

[Jerke the rope]. Up hog! [Noise of Lucky getting up and picking up his baggage. Pozzo jerks the rope.] Luck ! [Enter Lucky backward.] Stop ! [Lucky stops.] Turn ! [Lucky turns] ... [To Lucky.] Coat ! [Lucky puts down the bag, advances, gives the coat, goes back to his place, takes up the bag]

Conclusion. Lucky, the submissive slave, the Biblical ass who always carries the burden is tied to his master Pozzo by a rope. He represents the intellect or the spiritual side which is subordinate to the body. His master wants to get rid of him. But in the end Pozzo has gone blind, Lucky has become dumb. Pozzo drives Lucky on a journey without an apparent goal. They are totally inter-dependent. Lucky is very vicious with strangers. He kicks Estragon viciously when the latter only wants to wipe away his tears. In the Second Act he is beaten by Estragon but takes no action even to defend him.

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CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF THE PLAY

The Opening

Waiting for Godot has a very unusual opening. The bleakness and bareness is highlighted by the stage directions and the scene. The setting is a country road. The only physical landmark is a tree. The time is evening. One of the characters is on a mound, symbolic of the ash-heap on which the Biblical Job settles himself. The character is a tramp. He is Estragon. The very first sentence of the play uttered by Estragon is : "Nothing is to be done". The other tramp Vladimir takes his words in an absolute sense, as a comment on life. And he remarks : "I'm beginning to come round to that opinion. All my life I've tried to put it from me, saying, Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven't yet tried everything. And I resumed the struggle."

The Situation

The tramps have to make a long and hopeless Wait endurable. There is no 'work' that they can engage themselves in, except Estragon taking off his boots and examining them and his feet, and Vladimir taking off his hat and peering inside it. For the rest, they must employ every resource they have to keep the ball of conversation rolling. They are quite conscious of the natures of their task and from time to time even compliment themselves on the ingenuity which helps them pass the time. They take credit for making a meaningless existence appear to have some sort of significance.

The Themes

Waiting for Godot is rich in theme. It has a cluster of themes. The prominent one is the theme of man's wait for Christ or God for his redemption. But the theme of the triviality and boredom of human life, the theme of prevalence of suffering, the theme of ignorance, the

theme of economic and intellectual exploitation and the theme of the meaninglessness of space, time and identity. The play also shows meaninglessness and purposelessness of life.

A Successful Play and Kind of Play

Waiting for Godot achieved a conspicuous success on the stage. Since its first performance in Paris in 1953 it has been performed by all sorts of actors in all sorts of places in many different countries, and it has been translated into many different languages. Obviously it is not a play with only a limited appeal; nor can it be called, as some do call it, an elaborate intellectual "hoax". *Waiting for Godot* has proved itself to be world theatre. However its tremendous success is a matter for surprise because, for one thing, it is an uneventful play. As a critic has said, it is a play in which "nothing happens, twice." There is in it no story and no message. Besides, the play has no spectacle, no star-part, no sex, not even a woman in the cast. The question why it has achieved such a striking success is not easy to answer. The main reason for its success perhaps is that it depicts a situation which has a general human application.

A Play about Nothingness

According to *Luc Estang*, Beckett is the creator of the "myth of nothingness." In his *Waiting for Godot*, which has aroused great controversies in Europe and America, practically nothing happens, nothing is done, no development is discernible, and there is no beginning and no end. The entire action boils down to this : in a place where there is nothing but a tree, two tramps dawdle their time waiting for a rescuer from misery. Two strangers, a cruel master and his half-demented serf, cross their path and leave again. At the end of the first act, a messenger from the rescuer arrives and promises that he will come tomorrow. In the second act the waiting goes on; the other couple pass by once more, but the master is now blind and the slave is dumb. Both stumble and fall. The tramps help them on their way, the messenger appears again with the same promise. Everything remains as it was in the beginning. It is a play without a woman, and in so far as the onlooker—perhaps against his wishes—is captivated by the strangeness of what he witnesses, he begins to hope for a turn or a solution which never comes. Beckett denies satisfaction to his audience, to whom he wants to give the chance of suffering extreme despair, this "more cruel and precise expression" of "...suffering than the conscious estimate of the sufferer who is spared at least one despair, the despair of the spectator."

