UNIT 1 WAITING FOR *GODOT* : AN AVANT GARDE PLAY

Structure

1.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this unit are to introduce you to the idea of tragicomedy, the theatre of the Absurd, and to enable you to appreciate how waiting for *Godot* is different from other plays prescribed in your syllabus.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Waiting for Godot was originally written in French entitled *En attendant Godot* in 1952. The play broke new ground in theatre history and is rightly called an *avant garde* play. There are certain distinct features of it, which make it markedly different from other plays you may have read in this course. Some of the things which distinguish it from other plays could be:

i) the austere stage-setting,
ii) tramps as protagonists,
iii) use of language and linguistic devices such as, speech-pace, pauses, silences etc.,

iv) Beckett's incorporating elements from different performing arts like, mime, music hall cross-talk, circus, stylized movements etc.,
v) static nature of the action,
vi) absence of conventional plot, and,
vii) asymmetrical structure of the play.

These features are meant to give you a sense of direction. You should try to apply these ideas as you read and reread the text. The text referred to in the discussion on Godot is Faber and Faber, London, 1979 edition.

1.2 TRAGICOMEDY

In order that you are able to appreciate the play better, especially in relation to Beckett's use of the resources of the performing arts, and as a literary genre (i.e. as a tragicomedy), I would urge upon you to read T.S. Eliot's essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent". The reading of this essay should enable you, in general, to see how a writer draws from the tradition and at the same time enriches it. In the light of Eliot's ideas of tradition and the individual talent, you should be able to see how the tradition of tragicomedy is continued by Beckett and how it undergoes a change at his hands.

Waiting for Godot was originally written in French. The French version did not have the subtitle underscoring its nature. Beckett translated the play himself into English and gave it the subtitle: 'A Tragicomedy in Two Acts." We shall see how this play is different from tragicomedies of the past.

Stated simply, tragicomedy is a blend of the elements of tragedy and comedy. To quote the Seventeenth Century playwright John Fletcher from the preface to his play *The Faithful Shepherdess* (1608); a tragicomedy

> is not so called in respect of mirth and killing, but in respect it wants deaths, which is enough to make it no tragedy, yet brings some near it, which is enough to make it no comedy.

In the 18th century Dr. Samuel Johnson defined tragicomedy as "drama compounded of merry and serious events". Contrary to classical injunction against mixing the tragic and the comic in one composition (as is insisted by Socrates at the end of Plato's *Symposium*), Dr. Johnson praises Shakespeare's mixture of the two, when he says, "Shakespeare has united the powers of exciting laughter and sorrow not only in one mind, but in one composition." In Shakespeare's tragedies the comic element, though a part of the play, nonetheless remains a distinct constituent in the sense that whereas it intensifies the tragic effect, it doesn't threaten to influence the action of the play. Porter in *Macbeth*, Fool in *King Lear*, and the grave digger in *Hamlet*, are a case in point. In Shakespeare's tragicomedies too, the tragic element constitutes a significant part of the action of the play. But here too, tragedy is threatened, yet avoided in time so that ultimately it doesn't affect the fortunes of the protagonists. The two elements, the tragic and the comic, thus remain distinctly apart, as is the case in *Much Ado About Nothing* and other tragicomedies.

Modern playwrights, on the other hand, mix the two elements differently and perhaps far more effectively. The two elements interpenetrate within the same character and the boundary between the two in a composition is blurred. This also projects their conception of the human existence and the audience, accordingto Styan, "is treated to the absurdity of human life inoculated first with laughter." So you will see that in *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett has, to use Styan's words again, "filtered the nightmare of human existence through the screen of laughter." Or, shall we say, that the protagonists in *Waiting for Godot* laugh to save their tears?

You will further note that Beckett uses various theatrical devices, such as mime, music hall cross-talk, varying pace and rhythm of dialogue, etc., in an attempt at cheerfulness in a world of weariness and despair, which the tramps inhabit. Beckett, to quote Roger Blin (the first director of and also an actor in *Waiting for Godot*, when it made its debut in Paris), "is unique in his ability to blend derision, humour and comedy with tragedy : his words are simultaneously tragic and comic." Fletchers (Beryl S. and John), critics on Beckett, also speak of Beckett's ability to harmonize tears and laughter.

