly addressing him. Finally the hero isolates himself from the society.

Generally speaking Samuel Beckett’s characters are schizophrenic. Their nature is fragmentary. They are divided amongst themselves. They have a warring self. The conflict is between their inward and their outward. Their self is torn between the ‘yes’ of the will-to-live and the ‘no’ of the will-to-cease. The two tramps waiting for Godot, in Waiting for Godot, Mr Hamm writing his own story, the old man Krapp trying to understand his past, Mrs Rooney’s attempts to communicate with the people she met in All That Fall, or Henry’s musings in Embers, display man’s serach for the self though it is elusive. Finally his characters try to find out their ‘me.’
In so far language is concerned, Beckett does not find human language to be sufficient for his purpose to express the unnameable or the inexplicable. In Martin Esslin’s view, “Language in Beckett’s plays serves to express the breakdown, the disintegration of language. Where there is no certainty, there can be no definite meanings – and the impossibility of ever attaining certainty is one of the main themes of Beckett’s plays. Godot’s promises are vague and uncertain. In Endgame, an unspecified something is taking to...to...mean something?” Clov merely laughs: “‘Mean something! You and I mean something!’”

2. HAROLD PINTER

Harold Pinter is a well-known British actor and playwright. He was born on 10th October 1930, in Hackney, East London to his Jewish parents Hyman and Frances Pinter. Pinter studied in Hackney Downs Grammar School from 1942 to 1948. He was very much impressed by his drama teacher Joseph Brearly. The same directed his life. Pinter was a bright student at school. He got a London County Council Grant to study acting at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA) in 1948. In 1951 Pinter attached himself with Anew McMaster’s company. In 1952 he toured Ireland with his company staging Shakespeare’s plays. He played the roles of Bassanio, Cassio and Horatio. Now he adopted a stage name David Baron. He married Vivien Merchant, his old friend, in 1956.
Harold Pinter's first play *The Room* was written in 1957. It was staged under Henry Woolf's direction at Bristol University in the same year. Harold Hobson appreciated the play. Michael Gordon liked Pinter's art of drama and he asked him for more plays. So Pinter gave him the scripts of two plays, *The Party* (which later changed to *The Birthday Party*) and *The Dumb Waiter*.


Harold Pinter is a great theatre personality in modern times. As so he has won an international acclaim for his contribution to drama. The latest being the 30,000 pound David Cohen British Literature Prize which is considered to be the Britain's biggest literary prize. He got it in 1995. His *The Pumpkin Eater* won the British Film Academy Award, his screen play *The Servant* fetched him the British Screenwriter's Guild Award. The *Homecoming* won the Tony as well as
the Whitebread Anglo-American award for his best play for its performance in the United States. Both Pinter and his wife Vivien received The Guild of British producers’ and Directors’ award for the script and leading performances in the play *The Lover*. However, Pinter divorced his wife Vivien in 1980 and he married Lady Antonia the same year.

**THE BIRTHDAY PARTY:**

Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party* is a full-length play. He wrote it in 1957. It was first produced at Art Theatre, Cambridge. Harold Pinter himself directed it when it was produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company at the Aldwych Theatre, London in 1964. The play depicts a tragedy arisen out of insecurity. It projects a shabby boarding house where Stanley Webber, a man in his late thirties has found a refuge from real life situations. He is the central character of the play. Other characters include Meg Boles, the owner of a boarding house, Petey, her husband, McCann and Goldberg, two sinister visitors and Lulu, a young lady. As Martin Esslin thinks the play combines some of the characters and situations of *The Room* and *The Dumb Waiter* while, for the first time, omitting the melodramatic, supernatural element – without any loss of mystery or horror.

*The Birthday Party* has three acts. The first act opens with Meg, speaking to her husband Petey, a docile old man who worked as a deck chair attendant on the promenade. The old motherly woman Meg enquires him whether Stanley, the guest had got up. Her husband does not speak much, symbolizing modern man's dry existence. He does not answer any of her questions asked about
Stanley, about his reading, or about his resting. Once Stanley gets up he engages our attention. He treats Meg as a motherly woman. He flirts with her as well. When he calls her ‘Succulent washing bag,’ she rebukes him. He says she does not cook well. He says her bread is not good. Most of the dialogue between the two appears like the Music Hall conversation:

STANLEY. Meg. Do you know that?

MEG. What?

STANLEY. Have you heard the latest?

MEG. No.

STANLEY. I’ll bet you have.

MEG. I haven’t.

STANLEY. Shall I tell you?

MEG. What latest?

STANLEY. You haven’t heard it?

MEG. No.59

Pinter introduces two tramp-like visitors at the end of Act I. We do not know who they are. Yet they interest us as visitors to the Boarding House. They bring a note of introduction from Mr Bales, Meg’s husband. They start speaking to Stanley rudely. It soon becomes clear that they are after Stanley. As Meg announces Stanley’s birthday the same day, they burst joyously. They plan to celebrate his birthday though he does not know that that day is his birthday. Goldberg says,
GOLDBERG: You're in a terrible humour today, Mr Webber. And on your birthday too, with the good lady getting her strength up to give you a party.  

Stanley finds all this strange. He breaks out:

STANLEY: Let me – just make this clear. You don’t bother me. To me, you’re nothing but a dirty joke. But I have a responsibility towards the people in this house. They’ve been down here too long. They’ve lost their sense of smell. I haven’t. (A little less forceful.) Anyway, this house isn’t your cup of tea. There’s nothing here for you, from any angle, any angle. So why don’t just go, without any more fuss?  

Then there is an exchange of heat between the visitors and Stanley. Their cross-examination is non-sensical and absurd:

GOLDBERG. You verminate the sheet of your birth.

MA CANN. What about the Albigensenist heresy?

GOLDBERG. Who watered the wicket in Melbourne?

MA CANN. What about the blessed Oliver Plunkett?

GOLDBERG. Speak up, Webber. Why did the chicken cross the road?

STANLEY. He wanted to—he wanted to—he wanted to—

MA CANN. He doesn’t know!

GOLDBERG. Why did the chicken cross the road?