Critical Estimates

Although some critics have expressed only a sense of bafflement with *Waiting for Godot*, many have praised it as a revolution in modern drama. Esslin, for example, appreciates the 'basically religious quality' of the play. He holds the convincing view that the action of the play is

not about Godot but about waiting. In fact an earlier version of the play carried the title *Waiting*. Fraser prefers to regard *Waiting for Godot* as a modern morality play, comparable to literary works, the *Everyman* and *Pilgrim's Progress*. The play has also been interpreted in the light of Existentialism and Nihilism¹ and the Theatre of the Absurd. It has been plausibly suggested by one critic that the title of Beckett's play is derived from Odet's *Waiting for Lefty*. A still more convincing suggestion is that the title owes its origin to Simon Well's play *Waiting for Godot*, especially because Beckett knew Well's work well and his own play appeared a year after Well's. Another claimant for the derivation of the title is Tom Kromer's *Waiting for Nothing*.

Existentialism and Absurdity in the Play

The play has been claimed by several critics to represent the Existentialist position in so far as it depicts the full horror of human situation. This is challenged, or at least considerably diluted, by the view that being an Absurdist play it is markedly different from Existentialist writing. Nevertheless, in its vision of life it is Existential; it says that there is no end to human misery; no solution to man's death and suffering. Man has to suffer endlessly; he can wait for the Messiah, or Saviour, or any system of person for the redressal of his grievances, but his grievances are going to remain the same; he has to be born and reborn to suffer endlessly.

One critic is of the view that *Waiting for Godot* is a mixture of the Absurd and the absurd : "In this play form and content, absurdity and Absurdity, are organically related there is coalescence of the Absurd.... and the human condition." Various interpretations have been offered as to what the two tramps, Pozzo, Lucky and the absent Godot stand for. The significance of Lucky's position is an important aspect of the critical study of the play. Critics have identified one or the other of the characters of the play in Godot's disguise.

Symbolism

The play is rich in symbols. The tree is symbolic of the tree on which Christ was hanged. The two tramps are two parts of a person or of a community seen subjectively, with Vladimir representing the more spiritual part and Estragon the more animal. Pozzo is the exploiter and the user of ideas; Lucky is the exploited and the creator of ideas. Godot symbolises the greatest of our hopes, namely that there is some point to existence, that we are keeping some mysterious appointment on earth and are therefore not random scraps of life. Critics have asked many questions about the precise nature of Godot, but they are irrelevant questions. The play is not about Godot, but, as its title states, about the waiting for him. It is about life on earth, not hereafter.

1. Total rejection of current religious and moral beliefs

The Religious Theme

There existed, throughout France for five years, a situation that literally corresponded, point by point, with the situation in this play. The German occupation of France may not be the "key" to this play; it is simply a validation of the play. And Beckett saw the need of not making the issue of the German occupation too prominent: evidently he did not want the play to be about an event that time would soon absorb and push him to the background. The result is that *Waiting for Godot* in the 1970s is little changed from what it was on the day it was first performed in 1953, a play about a mysterious world where two men wait. Only a fraction of the human race experienced the German occupation of France. But everyone, everywhere, has waited, and wondered why he waited. This shows the universal quality of the play. We have all waited, perhaps not by a tree in the evening or on a country road, but waited. The details are immaterial. The tramps are waiting for "Godot". Each of us has had his Godot, if only someone from whom, for several days, we had expected a letter. The substance of the play, in short, is as common a human experience as we can think of.