1.3 *WAITING FOR GODOT* AND THE THEATRE OF THE ABSURD

What is the theatre of the Absurd? The label Theatre of the Absurd is often applied to the plays of Engene Ionesco, Jean Genet, Arthur Adamov, Samuel Beckett, and the early plays of Edward Albee. Plays written by these playwrights flout all the standards by which drama has been judged over the centuries. Structurally, in contrast to a well made play with a beginning, a middle and a neatly tied up ending, the plays by the absurdist playwrights often start at an arbitrary point and end just as arbitrarily. The arbitrary structure of the plays reflects the arbitrary and irrational nature of life. To put it differently, the playwright of the absurd views life existentially, he expresses the senselessness of the human condition by abandoning rational devices. Most of the plays, thus, express a sense of wonder and incomprehension, and at times despair at the meaninglessness of human existence. Since they do not believe in a rational and well-meaning universe, they do not see any possibility of resolution of the problems they present, either.

When you read *Waiting for Godot*, try to see if the play has conventional structure. If not, what are the points of difference?

Do you see a definite ending or a conclusion? Can we call the play open-ended?

1.4 AN AVANT GARDE PLAY

Waiting for Godot is a landmark in modern drama. ,When it premiered in Paris, its originality-stunned audiences; no one had seen or heard anything like it before. Initially, some were disgusted; some were puzzled; and some were wildly enthusiastic. Within a short time, audiences came to the theatre prepared for a wholly new dramatic experience and went away with praises for Samuel Beckett. Let us now have a look at the distinct aspects of *Waiting for Godot* so as to highlight the devices which made it an avant garde play.

1.4.1 The Austere Stage Setting

Compared to the elaborate stage-setting in other plays in your course, you will notice that in *Waiting for Godot*, the stage is almost bare and shorn of stage properties. This is characteristic of Beckett's plays. See the stage-setting in plays like *Endgame, Happy Days, Krapp's Last Tape, etc.*.

Compared to the stage-setting in some of his own plays the one in *Waiting for Godot,* is much barer : an open road, a mound of earth and a bare tree.

Read other plays of Beckett to get an idea of stage setting in them and their significance for the theme, action and plot of the plays. Also, you will observe that

the stage-setting in Shakespeare's, Marlowe's and other writers' plays creates the ambience (in which the protagonists--Kings, Princes, heroes etc.--are placed), to heighten the tragic effect.

Do you think the stage setting has necessarily to be in tune with the protagonists' tragic situation?

1.4.2 Tramps as protagonists in *Godot*

Have a close look at the protagonists in the plays you have studied. Notice the gradual transformation in the idea of the protagonist over centuries from Kings, Princes, heroes to the common man and even tramps. For example, from Prince Hamlet in the play by the same name, again, *Dr. Faustus* in Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*, to Professor Higgins and Flower Girl in Shaw's *Pygmalion* and finally, the two tramps in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*.

Don't you think the tramps conform to the bare setting they are placed in? If so, what purpose does Beckett wish to achieve thereby?

1.4.3 Linguistic Devices

The religio-political and socio-cultural developments from the late 19th century to the middle of 20th century, brought about a profound sense of meaninglessness and rootlessness in life. Such a sense of meaninglessness naturally led to a loss of faith in a coherent and cohesive universe. This was further manifested in the breakdown of communication, and the inability of language to communicate the illogicality of human situations. Thus the language of the absurd is very often at variance with the immediate action and is reduced to meaningless patter, to show the futility of communication. Sometimes what happens on the stage transcends, and often contradicts the words spoken by the characters. Have a look at the following dialogue between Vladimir and Estragon in *Godot:*

> Vladimir: Pull on your trousers.
> Estragon: You want me to pull off my trousers? Again,
> "Let's go". (They do not move) says the stage direction, at the end of Act I.

No wonder, at times, these tramps lapse into monologues and silences in much the same manner as Beckett the playwright also lapsed in *Breath* (1966).

Thus, as is the case with the stage setting and the nature of the protagonists, there is also a very close interrelation between these two and the language (used by the protagonists).

While reading the tragedies of Shakespeare and Marlowe, you will find that the poetic intensity of the language used by the protagonists not only expresses their character but also intensifies their tragedy. Their language is also attended by a certain degree of formality. They use imagery, rhythm, and other prosodic devices to heighten the effect.