STANLEY. He wanted…

MA CANN. He doesn’t know. He doesn’t know which came first!

GOLDBERG. Which came first?

MAC CANN. Chicken? Egg? Which came first?
GOLDBERG and MAC CANN. Which came first? Which came first? Which came first? In Act II we find Stanley getting into trouble. The two sinister visitors harm him emotionally. There is much of music and dance. They play the blind’s game. Stanley whose glasses have been snatched by McCann becomes more and more hysterical, tries to strangle Meg, and is finally driven upstairs by the two sinister strangers.

Martin Esslin comments that “The Birthday Party has been interpreted as an allegory of the pressures of conformity, with Stanley, the pianist, as the artist who is forced into respectability and pin-stripe trousers by the emissaries of the bourgeois world. Yet the play can equally well be seen as an allegory of death — man snatched away from the home he has built himself, from the warmth of love embodied by Meg’s mixture of motherliness and sexuality, by the dark angels of nothingness, who pose to him the question of which came first, the chicken or the egg. But as in the case of Waiting for Godot, all such interpretations would miss the point; a play like this simply explores a situation which, in itself, is a valid poetic image that is immediately seen as relevant and true. It speaks plainly of the individual’s pathetic search for security; of secret dreads and anxieties; of the terrorism of our world, so often embodied in false bonhomie and bigoted brutality; of the tragedy that arises from lack of understanding between people on different levels of awareness.”
THE CARETAKER:

Harold Pinter's second full-length play *The Caretaker* is his masterpiece. He wrote it in 1959 and the play was first produced at Arts Theatre, London. Since then it has been produced often and again. The play has three acts and three characters Mick, Aston and Davies. The locale is that of a house in West London. The brief story line is as follows.

Aston, a dull-witted younger brother of Mick, one day brings a middle-aged man called Davies who was often beaten in a café. When inquired Davies appears elusive and uncertain. Both Aston and Davies talk of their problems and black people who live with them as neighbours. They allude to the statuette of Buddha, which the two brothers are fond of. Later we hear Davies telling that his another name is Bernard Jenkins. He says he had to go to a place called Sidcup. He says he has his papers there. 'Papers' means all his identity. In his own words:

DAVIES. A man I know has got them. I left them with him. You see? They prove who I am! I can't move without them papers. They tell you who I am. You see! I'm stuck without them.

ASTON. Why's that?

DAVIES. You see, what it is, you see, I changed my name! Years ago. I been going around under an assumed name! That's not my real name.64

Once Aston believes the newcomer, he assigns him the work of the caretaker of his household. He cannot do it because he is weak mentally. This he reveals to Davies when they are too close to each other. In his own words:

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ASTON. I used to go there quite a bit. Oh, years ago now. But I stopped. I used to like that place. Spent quite a bit of time in there. That was before I went away. Just before. I think that...place had a lot to do with it. They were all...a good bit older than me. But they always used to listen. I thought...they understood what I said. I mean I used to talk to them. I talked too much. That was my mistake. The same in the factory. Standing there, or in the breaks, I used to...talk about things. And these men, they use to listen, whenever I...had anything to say. It was all right. The trouble was, I used to have a kind of hallucinations. They weren't hallucinations, they...I used to get the feeling I could see things...very clearly...everything...was so clear...everything used...everything used to get very quiet...everything got very quiet...all this ...quiet...and...this clear sight...it was ...but maybe I was wrong. Anyway, someone must have said something. I didn't know anything about it. And...some kind of lie must have got around. And this lie went round. I thought people started being funny. In that café. The factory. I couldn't understand it. Then one day they took me to a hospital, right outside London.65

In Act Two we find Mick befriends the stranger. He asks him who he was. Yet the fellow does not say who he is. Davies’ speech amuses Mick. He asks him for his name and all that. He says, “I’m afraid you’re a born fibber, en’t you? You’re speaking to the owner. This is my room. You’re standing in my house.”66

However, Davies adjusts with Mick gradually.
We notice some fun in Davies' callousness. Once he knows that Aston is weak mentally, he starts misusing him, or speaking of him openly. He complains Aston is weak in mind and he is a slow worker. Davies complains that Aston does not speak to him properly; and does not give him cooperation at work. Davies speaks as if Aston has gone mad: "Couple of weeks ago... he sat there, he gave me a long chat...about a couple of weeks ago. A long chat he gives me since then he ain't said hardly a word. He went on talking there...I don't know what he was...he wasn't looking at me, he wasn't talking to me, he don't care about me. He was talking to himself!" 67

However, sin recoils the sinner. As the days pass Davies tries to misuse Mick, the lawful landlord. This causes problems between them. Mick thinks of Davies as a bad fellow. He tells,

"You're stinking the place out. You're an old robber, there's no getting away from it. You're a skate. You don't belong in a nice place like this. You're an old barbarian." 68

Act III portrays Davies' deviation. Mick gives him up. Then Davies goes to Aston for help and soccur. He prays, "Did you? You been a good friend to me. You took me in, you took me in, you didn' ask me no questions, you give me a bed, you been a mate to me. Listen. I been thinking, why I made all them noises..." 69 So the play ends in Davies' prayer to Aston for an adjustment.

Martin Esslin thinks "The Caretaker achieves the quality of universality and tragedy without any of the tricks of mystery and violence that Pinter used in his earlier plays to create an atmosphere of poetic terror. Even Davies' myth of
the impossible journey to Sidcup remains within the bounds of strict realism. It represents simply a form of self-deception and grotesque evasion on Davies’s part. Anyone can see through it, but Davies is too self-indulgent a character to notice how the rationalization of apathy and inability to help himself deceives no one except perhaps himself."70

Pinter had originally intended to bring in violence at the end of the play. It seems he gave up the idea later. The play abounds in archaic humour. As Pinter in his interview to Sunday Times says, “An element of the absurd is, I think, one of the features of the play, but at the same time I did not intend it to be merely a laughable farce, if there had not been other issues at stake, the play would not have been written. Audience reaction can’t be regulated, and no one would want to be; nor is it easy to analyze. But where the comic and the tragic (for want of a better word) are closely interwoven, certain members of an audience will always give emphasis to the comic as opposed to the other, for by so doing they rationalize the other out of existence...Where this indiscriminate mirth is found, I feel it represents a cheerful patronage of the characters on the part of the merrymakers, and thus participation is avoided...As for as I’m concerned The Caretaker is funny upto a point. Beyond that point it ceases to be funny, and it was because of that point that I wrote it.”71