The religious theme in this play centres upon the God-Godot-France syndrome¹: Existence and Nothingness are complementary concepts, one the obverse of the other.

Conclusion

Acts are meaningless, time does not flow consecutively, memory seems deceptive, existence is an "impression" or perhaps a dream, happiness is actually absent and the gap it has left still aches. This tooth-aching void supplies as good a metaphor as any other for the Nothing which the two tramps feel within and without them. They are on the point of becoming hollow men in a possibly hollow universe. Beckett affirms negation. He substitutes ignorance for knowledge, impotence for creativity, lethargy for efficiency, confusion for understanding, lunacy for rationality, doubt for certainty, illusion for reality.

The play conveys its message by an extension of the dramatic methods of dramatists such as Strindberg, Chekhov, and Pirandello. There is no narrative sequence; meaning emerges only fitfully from the apparently inconsequential dialogue; apparently pointless remarks take on metaphysical overtones by being repeated in different situations; and the conclusion is inconclusive. The two tramps are in the universal stage. According to some critics, Pozzo represents humanity and Lucky represents Christ. Hence what takes place before Vladimir and Estragon is the re-acting of the Redemption. Another possible interpretation is that Pozzo and Lucky represent human life, Pozzo representing the physical aspect of the human personality and Lucky representing the spiritual, which is in time brutalized by the treatment it receives.

¹ Syndrome: a complex going together of the various symptoms of the disease.

Into this wonderfully suggestive and subtle play, Beckett incorporates such minor themes as the inadequacy of human language as a means of communication and the illusory nature of such concepts as past and future. The whole possesses a universal relevance which only a poet can give to an otherwise unremarkable situation. There is no woman character in the play. Man is whittled down to essentials and perhaps beyond them. God is a question-mark. As to Nature, she is represented by a single tree, bare in the first Act and sprouting a few leaves in the second, as though to show that in the vegetable kingdom at least some life still stirs.

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SELECT CRITICAL OPINIONS

(1)

Pessimism and Optimism

To inquire whether *Godot* is a drama situated beyond extinction is to ask whether the sentence which the author imposes upon his characters is such as to silence their meaning. The balance of optimism in tragedy is the extent to which a human affirmation exceeds the assertion of a human jeopardy : it is only when blinded that Oedipus asserts the full vision of a man. The pessimism of Ionesco demands the destruction of more than the physical human since it defines the antihuman as that which can silence even the resonance of the human being against which it is matched. One may assert a world in which man can no longer make even the most limited assertion, but that view cannot find expression in the theatre because its viability requires acceptance by the spectator of an essentially anthropocentric construct. Moreover, the antihuman incarnation of Ionesco derives its strength through specialization—it is the personal fate of only a single victim. Ionesco's drama supposes a victim suited to the manifestation of an absolute force that operates within narrow limits. There is no assurance that the spectator may provide such an ideal victim.

—David I. Grossvogel.

(2)

Pity and Terror

dignity, but are for the most part, cruel, finding a strange pleasure in their own squallor and the helplessness of others.

Krapp describes the world as "this old muckball", and life as the gentlest of all these characters, asks, "How can one better magnify the Almighty than by sniggering with him at his little jokes, particularly the poorer ones?" Nell is more direct. "Nothing," she says, "is funnier than unhappiness, I grant you that."

Vladimir seems to speak for all of them when he refers to this "foul brood to which a cruel fate consigned us." The physical disgust and the savage irony remind us of another Irish writer, Jonathan Swift. But Beckett could never dissociate himself from his characters as Swift does when he leaves Gulliver, still a man but how scarcely able to tolerate the society of his fellow human beings, even that of his wife.