Contrasted with the above what significance do you see in the use of communicative devices by Beckett, like, common idiom, the pauses, repetition, monologues, the speech-pace, the silences etc.

1.4.4 *Godot* and Performing Arts

Closely related to the distinct communicative devices mentioned above are some of the non-verbal acts, accompanying them in *Godot.* Beckett makes extensive use of devices like gestures and mannerisms employed in various other performing arts. Let's first look at

a) Mime:
Vladimir's mimickry on pp.40, 89.
Pozzo mimicking a public speaker in Act I.
Estragon and Vladimir playing Pozzo and Lucky in Act II.

b) Banalities of mother and wife.
Boots must be taken off everyday
I'm tired telling you that - p. 10, and,
There's man all over for you, blaming on his boots the faults of his feet - p. 10

c) Music Hall Cross-Talk : on pp. 18-19.

Also cross talk between a straight and a funny man, when they contemplate suicide, on pp 17-18.

Estragon	:	Let's hang ourselves immediately!
Vladimir	:	From a bough? . . . I wouldn't trust it.
Estragon	:	We can always try.
Vladimir	:	Go ahead.
Estragon	:	After you.
Vladimir	:	No no, you first.
. . . . .		
Estragon	:	If it hangs you, it will hang anything.

Does it remind you of the typical aristocratic etiquette and mannerism of the Nawabs of Lucknow--"Pahle Aap"--(You first!), giving precedence to the other person over oneself. See how the two tramps give precedence to each other while suggesting suicide! What effect would it have on the audience?

d) Elements of Circus: Clowning as is done in a circus.

In the beginning itself Estragon struggling to take off his boot and panting as if it involves great effort.

When they purposely misunderstand: "Pull on you trousers." See the dialogue between Estragon and Vladimir quoted on p.8 above. (iii) Linguistic devices.

e) Stylized movement;

1. Valdimir walking with stiff strides, legs apart, reminding readers of the Chaplinsque gait.

2. Lucky sagging slowly and sleeping on his feet in Act I.

The list of examples given above, however, is not exhaustive. Please do look for other examples in the text.

1.4.5 Static nature of the play

The last line of the play typifies the nature of action: "They don't move."

The entire action takes place at one place.

The only movement is from wings to the stage and vice versa.

The plot lacks linear progression. There is no basic change in the protagonists' situation.

The wait seems endless. The curtain goes up on the two tramps waiting for the elusive *Godot* and it comes down with the two tramps hinting to come the next day, and wait for him all over again.

The only thing that really moves is time.

1.4.6 Lack of coherent story, plot, etc. in *Godot*

The static nature of the play is reinforced by the absence of a coherent story in it.

Please try to locate the primary movements of the play--movements which take the action, if any, forward.

Do these movements cohere and form a chain, or are they logically linked up with each other?

The plot of a conventional play has an opening leading to a climax and finally the resolution. In a play with a deterministic conception, do you think *Waiting for Godot* follows this conventional pattern?

1.4.7 Structure--symmetrical or asymmetrical?

The play has two Acts. In both Acts, the two tramps meet, they are joined by Lucky and Pozzo, who leave the two of them together after sometime. The tramps are finally visited by the Boy who in both the Acts conveys an identical message.

Note the repetition of action in the two Acts.

Graph of 'action' follows identical path in the two Acts.

The structure is sustained by the refrain: "We are *Waiting for Godot*".

1.5 SAMUEL BACKETT (1906-1989): LIFE AND IMPORTANT WORKS

Beckett was not forthcoming in accepting that he was autobiographical in his writings, yet one continuously hears echoes of certain incidents of his life in his writings.

Samuel Barclay Beckett was born in Foxrock, in the Southern part of Dublin, Ireland in a Protestant family on April 13, 1906--that happended to be Good Friday. He went to Earlosfort House, a preparatory school, in Dublin, and from 1920 to 1923, he attended Portora Royal School, in Enniskillen, Northen Ireland. As a student he showed a remarkable talent for cricket and swimming. In 1923, he joined Trinity College, Dublin, where he did his graduation in 1927 with honours in French and Italian, together with a sound knowledge of German and Spanish. His interest in French language, life, and culture was stimulated by French *lectuer*, Alfred Peson, a Surrealist poet who later became a good friend of his.