OLD TIMES:

Pinter’s next full-length play Old Times written in 1971 depicts in detail the ambiguities and the stasis of his two radio plays Landscape and Silence. Here a man is involved with two woman. Deeley is a middle aged intellectual and he
has married a lady called Kate. As the play opens the couple are discussing the impending arrival of Anna, Kate’s friend of her youth. While we see Anna is discussed, Anna appears to them in their fantasy. In fact, soon she appears in person. Deeley and Anna speak of Kate. Their discussion prolongs and Deeley is caught between the two women. The play has a haunting impact.

**NO MAN’S LAND:**

Pinter’s *No Man’s Land* presents a similar kind of duel. The situation of the play *The Caretaker* is transferred into a socially more elevated milieu. As in the novel of *Withering Heights*, Mr Spooner has brought Hirst, a tramp to have a drink with him. Spooner wants to befriend the fellow. But their hopes seem to be threatened when two lower-class men Briggs and Foster, of course, the master’s servants, appear. The play ends with Spooner about to be expelled from his much-desired haven. Finally Hirst lands into a situation of no man’s land.

**HAROLD PINTER’S RADIO AND TELEVISION PLAYS:**

**THE ROOM:**

Harold Pinter wrote his first play *The Room* in 1957 and it was presented at Bristol in 1960. The play has several characters such as Bert Hudd, Rose, Mr Kidd, Mr. Sands, Mrs Sands and Riley. The play is about a room which Mrs Rose inhabits in a large house with Bert Hudd whom she appears to have married and with whom she tries desperately to contact. Of course, he does not speak to her till the end. Sanjay Kumar, in his article on Pinter says obviously scared of the cold, outside, hostile world Mrs Rose chooses to look after her
husband who just wants her pampering. When Mr Kidd turns to them elusively the play’s mystery deepens, one may say. Kidd is an old, doddering man, vague about his own origin. Even he does not know whether his mother was a Jewish. Mrs Rose, in fact, mistakes him for her husband. He appears to threaten her. Later, the Sands, who are in search of a room, appear there enervating Mrs Rose. Finally one Mr Rilay persuades her to go with him. He says, “Your father wants you to come. Come home, Sal.”72 In a typical Painteresque manner Bert Hudd knocks the blind Riley down and Mrs Rose goes blind.

THE DUMB WAITER:

Pinter’s radio play The Dumb Waiter was first presented at the Hempstead Theatre Club in 1960. The play has just two characters Ben and Gus. The play is located in a basement where two hired assailants wait to receive an order from their anonymous boss to shoot their next victim. To keep out the feeling of suspense and nervousness, they chat about news and sports. The action progresses in a bizarre manner as an envelope with a box of matches is slid under the door. By the time a dumb waiter noisily comes down demanding food, the two men, Ben and Gus try to fulfill the demands in a frantic and funny manner. The tension keeps mounting until Gus goes out of the room. In his absence, Ben receives an order to shoot the first person who comes into the room next. The man who comes next is none else but Gus himself. The partners stare at each other as the curtain falls. In Martin Esslin’s view “The Dumb Waiter brilliantly fulfils Ionesco’s postulate in completely fusing tragedy with the most hilarious farce. It also succeeds in turning the mysterious supernatural
ingredient, which was merely sentimental in *The Room*, into an additional element of comedy: the spectacle of the heavenly powers bombarding two solemn gunmen with demands for 'mecaroni pastitsio, ormitha macarounada, and 'char siu and nean sprouts’ is wildly funny. Yet the main element of comedy is provided by the brilliant small talk behind which the two men hide their growing anxiety.”73

**A SLIGHT ACHE:**

Harold Pinter’s radio play *A Slight Ache* was written in 1958. It was first performed on the BBC in 1959. Later it was published in 1961. The play has three characters Edward, Flora, both couples, and a tramp called Matchseller. The fun is that the last character does not speak most of the time.

When the play opens Edward and Flora are sitting talking about a honeysuckle. The man feels he has a slight headache. They think of killing a wasp. They like the flower convolvulus. The day is a Saturday, the longest day of the year for them. When Edward goes out into his garden he sights a man waiting outside there. He wants to know why he is there. His wife calls him inside. First the husband enquires the stranger about his whereabouts. But the latter does not speak. Even he tells his story to him. Yet when he does not find the fellow responsive he bursts with anger: “I haven’t wasted my time. I’ve hit, in fact, upon the truth. He’s not a Matchseller at all. The bastard isn’t a Matchseller at all. Curious I never realized that before. He’s an impostor.”74

Soon the husband goes out into the garden. The wife Flora desires to know about the tramp. She takes some sympathy with him. She asks him many questions
guessing something of the man. She even calls him Barnabas. Once the tramp finds Flora sympathizing with him he moves, and laughs. Flora likes it, "Ha-ha-ha! Yes! You’re laughing with me, I’m laughing with you, we’re laughing together." Flora, like Meg in *The Birthday Party*, falls in love with him. Finally she sends her husband outside entertaining the guest. The play sounds fantastic. So the play is about the terror of the unknown. Harold Pinter has succeeded in depicting the mystery in man.

**A NIGHT OUT:**

*A Night Out* is Pinter’s second radio play. He wrote it in 1960. It was performed on the BBC the same year. The play has three acts and as many as a dozen characters. In fact, each act has several scenes. Here Pinter relies entirely on his mastery of real-life idiom to produce a feeling of the absurdity and futility of the human condition. The play is about the adventures of a depressed clerk Mr Albert. He has a mother Mrs Stokes as affectionate as Meg in *The Birthday Party*. One day he goes to a party at his office where his office rival causes him annoyance. He is accused of having interfered with a girl and he rushes home. There he has a squirmish with his mother and goes off. Later he is trapped by a prostitute. Still he terrifies her and returns home finding his mother still alive. Has he really broken free during his night out? The question is unanswered.