Existence must be endured, and in this process Beckett's characters reveal unexpected virtues; charity, compassion, love and a firm resolve to endure. Estragon, the smaller of the two tramps, though eager enough to die, will not hang himself first because Vladimir's great weight might break the branch and Vladimir might thus be left to face the world alone. Vladimir, on his part, is deeply protective, watching over Estragon as a fond parent watches over a sleeping child? If pity and hope are possible in the world of Beckett's dramas, then they are possible anywhere for anyone. Only the dead do not feel, and in the whole of Beckett's work there is not one unfeeling man or woman. They all suffer and their anguish, Beckett's anguish, finds an echo in us, and becomes our anguish.

1. Godot

Who is Godot ? : This is a baffling question. Much ingenuity has been shown in attempts to establish at least an etymology for Godot's name, which could throw some light on Beckett's conscious or subconscious intention in making Godot the objective of Vladimir's and Estragon's quest. It has been suggested that 'Godot' is a weakened or diminutive form of the word "God", with the added association of the Charlie Chaplin character of the little man, who is called Charlot in France, and whose bowler hat is worn by all four main characters in the play. The name Godot may have something to do with a character called "Godeau" in Balzac's play *Mercadet*. In Beckett's play Godot does not arrive whereas in Balzac's play Godeau does turn up at last. According to these theories, then, the name Godot either suggests the intervention of a supernatural agency or stands for a mythical human being whose arrival is expected to change the situation. It is probable, too, that both these possibilities may be implied through the use of the name Godot. Nevertheless, there is some relationship between God and Godot.

Mystery about Godot : Godot is a mysterious and baffling character in the play. He gives the name to the play yet he does not appear in it even once. Although Vladimir and Estragon have met him, the latter claims that he would not be able to recognize him if he saw him. Vladimir has spoken to him at some length, yet even he has to ask the boy whether Godot has a beard, and if so, what colour it is. Some critics hold the view that Godot does appear in the play. They identify him variously either with Pozzo (as Estragon also does) or even with Lucky. When the writer himself was once asked to explain "Godot", he said that he did not know, otherwise he would have done so in the play itself. To most of his readers, Godot seems to be a mirage. At the end of each day, a messenger boy arrives in his stead with the promise that Godot will come tomorrow. In Act I, we hear that he does not beat the messenger-boy, who is a goat-herd, but that he beats his brother, who is a shepherd. The two tramps feel uneasy about Godot. When the time comes to meet him, they will have to approach him "on their hands and knees", and if they stopped waiting for him he would punish them. At the end of Act II we learn that Godot does nothing and that his beard is probably white.

Godot Vs. God: Godot has several traits in common with the image of God as depicted in the Old and the New Testaments. His white beard reminds us of the image of the old-father aspect of God. His irrational preference for one of the two brothers recalls Jehovah's treatment of Cain and Abel; so does his power to punish those who would dare to ignore him. His doing nothing approach shows man's forlorn existence. What Vladimir and Estragon expect from Godot is food and shelter, and these are provided to men by God. But the play does not deal with God but with the concept of God.

Godot as an Underground Leader : Godot has been identified by some as representing some underground leader of the Resistance during the German occupation of France, though it might be argued that the tramp's fear of him makes it just as likely that Godot is meant to stand for some link with the occupying forces who have promised help and protection to the tramps. That is why they dare not break the appointment with him. He may also be regarded as symbolic of God of the Old Testament, God who loves us all dearly, but with some exceptions.

Godot as Death : Godot may be a symbol of death. The tramps wait for him endlessly; but death does not come on a fixed, appointed hour. One has to wait for Death for getting relief from pain and misery. But this would be too existential an interpretation of the play to accept Godot as merely nothing but death.

Conclusion : Godot is both mysterious and ambiguous, and the elements of mystery and ambiguity seem to be deliberate. He seems to represent several ideas, one of which surely is that of superstitious religion and exploitation of the have-nots by the all-powerful haves. Godot keeps Vladimir and Estragon waiting for long, day after day.

but he does not think it necessary either to express any regret or give any reason as to why he is unable to come. And even if he does come, there does not appear to be much basis for the tramps' hopes. In fact, they have not put any definite request to him which he might grant. Perhaps they are waiting more out of fear than out of hope. We gather from the talk of the tramps that they treat Godot like a god to whom one only makes a prayer rather than asks for a boon :

Estragon. What exactly did we ask him for ?