Beckett began his career as a school teacher, and after a few months in October 1928, he was appointed to a prestigious position of *Lecturer d'anglais* at E'cole Normale Superieure in Paris. In Paris Beckett moved in both French and Anglo-Irish intellectual circles. In particular, he came in close contact with James Joyce. It was during this period that Beckett began writing seriously--poems, short stories and criticism. The poem *Whoroscope* (1930), and criticism, "Dante . . . Bruno, Vico, Joyce" (1929) belong to this period, as does *Proust* (1931). On the expiry of his term at E'cole Normale Superieure, Beckett was appointed as assistant Lecturer in modern

languages at Trinity College. Dublin, which he joined in October 1930 and resigned about 15 months later. He felt he was teaching something he knew nothing about. That decision was the birth of a writer.

Beckett had always had a liking for the anti-academic jokes. At Trinity he successfully lectured to the University Modern Languages Society on a non-existent group of French poets called *Les Convergistes*. No one has exposed the follies of pseudo-intellectualism more hilariously yet more ruthlessly.

Beckett came to London and took up a job as an attendant in a mental home for a year. Jack Mac Gowran (an Irish actor) believed that Beckett's first novel *Murphy* (1938), came out of his experiences as an attendant in the mental hospital, during which period he had seen many people who were handicapped severely in some way. Besides, there was a war pensioners' hospital very close to where he was born. When he was young, he saw them regularly everyday, they were at various stages of physical disability. No wonder many of Beckett's characters like Hamm, Clov, Nell, Nagg, Pozzo, Lucky, etc., are damaged people. Speaking of his childhood to MacGowran, though, Beckett stated: "People must think I had a very unhappy childhood, but I hadn't really. I had a very good childhood, and a very normal childhood as childhoods go. But I was more aware of unhappiness around me than happiness."

Beckett thus grew to be very sensitive to his surroundings.

The next five years beginning end of 1934 Beckett moved from London to Dublin, and from Paris to Kassel and Munich. In 1934 Beckett published his first volume of stories *More Pricks Than Kicks*. The book was banned by the Irish authorities and it appears that thereafter Beckett decided to spend as little time as possible in his country of birth. He took up residence in Paris in 1937. There on January 7, 1939, an incident occurred that had a deep and lasting effect on his life in many ways. While walking out at night he was accosted and stabbed by a pimp named Prudent. He was administered the first aid by a passing conservatoire student, Suzanne Deschevaux Dumesnil, who thus entered Beckett's life and after 22 years of live-in relationship with him eventually became his wife in 1962.

In June 1940, when the German Army occupied Paris, Beckett and Suzanne moved to Areachon, and returned to Paris. He was so disgusted with the Nazi's treatment of the Jews, who were forced to wear a yellow star of David stitched onto their clothing, that he felt compelled to act: "I couldn't stand with my arms folded." And, he became actively involved with a Resistance group with its agents spread out all over France collecting information about enemy troop movement. But in August 1942 the group was betrayed and out of about 82 members less than twenty survived. Beckett and his 'wife' were alerted and they escaped barely half an hour before the Gestapo came for them. For the next four months they were on the run and lived life dangerously. At last they crossed into unoccupied France ending up at Roussillon, a village in high mountains famous for its red clay. Here they remained in semi-hiding until the German occupation collapsed. He worked as a farm labourer during the daytime, while in the evening he wrote Watt (1953), a comic-novel. This, as Beckett put it, helped to take his mind off the German occupation.

Between 1945 and 1952, in addition to *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett wrote trilogy of novels, *Molloy* (1951), *Malone meurt* (*Malone Dies*, 1951) and *L'Innommable* (*The Unnameable*, 1953), some short stories, the prose tale Mercier and Camier (1970) and an unpublished play *Eleutheria* (1947) whose title is the Greek word for freedom. Beckett's trilogy is a major achievement in the history of novel. In working on it he turned his back on the realistic mode and instead chose to explore the boundaries of a totally hermetic sphere. Beckett had abandoned writing in English. He believed, perhaps only the French language can give you the thing you want. . . . It was more exciting for me--writing in French." He felt that writing in English "you couldn't help

writing poetry in it." Beckett thus became a "double expatriate"--first from his country and then from his mother tongue.