**THE DWARFS:**

Pinter’s radio play *The Dwarfs* was first performed on the BBC in 1960. It has three characters Len, Pete and Mark. The action of the play moves from Mark’s house to Len’s house in a London suburb. All three characters are in
their thirties. The play is based upon his unpublished novel. The fun is that it has
no plot as such. It is a set of variations on the theme of reality and fantasy. It is
observed that "The Dwarfs, although outwardly simple and without any of
Pinter's earlier tricks and mystification, is a complex and difficult play. It is also
one of his most personal statements. Len's world of the dwarfs is that of Aston,
or Stanley in The Birthday Party. All three have the same experience in
common- they have been expelled from their private world, squalid but cozy, in
which they could indulge their personal vision. Stanley is carried off by force in
the midst of highly allegorical happenings; Aston and Len lose their vision in a
process of healing that is also a catastrophic loss of a dimension of their lives -
the dimension of fantasy or poetry, the ability to look behind the scenes of the
commonplace, everyday world."76

THE COLLECTION:

Pinter's play The Collection was published in 1963. It was first presented
by Associated Rediffusion Television, London in 1961. The play has four
characters Harry, James, Stella and Bill, all in their thirties. The locations are
Harry's house in Belgravia and James's flat in Chelsea. Harry, a wealthy
homosexual textile designer lives in a household with Bill, a young man he has
befriended. James, also in the same business, accuses Bill of having seduced and
spent the night with his wife Stella, when both had gone up north, to Leeds, to
look at the season's dress collections. The play highlights the tragedy of a
woman in a world where the men tend to be more interested in each other than in
the other sex.
FAMILY VOICES:

Pinter’s radio play *Family Voices* has just three voices as Voice 1, Voice 2 and Voice 3. It was presented in a ‘platform performance’ by the National Theatre, London in 1981.

THE LOVER:

Pinter’s play *The Lover* was first presented by Associated-Rediffusion Television, London in 1963. The play has three characters Richard, Sarah and John. Richard and Sarah are suburban couple, the husband commuting to London every weekday. He knows that his wife has a lover. He too has a whore. Later we come to know that Sarah prepares for her lover. Actually the lover and whore are enacted by the two themselves. As Martin Esslin thinks the theme of reality and fantasy of wish fulfillment are presented.

NIGHT:

*Night* is Pinter’s radio play. It was first presented in an entertainment entitled *Mixed Doubles* at the Comedy Theatre in 1969. The play has two characters Man and Woman. They are in their forties.

LANDSCAPE:

*Landscape* was first performed by the BBC in 1968. The play has two characters Beth and Duff. The Royal Shakespeare Company staged it in 1969. The play takes place in the kitchen of Beth’s house. Duff refers normally to Beth but does not appear to hear her voice. Beth never looks at Duff and does not appear to hear his voice. Both characters are relaxed in no rigid sense. The play is based on the theme of elusiveness of human personality. The landscape of the
title is in Beth’s memories, a scene of lovemaking with an unnamed man by the seaside, tenderly and delicately recalled. The play raises the question why Beth is isolated from Duff. None answers this.

SILENCE:

Silence, first presented by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1969, has the following characters Ellen, a girl in her twenties; Rumsy, a man of forty and Bates, a man in his middle thirties. This play is a variation on the theme presented in Landscape. The characters remain seated throughout the play. The drama lies in the evocation of moods.

NIGHT SCHOOL:

Night School is Pinter’s experimental work.

BASEMENT:

Pinter’s radio play Basement was broadcast from the BBC in 1967. It was entitled as The Compartment first. The play is about a room again. The owner of the basement room is visited by an old friend who, as soon as he is offered hospitality, brings in a girl who has waited outside in the rain and goes to bed with him. As Martin Esslin comments there follows a series of images all illustrating the struggle between the two men, Law and Stott, for the favours of the girl, Jane. The room itself changes character and furniture as the moods of the contest change. In the end Law has lost the room but won the girl. Now he stands with her outside in the streaming rain while Stott sits inside, snug and warm. The action seems to be surreal. Pinter seems to create a kind of fantasy of an archetypal situation.
TEA PARTY:

Pinter’s TV play *Tea Party* was first broadcast by the BBC in 1965. It deals with a far more conventional subject. The hero is a wealthy manufacturer of sanitary equipment who has married into an upper-class family to whom he feels socially inferior. Martin Esslin says, “His inferiority complex towards his wife drives him to lust after his secretary. As at a tea party in his office during which the wife and her brother confront the secretary and the hero’s proletarian parents, the tension becomes too great for him and he sinks into his chair, stricken, paralyzed, blinded.”

THE HOMECOMING:

Pinter wrote this play in 1964. Teddy, a professor in America returns home to meet his father, an ex-butcher, his brothers—Lenny, a pimp and Joey, a boxer. Ruth shows no interest in staying there for a long time. Lenny drags her into a sexual bout. Max calls Ruth as tart. Later Joey makes love to Ruth. When Teddy asks her to accompany him to America she declines. She stays behind as a whore, cook and housekeeper. In A. D. Choudhari’s view: “*The Homecoming* has the gruesome story of a family of pimps, prostitutes, of father and two sons desiring to share the wife of the third son. Pinter’s interest in the underworld, its violence and sex, its shady dealings, masquerades, its tingods and their boastings, is manifest in many of his plays. *The Homecoming* may be termed as a drama of underworld characters.”
BETRAYAL:

Pinter’s play *Betrayal* was written in 1978. The play has a complex theme. The play has the characters Jerry, Robert and Emma. As long as the story goes, it sets up a love triangle. Jerry, a literary agent has had an affair with Emma, the wife of his publisher friend Robert. Jerry is married to Judith, a doctor and both the couples have two children each. It is observed, “The play which seems a straightforward and conventional marital triangle play, subtly and brilliantly underlines the complex web of structural variations on the theme of betrayal. This inextricable web of betrayal underlines the absurdity and hallowness of the characters’ existence and social relationships.”