Vladimir. Were you not there ?

Estragon. I can't have been listening.

Vladimir. Ohnothing very definite.

Estragon. A kind of prayer.

Vladimir. Precisely.

Estragon. A vague supplication.

Vladimir. Exactly.

Estragon. And what did he reply ?

Vladimir. That he'd see.

Estragon. That he couldn't promise anything.

Vladimir. That he'd have to think it over.

When all is said, it will be safer to regard Godot as God. The name "Godot" is a bilingual pun on God and water. "Godot" is from the French "Godeau", and "eau" in French means water. "Godot" is pronounced as "Godo". The two needs of the hero are his isolation and spiritual thirst. But though the play is rich in Christian imagery and symbolism it is not more prevalent than, for example, in Beckett's novels, *Molloy*, or *The Unnamable*. Yet one thing is not convincing. Beckett's characters do not believe in the existence of God. So to regard Godot as God would be a reversal of this situation. Hence Godot remains to us as great a mystery as God himself.

2. Estragon

Estragon's Appearance : We have few pieces of information about Estragon's physical appearance. Estragon claims to have been a poet; hence there is some poetic absurdity about his manners. In eating his carrot, Estragon finds that the more he eats of it the less he likes it, while Vladimir reacts the opposite way—he likes things as he gets used to them. Estragon is volatile ; he has stinking feet. He tends to forget things and events. He is a weak man. He is beaten by mysterious strangers every night.

Nature and Temperament : He is one of the two tramps. Estragon is of a weak build and is also timid and fearful by nature. This makes him an easy prey of the ruffians who beat him every night. He has the ability of dropping off to sleep at a moment's notice. However, he is unable to enjoy undisturbed sleep; he suffers from nightmares which he tries to relate to his friend, though in vain. He has also a weak memory, though it is possible that he exaggerates this to some extent just to tease and refute Vladimir and, indirectly, to help

in some time passing away. He exploits Vladimir's evident affection for him more than once. Every now and then he says that he is going away and Vladimir has to patiently remind him that they cannot go away since they are Waiting for Godot. He seems to be of a reckless nature, for once he even suggests that they should drop Godot altogether, only to be reminded by Vladimir of the punishment at Godot's hands which they would have to face in such a case. Estragon does not seem to be very observant either : in fact he admits this fact when the two friends talk about their life together in the Maoon country. He did not pay attention when Vladimir talked to Godot. So he does not know what request his friend made to him.

Sceptical Nature : As compared with Vladimir Estragon is impatient and temperamental. Estragon is of a sceptical bent of mind. Unlike Vladimir he does not seem to believe in religion very much. He has not read the Bible but only seen the maps of the Holy Land in one edition of the Bible. Even that he enjoyed in a poetic way. The pale blue colour of the Dead Sea in the map was so fascinating that he felt like drinking the water and made up his mind that he would spend his honeymoon in that region and have a swim in the sea. On the other hand, he seems to be fond of coarse jokes. Moreover, he is seen to become physically excited when Vladimir says that death by hanging causes an orgasm. In contrast with Vladimir Estragon expresses his feelings violently and in strong language :

Vladimir. Where else do you think ? Do you not recognise the place ?

Estragon. [*Suddenly furious*] Recognise. What is there to recognise ? All my lousy life I've crawled about in the mud; And you talk to me about scenery ; [*Looking wildly about him.*] Look at this muckheap ! I've never stirred from it.

Impulsive and Spontaneous : Estragon is impulsive and spontaneous. In contrast to him, Vladimir seems to speak after calm reflection. He can't wait for anything, yet he has to wait for Godot. When the tramps see the chicken bones it is Estragon who at once asks Pozzo whether he can have the bones. Vladimir does not approve of this act and comments : "You might have waited !" To him even ten francs is a handsome gift. To him even five francs would do. His position is thus somewhat that of a beggar.