In writing *The Unnameable* Beckett found himself meeting the wall. The work, he said, "finished me or expressed my finishedness." He was, he observed, "not so much bogged down as fogged out." It was during the interval between *Malone Dies* and *The Unnameable*, that he turned to writing a play as a "relaxation, to get away from the awful prose I was writing at the time." In 1985, he further remarked, "I needed a habitable space, and I found it on the stage." That is how *Waiting for Godot* was born.

Beckett followed up *Godot* with *Endgame* (1958, English version) which Beckett dedicated to Roger Blin, who you will recall directed and acted in the first stage production of *Godot* in 1953, in Paris. The play which first appeared in French, *Fin De Partie* (1956), borrows its title from the game of chess. In the same year, 1956, Beckett also wrote, his first radio play on commission, *All That Fall and Actes Sans Paroles* I and II, the latter two were subsequently translated as *Act Without Words I* (1958) and *Act Without Words II* (1959).

Fin De Partie (Endgame)

It is a play in one Act. It was originally written in French and Beckett himself translated it into English in 1957. The play had its first production in French in London in 1957, since no French management would put on the play in Paris.

Beckett himself called the play "rather difficult and elliptic . . . more inhuman than *Godot*," Jack Mac Gowran stated, "If *Godot* is the anguish of waiting, *Endgame*, is the anguish of going." In *Endgame* Beckett recreates Dante's *Purgatory* in a 20th century claustrophobic setting--both literally and metaphorically. The room with two eye shaped ventilators is inhabited by Hamm and Clov, besides the former's parents, Nagg and Nell. Of the two protagonists, Hamm and Clov, Hamm is blind and is confined to an arm chair on castors, while Clov is not able to sit. The Pozzo-Lucky relationship between authoritarian master and slave is continued in this play.

Krapp's Last Tape

Krapp's Last Tape (1958) was written for the Irish actor Patrick Magee. In fact he called the early draft "Magee Monologue". It is Beckett's first uninterrupted monologue for the live theatre. Like other characters of Beckett, Krapp, an old man, too, is a marginalised human being with physical infirmities : he is nearsighted, and hard of hearing. The "protagonists" in this play are two voices: one that of Krapp himself on stage and the other recorded on audio-tape, which the same actor had recorded at two points of time--when he was 39 (about 30 years ago) and the other 12 years prior to that. The tapes unfold Krapp's unhappy love affair, his intellectual pursuits and his relationship with his parents. Listening to tapes, Krapp responds and reacts to his past. Krapp's Last Tape, moves not only in time, but moves through time. In this play Beckett dramatizes listening. Pierre Chabert, who played Krapp under Beckett's directions in Paris explained it thus: "Listening is here communicated, by the look. It is literally the eye which is listening." Hindi film Anupama, played in the lead role by Sharmila Tagore, is one such film in which listening and speaking are communicated by the eyes by her.

Happy Days:

Happy Days (1961), the next important play brings to a close the first great period of Beckett's writings for the stage. Alan Schneider directed its world premiere in New York on September 17, 1961. *Happy Days* is scenographic, in that the set and the characters coalesce. It has a couple as the protagonist. Willie, about 60 can move on all fours; he passes his day reading newspaper or looking at a naughty postcard. Willie lives at the back of the mound, in the exact centre of which stands buried his

wife, Winnie, a woman of about 50. She can move her arms and handle her few possessions: a tooth brush, a tube of toothpaste, a small mirror, a revolver, a handkerchief and spectacles. Since there is no night in her life, her waking and sleeping are governed by a bell off stage. In Act II, she is buried to the neck and can't even move her head. She can't use her possessions, but can only talk about them. She whiles away her time inventing stories. Willie, with great difficulty, crawls upto her, and is "dressed to kill," but Winnie can no longer give him a hand. Willie also falls back twice - but Winnie finds in his visit matter good enough to make it "one more happy day!"

Beckett continued with experimentation to create and remake the playwright's space, with plays like *Play* (1962-63), *Come and Go* (1965) and *Breath*. Beckett communicated by progressively diminishing presence of the protagonist on the stage. In *Breath* a curtain rises and falls interrupted by an infant cry. In *Not I* (1972) Beckett achieves new height in stage technology: there is a gaping Mouth and opposing it is the Auditor, which is larger than life figure. Mouth's words pass by quickly and are intelligible. To the furious monologue of Mouth, Auditor responds four times in the play with "a gesture of helpless compassion." Beckett told Jessica Tandy who played Mouth in the world premiere directed by Schneider, at Lincoln Centre in New York in 1972, "I hope the piece may work the nerves of audience, not its intellect."