THE HOTHOUSE:

Pinter’s *The Hothouse* has attracted a great deal of attraction because of the twenty years that elapsed between its writing in 1958 and its first publication and stage production in 1980. Set in what turns out to be a government-run mental home, *The Hothouse* is a black comedy in vintage Pinter style with a new and fascinating relevance for the 1980s. The play has several characters like Roote, Gibs, Lamb, Miss Cutts, Lush, Tubb and Lobb. The locations are Roote’s office and Lobb’s office in the Ministry. Critics call it a work full of comic invention. The play has some of the funniest scenes Pinter has written.

MOONLIGHT:

Pinter’s play *Moonlight* concerns a dying man’s alienation from his family. There are three simultaneous settings; the wall-furnished bedroom where the man Andy, lies musing and snarling, while Bel, his long-suffering but self-
composed wife, sits at his bedside; the shabby bedroom of his son Fred, who lives in a different location from his father, where he is visited by his brother Jake; and a vague area behind and above the other two, where a daughter, Bridget, appears from time to time, and where there is a flashback scene of all three children as teenagers. Much of the play consists of expositions, from which it is clear that Andy brutalized his children. Fred is sickly, looking worse than Andy, and spending much of his time in bed himself; Jake regularly swigs from a bottle of liquor on Fred’s table; Bridget moves about dreamily, perhaps representing only a memory of a ghost. Only Bel maintains equilibrium, putting her husband down with a bland cheeriness.

Pinter’s work as a scriptwriter for the cinema cannot be neglected. Pinter adopted others’ novels for films. His The Servant is based on Robin Maugham’s novels (written in 1963) and Accident (after a novel by Nicholas Mosley, 1967). Other films Pinter has scripted are The Caretaker, The Pumpkin Eater (after a novel by Penelope Mortimer), The Quiller Memorandum (based on a thriller by Donald Hall), The Go-Between (after the novel by L. P. Hartley, directed by Joseph Losey) and The Last Tycoon (after the novel by Scott Fitzgerald). A screen play based on Aidan Higgins’s novel Langrishe, Go Down was made a TV play and Pinter’s masterly adaptation of Proust’s great novel A la recherche du Temps Perdu was published in 1978.

Yet Pinter is a man of theatre. He is a poet and his theatre is essentially a poetic theatre. Pinter, like Beckett and Kafka, is preoccupied with man at the limit of his being. As Len says in The Dwarfs, “The point is, who are you? Not
why or how, not even what...You are the sum of so many reflections. How many reflections? Whose reflections? Is that what you consist of? What scum does the tide leave? What happens to the scum? When does it happen? I’ve seen what happens...The scum is broken and sucked back. I don’t see where it goes, I don’t see when, what do I see, what have I seen? What have I seen, the sum or the essence?”

Pinter says he writes of life in its extremity. He made this clear when Kenneth Tynan interviewed him. He deals with man’s existential problems. Martin Esslin observes, “We see Pinter’s characters in the process of their essential adjustment to the world, at the point when they have to solve their basic problem – whether they will be able to confront, and come to terms with reality at all. It is only after they have made this fundamental adjustment that they will be able to become part of society and share in the games of sex or politics. Pinter repudiates the suggestions, his plays deal with a short, if climactic, period in the lives of his characters, a few days or, in the case of The Caretaker, a fortnight. We are only concerned with what is happening then, in this particular moment of these people’s lives. There is no reason to suppose that at one time or another they did not listen at a political meeting...or that they haven’t had girl friends’ or been concerned with ideas.”

Pinter’s plays make use of isolation. A. D. Choudhari says, “In Pinter’s theatre the persistent presence of a closed room, isolated from the outside world, with a few persons huddled together inside, in a sort of non-communicative conversation, is significant.” His plays like The Room, The Birthday Party,
The Dumbwaiter, The Caretaker and The Homecoming are enacted in a room, in a kind of isolation. In such place people are found mostly as strangers. The subject of their talk is irrelevant or ununderstandable. There is mystery and nervousness. What the characters do? Do they discuss any problem? Social issues? Philosophy? Their love affairs? Their frustration? Apparently they do nothing of that sort. This pattern repeats in variation in all his plays. It is observed: "Pinter's world is exclusively private. The great commotions of the world, the seething social problems which engage the attention of the social-realist dramatist do not figure in his vision. Instead, he concentrates on the delineation of fundamental human situations, free from accidents of social consideration and political affiliation; apparently in commonplace surroundings in which characters are at the extreme edge of their living; all the insecurity and anxiety that haunted the pre- and post war Western world seem to have been crystallized in the atmosphere; and without any reference to the political world we feel the impact of the modern socio-political instability in the private vision of the characters."\(^83\) One reason for this is Pinter's boyhood background. As a Jewish boy in the time of Hitler's reign in Europe, he experienced fear, isolation and insecurity.

It seems Pinter is not bothered of western society's welfare problems as we find in the plays of Osborne, Wesker and Arden. Critics think his plays deal entirely with personal contacts but he deals with them impersonally, and his interest is psychological. We cannot find plot and characters in his plays. Pinter presents an illogical world. What we find there is intuitive imagination and
dream-like atmosphere. The characters live in the island of their own existence. Their journey is a journey in the unconsciousness. His plays are the most un-British plays of the 20th century.

3. N. F. SIMPSON

If Pinter’s plays transmute realism into poetic fantasy, N. F. Simpson’s works are philosophical fantasies based on reality. N. F. Simpson was born in 1919. N. F. Simpson, an adult education lecturer who lives in London, first came into prominence by winning one of the prizes in the Observer’s 1957 play-writing competition with *A Resounding Tinkle*. Although Simpson’s work is fantasy as that of Lewis Carroll’s, and called by the author himself as ‘Jabberworky,’ it is based on the educated class system. If Beckett and Pinter’s worlds are full of tramps, Simpson’s world is a suburban.