3. Vladimir

His Physical Appearance : Vladimir is also a tramp. He is older than Estragon. He is more stoutly built. He seems to be suffering from some serious disorder of the kidneys which makes it necessary for him to get up several times a night. Moreover it causes him acute pain when he tries to laugh, so that he has to be contented with a smile. He is affectionate and protective towards Estragon. He carries an assortment of carrots, turnips and radishes from which he gives something to his friend whenever he asks for it. He himself is not seen

eating anything of it. He seems to be more mature and sober than the impulsive and temperamental Estragon. He seems to take waiting more philosophically than his friend.

His Characteristics : It is he who has conducted negotiations with Godot, and it is to him that the messages of Godot are addressed. He seems to be able to have a wider view of their situation than Estragon who is concerned with the surface as well as with the immediate present. Vladimir has an acute and literal sense of time, in contrast with Estragon who inclines towards a timeless view of things. Vladimir is patient by nature. He has to humour Estragon more than once.

His Mysticism : Although Vladimir is on the whole a realist, as contrasted with the fanciful Estragon, towards the end of the play we find him revealing a new aspect of his character. We can see that there is a touch of mysticism in him. He seems to regard external reality as an illusion. He also distrusts others as regards their views of time and the past. He is suspicious that the messenger boy will claim the next day that he never met them. He disbelieves Pozzo's story about his blindness. He is frightened by the boy's disclosure that Godot has a white beard.

As a Thinker : Of the two tramps, Vladimir thinks more and is, therefore, more eloquent; his anguish is intellectual. It is Vladimir who implies that he once dealt with Godot ; it is he who assures Estragon that they are in right place; it is he who dispenses the food—turnips, carrots, and searches his memory for the correct word, unlike Estragon who is content with the first word that occurs. It is Vladimir, again who tries to make polite conversation with Pozzo while Estragon listens or follows his own thoughts.

But Vladimir's thinking is fallible and exposes him to greater anguish than Estragon. He lives according to the rationalist principle which urges him to be reasonable. Vladimir is also capable of thinking of others whereas Estragon is only concerned with his own pain. Vladimir is outraged by the sores which the rope has made on Lucky's neck and protests to Pozzo when the latter says that he is on his way to sell his servant at the fair : "And now you turn him away ? Such an old and faithful servant. after having sucked all the good out of him, you chuck him away like a banana skin."

The Contrast between Estragon and Vladimir : As the members of a cross-talk act, Vladimir and Estragon have complementary personalities. Vladimir is the more practical of the two, and Estragon claims to have been a poet. In eating his carrot, Estragon finds that the more he eats of it the less he likes it, while Vladimir reacts the opposite way—he likes things as he gets used to them. Estragon is volatile, Vladimir persistent, Estragon dreams, Vladimir cannot stand hearing about dreams. Vladimir has stinking breath, Estragon has stinking feet. Vladimir remembers past events, Estragon tends to forget them as soon as they have happened. Estragon likes telling funny stories, Vladimir is upset by them. It is mainly Vladimir who

voices the hope that Godot will come and that his coming will change their situation, while Estragon remains sceptical throughout and at times even forgets the name of Godot. It is Vladimir who conducts the conversation with the boy who is Godot's messenger and to whom the boy's messages are addressed. Estragon is the weaker of the two; he is beaten up by mysterious strangers every night. Vladimir at times acts as his protector, sings him to sleep with a lullaby, and covers him with his coat. The opposition of their temperaments is the cause of endless bickering between them and often leads to the suggestion that they should part. Yet, being complementary natures, they also are dependent on each other and have to stay together.