That Time (1975) which Beckett called "a brother to *Not I*," is similarly concerned with theatrical form. A disembodied head hangs suspended in a frame 10 feet above stage level and the face is its own auditor. Once again Beckett fills the void with language. Three prerecorded Voices A, B, and C, broadcast memories from three fixed positions, "both sides and above." Each Voice is the same voice. yet each narrates different story. In *Footfalls* (1975) the presence of the character is felt through the sound of steps falling through space in time.

In his later writings for the theatre Beckett brought his experiences in radio, film and television to bear on the contingencies of the stage. This is amply demonstrated in new ideas Beckett introduced in theatricality of *A Piece of Monologue* (1980), *Rockaby* (1981), *Ohio Impromptu* (1981) etc.

1.6 HISTORY OF *GODOT*: IN PRINT AND PERFORMANCE

Written in the 1940s and published in text form in 1952 in French, *Waiting for Godot*. received fair to mild reviews on its stage debut directed by Roger Blin in Paris in 1953. Gradually it gained acceptance and ran for more than four hundred performances. While some critics objected to Beckett's disregard for such dramaturgical elements as plot, scenery, and dramatic action, others argued that the play's strength lay in its opposition to rules of convention. The play had, despite numerous successful runs in major cities in Europe, including a highly acclaimed German-language version performed in Berlin, encountered opposition. These included a ban on reviews and advertisements of the play in Spain, where its message was considered pessimistic, and also its threatened cancellation in the Netherlands.

Prior to the first London production of the play in 1955, Beckett revised and tightened the play's dialogue in the second Act and translated it into English. The original French title of the play *En Attendant Godot* translates more literally as *While Waiting for Godot*. However, Beckett while giving the title in English opted for a phrase as easy for the English tongue as the original is for the French. Beckett didn't do the German translation--it was made by Elmer Tophoven. Here too the audience response was a mixed one. Some dismissed it as pretentious, while others praised its power to disturb and disquiet audiences. Encouraged by the London production

American producer Michael Myerberg presented the play first in Miami, Florida in 1956. The play failed due to its misleading billing in area newspapers, which called it: "the laugh hit of four continents." Myerberg attempted to correct the wrong, before attempting a second production in New York city, by giving a statement in New York's most prominent newspapers which read:

> *Waiting for Godot* is a play for the thoughtful and discriminating theatergoer. . . . I respectfully suggest that those who come to the theater for casual entertainment do not buy ticket to this attraction.

American critic Walcott Gibb came heavily on the play, stating "All I can say, in a critical sense, is that I have seldom seen such meagre moonshine stated with such inordinate fuss." Most people, however, acknowledge *Waiting for Godot*, as an enduring and important contribution to world drama. American dramatists Thornton Wilder and Tennessee Williams endorsed the play, while William Saroyan remarked: "It will make it easier for me and everyone to write freely in the theater." Thornton Wilder called the play "a picture of total nihilism and a very admirable work; and also added, "I don't try to work out detailed symbolism. I don't think you're supposed to."

Norman Mailer in a public advertisement in *The Village Voice* of May 7, 1956, apologised for his initial reaction on *Waiting for Godot*, published in its preceding issue. In his remarks he had stated that Beckett's play was "a poem to impotence and appealed precisely to those who were most impotent." Subsequent reading of the play, watching its performance at Broadway, and again reading it struck him with a sense of guilt for his harsh initial response. He in the abovementioned apology stated: ". . . I was most unfair to Beckett. Because *Waiting for Godot* is a play about impotence rather than an ode to it, and while its view of life is indeed hopeless, it is an art work, and therefore, I believe it is good."

On Broadway *Waiting for Godot* also created extraordinary phenomena in American show business. For, after the final curtain on many nights, the audience remained and, joined by interested literary figures and laymen, debated the play's meaning and merit. In these debates clergymen were sometimes pitted against each other on whether *Godot* was religious or atheistic. The strategy has since been used by many feminist women playwrights also, but for a limited purpose of highlighting and discussing woman-issues, to create awareness among women.