**A RESOUNDING TINKLE:**

Simpson’s *A Resounding Tinkle* is a comedy. Simpson wrote the play in 1957. The play was performed in a much-shortened version at the Royal Court Theatre, London in the same year. The play is in two acts and the characters are First Comedian, Second Comedian, A Technician, an American Tourist, the Producer, First Cleaner, Second Cleaner, Bro Paradox, Middie Paradox, Uncle Tod and the Author. Interestingly the play has some critic-characters like Mustard Short, Denzil Pepper, Miss Salt, Mrs Vinegar, Chairman, Man in
Bowler Hat and Producer. The play is set in a suburban living room. The time is evenings spread over two days.

When the play opens we find the Parodocks chatting about everyday affairs. Middie Paradock announces that a man has come there wishing Bro Paradock to form a government. What kind of government and where is not made clear. Yet Mrs Paradock refers to Ireland. Later two comedians arrive there as if commissioned. Mr. Paradock mistakes the First Comedian for his Uncle Tod. The Second Comedian arrives shortly. They chat about horse and dog breading. Mrs Paradock brings the guests some drinks and her husband brings them some eatables. They ask them to enjoy, “Let us laugh with those we tickle...Let us weep with those we expose to tear gas. Let us throw back our heads and laugh at reality, which is an illusion caused by mescaline deficiency; at sanity, which is an illusion caused by alcohol deficiency; at knowledge, which is an illusion caused by certain biochemical changes in the human brain structure during the course of human evolution...Let us laugh at thought, which is a phenomenon like any other. At illusion, which is an illusion, which is a phenomenon like any other...”

The First Comedian thinks of the earth as flat and the discussion about it prolongs.

Act Two opens with new characters. Author comes. He speaks of Portugal, tragic relief, while Bro Paradock speaks of the absence of repetition as the fundamental law of life;
BRO PARADOCK. Oh! The fundamental law of life...is a complete negation of repetition! But I find that a certain movement of head or arm, a movement always the same seems to return at regular intervals. If I notice it and it succeeds in diverting my attention, if I wait for it to occur and it occurs when I expect it, then involuntarily I laugh. Why? Because I now have before me a machine that works automatically. This is no longer life, it is automatism established in life and imitating it. It belongs to the comic.

MRS PARADOCK. Good. And what does he say on page fifty-eight?

MR PARADOCK. He says, We laugh every time a person gives us the impression of being a thing. You’ve marked it. But where does all this get us?

MRS PARADOCK. You’ll see. These two are Bergson trained.

MR PARADOCK. They’ll be like that for hours yet.

_The two comedians begin to stir._

MRS PARADOCK. Will they?

_The two comedians look around them as though coming out of a trance._

_Second Comedian leaves around his chair and advances to the front of the stage._

First Comedian follows:

SECOND COMEDIAN. You could call this intellectual slapstick.

FIRST COMEDIAN. We are, metaphysically, the Marx Brothers.

SECOND COMEDIAN. Presenting the custard pie comedy of the abstract.

FIRST COMEDIAN. Quintessentially.

SECOND COMEDIAN. And working to a blueprint.
FIRST COMEDIAN. The fundamental law of life is a complete negation of repetition! But I find that a certain movement of head or arm, a movement always the same, seems to return at regular intervals....If I notice it and it succeeds in diverting my attention, if I wait for it to occur and it occurs when I expect it, then involuntarily I laugh. Why? Because I now have before me a machine that works automatically. This is no longer life, it is automatism established in life and imitating it. It belongs to the comic.\textsuperscript{85}

The above passage evinces the presence of humour in Simpson's comedy. Simpson introduces the dialogue of music hall comedy. Mr Paradock mimes something illogical, "Two in the circle two in the circle two in the circle two in the circle two in the circle at seven and six, and six and five, and five and four, and four and three and three and two in the circle at six and five, and five and four, and four and three, and three and two in the circle at four and three, and three and two in the circle at three and two, and one, and naught."\textsuperscript{86}

There is a Technician speaking about the conduction of the play. Some typical characters like Prayer and Response speak of merry-making. The Paradocks' reason for inviting the comedians is stated thus when Mrs Paradock asserts: "...Bro and I need some good comedians in the house to prevent us quarrelling all the time."\textsuperscript{87}

The Paradocks buy the toys of some animals like serpents. They buy the toy of an elephant. They like to call it with different names like Trench and Oedipus Rex. The comedians chat and amuse the old couple. The Author refers to his failures in the play. Critics come there finally. The Critic has many
followers like Pepper, Salt, Mustard, Mrs Vinegar and others. The Critic asks others as to the quality of the comedy. Pepper says it is a hotchpotch; and Mustard says it is a producer’s play. The Chairman of the team says, “We seem to be getting away from the play itself. Can we try to reach agreement on what kind of production this is? Is it a comedy. Denzil Pepper—what do you think about this play as a comedy?” to which Pepper replies: “What do I think about it as a comedy? I believe I laughed once. So, technically I suppose the play could be a comedy.”

So he seems to think A Resounding Tinkle must be a comedy of errors. Likewise the Author appears at the end of the play and says, “What a waste of talent it’s all been. What a waste!”

Nonsense and satire are mingled with parody here. Martin Esslin observes, “N. F. Simpson’s plays are highly intellectual entertainments. They lack the dark obsessiveness of Adamov, the manic proliferation of things in Ionesco, or the anxiety and menace of Pinter. They are spontaneous creations that often rely on free association and a purely verbal logic and lack the formal discipline of Beckett. As Simpson himself put it in one programme about to become detached from the main body, “No attempt, well intentioned or not, should be made from the audience to nudge these back into position while the play is in motion. They will eventually drop off and are quite spontaneity.”

THE HOLE:

N. F. Simpson’s second play The Hole is equally interesting. The theme of the play is the exploration of the relativity of our vision of the world. The play was first performed at the Royal Court in December 1957. Here a group of
characters congregate around a hole in the street, discussing what it might be, each of them in turn seeing different things happening in its dark opening. There is a visionary thinking that the hole stretches away from him in every direction known to the compass. The more commonplace characters arrive there and watch the hole projecting their own preoccupations about it. The discussions around the hole become a survey of the fantasy-life of an English suburb. The discussion, in Martin Esslin’s words, “…starts with sports, ranging from dominoes to cricket, boxing, and golf; proceeds to nature, turning the hole into an aquarium housing a variety of species of fish that can be discussed with expertise; then turns to crime and punishment and violent demands for torture, execution, and revenge; and, having aroused the emotions of all concerned, culminates in fantasies of a political nature—the violence of both chauvinism and revolutionary action. After all this, a workman emerges from the hole and informs the bystanders that it contains a junction box of the electricity supply.”

The intellectual of the group Cerebro accepts the statement. But his opponent Soma accuses him of the deprivation of mystery surrounded around it. Gradually some sort of metaphysical significance is attached to the event. The technological facts have been turned back into vague emotional mumbo-jumbo. Critics think the play is a moral story. It is observed, “The Hole is a philosophical fable.”

**ONE WAY PENDULUM:**

Simpson wrote the play *One Way Pendulum* in 1960. The play has two acts. It was first performed at the Theatre Royal, Brighton in 1959. *One Way*
Pendulum has many characters like Kirby Groomkirby, Robert Barnes, Mabel Groomkirby, Sylvia Groomkirby, Aunt Mildred, Myra Gantry, Arthur Groomkirby, Stan Honeyblock, Judge, Policeman, Usher, Clerk of the Court, Prosecuting Counsel and Defending Counsel. Simpson combines the theme of philosophical nonsense with suburban nonsense in this play One Way Pendulum. When a critic asked Simpson about the meaning of the title, the author is reported to have replied that the name is just a name as London or Simpson. It is a kind of signpost indicating that the contents of the play are paradoxical. The first sub-title of the play when it was staged at the Royal Theatre, London, in 1959, was 'An Evening of high drung and slarrit.' Later the subtitle was changed to 'A farce in a new dimension.'

As in The Hole, a group of characters is presented and each of whom is preoccupied with a private world of fantasy. As Simpson says, "In these plays each man is an island. The whole point about the relationship in the family is that everyone is in fact preoccupied with his own interests and makes very little contact, except superficially, with the other characters in the play." The family in question is the Groomkirbys. Arthur Groomkirby, the father of the family works in a private enterprise as a keeper of metre. Like everyone he has a hobby. He constructs model structures. He builds up a model of the court in his living room. Arthur's son Kirby Groomkirby who has trained himself by the Pavlov method is engaged on a gigantic educational enterprise. He wants to teach five hundred 'speak-your-weight' weighing machines to sing the 'hallelujah' chorus from the Messiah. He thinks if they can speak they can sing as well. He makes
some progress. He thinks once they sing they can be transported to the North Pole and attract tourists. He even wants some holocausts to take place on the earth. The teenage daughter of the family Sylvia is also preoccupied with the theme of death. She is unhappy with human conditions. There is an old aunt in wheel chairs and she is treated as a thing. The mother of the family Mabel is highly eccentric. She exploits the maidservant at home.

In Act Two the home-made Old Bailey (a model of law court) is suddenly filled with judges and lawyers. Arthur Groomkirby is summoned for cross-examination. Later it is announced that the accused is his son. The play ends with a note of despair. Martin Esslin observes, "One Way Pendulum owed its considerable success with the public to the sustained inventiveness of its nonsense and, in particular, to the brilliant parody of British legal procedure and language in the court scene, which occupies almost the whole of the second act. In fact, however, the play is far less amiable than it appears at first sight. What seems little more than a harmless essay in upside-down logic is essentially a ferocious comment on contemporary British life."94 The play depicts the fact that suburban people are preoccupied with their private thoughts. Automatism is a key image here. To lead an emotional life, Kirby has to stun himself into unconsciousness; only then can he indulge in sex. When awakened from one of these stupors by his Pavlovian cash-registrar bell, he angrily exclaims, "'I might have been dreaming... Might have stopped me stone dead in the middle of an orgasm."95 It is said habit and social conventions are the deadeners of a society that has lost its authenticity. One Way Pendulum portrays a society that has
become absurd because routine and tradition have turned human beings into Pavlovian automatons. In that sense, Simpson is a more powerful social critic than any of the social realists. Martin Esslin thinks his work is proof that the theatre of the absurd is by no means unable to provide highly effective social comment.

4. TOM STOPPARD

Tom Stoppard is a Czech-born British dramatist. He was born “Tom Straussler” in Zlin Czechoslovakia in 1937. His family was in Singapore. Tom lived in Darjeeling, India for some time. However his father remained in India, his Martha mother who married Kenneth Stoppard migrated to England. Stoppard had his primary education and became a freelance writer for English papers. Later he started writing for the theatre. Even he adopted the pseudonym William Boot (taken from Evelyn Waugh’s SCOOP). As for Stoppard’s personal life he married Jose Ingle in 1965 and divorced her in 1972 and he married Dr Miriam Moore-Robinson in 1972 and divorced her in 1992. He has two sons from each marriage.

Tom Stoppard is dramatist and something of an eclectic who has experimented with a variety of forms in his writing for stage and television. A heavy reliance on intellectual wit and allusion as in the case of N. F. Simpson, is the characterization of Stoppard’s plays. In fact, his plays have achieved a great success at West End. Now he is established as a leading comic playwright. His major works include Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead (1966), The Real

Tom Stoppard's best play is Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead is, in fact, his most representative work. While participating in a colloquium sponsored by the Ford Foundation in Berlin in 1964, Stoppard wrote a one act play that later became Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead. The play was enacted at Cranston Street Hall at Edinburg Festival in 1967. The play attracted a vast audience and became instantly popular. Thereafter, it was staged at Old Vic Theatre in London in the same year.