The play kept generating a lot of interest and enthusiasm among theatergoers. The play was revived in September 1958 in New York by San Francisco Actors' Workshop, which took the play to Brussels the same month. At many of the performances spectators were asked to write comments on *Godot*. At least one quarter of over 200 returns were unfavourable, another third bewildered or undecided, and the rest favourable (*Contemporary Literary Criticism*, Vol.57, p. 74).

As often happens with many popular plays, they are tinkered with by the Directors or the playwright-director himself, and the focus of the play and its scenario changes in different performances. *Godot* was no exception.

"One thing interesting about Beckett and *Waiting for Godot* is that whenever Beckett took interest in a particular production of the play, he tinkered with the references to time and place. . . . In any strict sense," says Denis Donoghue, "there is no established text of the play. The New York production, used "a text provided by Samuel Beckett in August, 1988, which will be published soon by Faber and Faber." (Beckett died in December 1989, and to date the revised version does not appear to have been published). Certain details from the current published text of 1954 probably cannot survive. When Pozzo says "I've lost my Kapp and Peterson!" the reference must be obscure to anyone who doesn't know that Kapp and Peterson is a distinguished Dublin pipe making firm. For the play's first several years, such local references as the play had were French : the Eiffel Tower, the Macon country, the Rhone, Rousillon, etc. In the Dublin production, the Macon country became the

Napa Valley, thereby facilitating a bout of rage--"the Crappa Country"--from Estragon.

In the new version staged in California, the scene is "somewhere in the United States--badlands, a bit of desert, a waste patch littered with a few stones, rusty detritus of trucks, hubcaps, a truck tire, bumper, a broken spring, a buffalo skull, a sheep skull. It is theater in the round, befitting a rigmarole in which Estragon and Vladimir, agreeing to go somewhere, do not move. . . ." About California setting, Robert Brustein finds it difficult to believe that Beckett himself could have authorized such a radical shift in geography. Beckett intended *Godot* to be situated in a generalized purgatory.

1.7 DIFFERENT ARTISTIC FORMS OF *GODOT*

Godot has been made into an opera, a television movie, and has also been adapted to two dance recitals--one called *May B*, performed by the French troupe Maguy Marin, and another called *La Espera*, choreographed by Rolando Beattie and performed in 1987 at the Teatro de Bellas Artes in Mexico city.

There is even an unauthorized sequel called *Godot* Came, written in 1966 by the Yogoslav playwright Miodrag Bulatovie. Further, in an Israeli production in Tel Aviv, Pozzo and Lucky were cast as a Jew and an Arab respectively. Brecht, the German playwright wanted to change them into landowner and peasant in the Marxist counterplay he thought of writing before he died.

Writers like Harold Pinter, Alain Robbe, Grillet, Athol Fugard, Sam Shepard, David Mamet, Eugene Ionesco, Tom Stoppard, Vaclav Havel, Caryl Churchill, and Maria Irene Fornes have expressed their indebtedness to Godot in various ways. Lillian Hellman, American woman playwright when asked in 1972 about which plays she liked to follow, replied: "Everything by Beckett."

1.8 *GODOT* IN INDIAN LANGUAGES

Godot has been translated into several Indian languages. Notable among them are:

a) *Waiting for Godot* (Hindi) translated by A.N. Prasanna, pub. by Anuvad Sagar, Akshara Prakashan, 1974.

b) *Godo di Udik* (Punjabi) translated by Surender Mohan, pub. by Sanket Prakashan, Jullunder, 1971.

c) *Godo Pratikshaye* (Bengali) translated by Kabir Chowdhury, pub. by Muktadhara, Dacca.

d) *Waiting for Godot* (Bengali) translated by Ashok Sen, Calcutta.

Besides *Waiting for Godot* is also available on video-cassette produced by E.M.R.C. Poona University, Poona.

1.9 LET US SUM UP

The information in this Unit is of two kinds: material that is not directly about the play but deepens our understanding of it which includes information about tragicomedy, theatre of the Absurd and life and works of Beckett, and material directly about the play such as an avant grade play, history of the play in print and performance, and different artistic forms. Our purpose has been to familiarize you with the play as also sharpen your wits to examine it critically.