Criticism of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead is complex and varied. The play focuses on two minor characters from Hamlet, and examines the ideas of fate and free will. Hard critics called it a plagiarism of Shakespeare's Hamlet. Stoppard was called a 'parasite.' Some people called him a parodist as he parodied Shakespeare's language with his colloquial language. Irving called Stoppard 'a Bookish playwright,' while Jim Hunter said he was 'a player.' Roger Sales terms Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead as 'theater of theatre.' Cheryl Faroane writes Stoppard is a "committed, hard-working theatrical practitioner."96 Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead, Rosencrantz
for short became labelled as a difficult play as it has an intellectual context, exploring the theme of absurd. Roger Sales observes, “the play presents problems... Rosencrantz is ‘about’ the theatre and theatricality and is therefore not quite so easy to contextualise.” It has placed a great emphasis on fashion, in common with the regency and Elizabethan ones. Stoppard himself was a dedicated follower of the sixties fashions and he sounds like a king’s road dandy. So when the play achieved an instant success at Edinburgh, it was staged on both sides of the Atlantic. Maybe Stoppard has written the play with Shakespeare’s help but he wrote the script in accordance with the 60’s mythology and it is here lies his originality.

The theme of the play is just as same as Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Yet Tom Stoppard’s play projects Ros and Guil, but not Hamlet. Stoppard seems to ask the question as to why Ros and Guil should suffer for Hamlet’s sake. They are, soon on arriving to the King of England, beheaded. He calls this absurd.

The modern play *Rosencrantz* begins with two Elizabethans passing their time in a place without any visible character. They are well dressed. Each of them has a moneybag and they want to play with money. As Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* influenced Stoppard, he makes use of syllogism and repetitions. The characters Ros and Guil want to pass their time. Yet they worry as to how to pass it. For instance,

ROSS: Heads.

(He picks it up and puts it in his bag. The process is repeated.)

Heads.
ROSS: Heads.

(again.)

ROSS: Heads.

(again.)

Heads.

(again.)

Heads.

GUIL: (Flipping a coin): There is an art to the building up of suspense.

ROSS: Heads.

GUIL: (Flipping another): Though it can be done by luck alone. As the tramps in *Waiting for Godot*, Ros and Guil pass their time by telling syllogism which is a form of reasoning in which a conclusion is drawn from two given or assumed propositions. An example can be: “All trains are long; some buses are long; therefore some buses are trains.” We see they speak of nothing important. For instance,

GUIL: Too late for what?

ROSS: How do I know? We haven’t got there yet.

GUIL: Then what are we doing here, I ask myself?

ROSS: You might well ask.

GUIL: We better get on.

ROSS: You might well think.

GUIL: We better get on.

Ros (actively): Right! (Pause). On where?

GUIL: Forward.
Later Guil narrates a unicorn story. Roger Sales observes, “He wants to associate himself with unicorns and therefore with mystery, mythology and poetry.”

Time passing is a recurring theme in *Rosencrantz*. Ros and Guil pass their time by playing coins, saying syllogism and asking each other nonsense questions.

**GUIL** (seriously): What’s your name?

**ROS**: What’s yours?

**GUIL**: I asked first.

**ROS**: Statement. One—love.

**GUIL**: What’s your name when you’re at home?

**ROS**: What’s yours?

**GUIL**: When I’m at home?

**ROS**: Is it different at home?

**GUIL**: What home?

**ROS**: Haven’t you got one?

**GUIL**: Why do you ask?

**ROS**: What are driving at?

**GUIL**: What’s your name?

Stoppard’s *Rosencrantz* bears a resemblance with Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*. Certain features like informal language, parodying, broken ceremonies, abrupt ending at Act One, and the dance of death in Act Two are of absurd theatre.
Roger Sales says the two tramps-like sentries who are content to wait passively for instructions and believe that they will be punished if they do not do so, may represent the absurdity of the so-called 'ages of faith' rather than that of a secular society. As for the difference between Godot and Rosencrantz, although Hamlet eventually appears in Ros, he nevertheless fulfils some of the same functions as the absent Godot does in Beckett's play. But Ros and Guil, like Estragon and Vladimir are desperately seeking a sense of direction and purpose.

TOM STOPPARD'S RADIO AND TELEVISION PLAYS:

Tom Stoppard has contributed much for the radio and television. Then, in 1977 after visiting Russia with a member of Amnesty International, Stoppard became concerned with a number of human rights issues which have manifested themselves in his work. Every Good Boy Deserves Favour (1977) was actually written at the request of Andre Previn and was inspired by a meeting with Russian exile Viktor Fainberg. And Professional Foul (1977), a Television play, was Stoppard's contribution to Amnesty International's declaration of 1977 as Prisoner of Conscience Year. Other works such as Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth (1979) and Squaring the Circle (1984) are direct attacks on the oppressive old regimes of Eastern Europe. Not all of Stoppard's plays, however, are political. One of his recent works, The Invention of Love (1977), examines the relationship between famous scholar and poet A. E. Housman and the man he loved his entire life, Moses Jackson, a handsome athlete who could not return
his feelings. The play opened to rare reviews at the Royal National Theatre in 1997.

In addition to his work for the stage, Stoppard has written a number of screenplays including *The Human Factor* (1979), *Empire of the Sun* (1987) and *Billy Bathgate* (1991). His screenplay for *Brazil* (1985) which he co-authored with Terry Gilliam and Charles McKeown, was nominated for an Academy Award in 1985, and in (1999), he won an Oscar for “Best Screenplay” for *Shakespeare in Love* (1998) which he co-authored with Marc Norman. Other awards include the John Whiting Award (1967), the EVENING STANDARD Award (1968, 1975, 1979, 1983), the Italia Prize for radio plays (1968), three Tony Award (1968, 1976, 1984), the Shakespeare Prize (1979), an Outer Circle Award (1984) and a Drama Desk Award (1984).

Tom Stoppard has established an international reputation as a writer of “serious comedy”; his plays are plays of ideas that deal with philosophical issues, yet he combines the philosophical ideas he presents with verbal wit and visual humour. His linguistic complexity, with its puns, jokes, innuendo, and other wordplay, is a chief characteristic of his work.
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31. The Bible, I.12.
45. Samuel Beckett, *All That Fall*, p. 34.


52. Samuel Beckett, *Cascando*, p. 44.


69. Harold Pinter, *The Caretaker*, p. 73.
80. Harold Pinter, *The Dwarfs*, p. 111.
97. Roger Sales, Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, p. 6.
100. Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, p. 14.
101. Roger Sales, Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, p. 21.
102. Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, p. 33.