4. Pozzo

A Landlord : Pozzo belongs to the class of exploiters. He is a landlord. He owns the very place where Estragon and Vladimir are waiting. He also claims to have a large number of servants. He is indebted to his servant Lucky for whatever touches of culture and refinement he has. However, he still seems to be something of a brute and a barbarian. In Act II, his character seems to have undergone a change. Pozzo and Lucky, connected together with a rope, seem to be based upon a sentence in the Bible which says that two persons are better than one because if one falls the other can help him in getting up. This becomes all the more relevant in Act II.

An Arrogant Fellow : Pozzo is an arrogant fellow. He is conceited too. He seems to think of himself as a sort of God, who has the power of life and death over his servants. He mocks at Lucky, saying that the fool believes that Pozzo is short of servants. He generally refers to himself as 'we'. He speaks to the tramps as if he owned the whole earth. He is a great egoist. He tries to impress the tramps by speaking fancy words to them, though he has the honesty to admit that he learnt them from Lucky. It does not occur to him, in his conceit, that the famished tramps would be better off with a small gift of money, or even some food, than the entertainment of Lucky's dance and thinking that he arranges for them. Even when he takes his food in the open, it is with all the fanfare of a ceremonial banquet. He is heartless enough to talk about the delight of smoking a pipe before the hungry tramps in front of whom he has dined on chicken and wine. He is not prepared to accept Estragon and Vladimir as belonging to the same species as he himself does, and the idea of their 'common' humanity tickles him to laughter :

Estragon. [*Hastily*] We're not from these parts, sir.

Pozzo. [*Halting*] You are human beings none the less. [*He puts on his glasses.*] As far as one can see. [*He takes off his glasses.*] Of the same species as myself. [*He bursts into an enormous laugh.*] Of the same species as Pozzo ! Made in God's image ! †

Pozzo as an Egoist : So Pozzo is the egoist. He belongs to that class of men who do not learn by suffering. He is an egoist, full of

self-love. He is convinced that he owns not only the land around the road, but the road as well and all the people on it. His stool which Lucky sets up for him whenever he wishes to rest is a portable throne. Having eaten the chicken, he throws, with the grand gesture of an emperor, the bones in the direction of his slave who, too weak to eat, lets Estragon chew them. Pozzo's greatest concern is his dignity. Once he has risen from his stool, he will not stay unless begged to do so. If he condescends to speak to Estragon and Vladimir, it is only because "from the meanest creature one departs wiser, richer, more conscious of one's blessings." But when these two dare question him, he sees in it a sign of future rebellion: "A moment ago you were calling me, sir, in fear and trembling. Now you're asking me questions. No good will come of this!" Pozzo's absolute mastery, his divinely delegated powers must remain unchallenged.

Pozzo's Attitude towards Lucky : As to his slave, Pozzo would like to get rid of him, but "the truth is you can't drive such creatures away. The best thing would be to kill them." One recognises here the tone of a superlord. Pretentious, but only half educated, Pozzo curses Lucky, calling him "Atlas, son of Jupiter." Though he does not know that Atlas was not Jupiter's son, he must recall that the brother of Prometheus was a foe of the gods, and that they punished him for having taken part in the rebellion of the Titans. Not that Lucky at last looks like a Titan—this is another example of Beckett's irony—but Pozzo fears a possible revolt by the slaves. In Act II, reduced to a pitiable condition, Pozzo still calls his servant "pig" and encourages Estragon "to give him a taste of his boot in the face and the privates as far as possible." Although he himself cries for pity, Pozzo feels no pity for anyone else.

Pozzo's Philosophic Utterance : Paradoxically this grotesque man of action, a doer who has outlived the moment of his greatest power formulates the tragedy of man's brief existence on this earth: "One day I went blind, one day we'll go deaf, one day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second." (p. 89).

Pozzo's Inward Emptiness : However, Pozzo's power is hollow. He does not accord much recognition to his servant whom he calls "pig" or "hog". "The road seems long when one journeys alone," he says, attaching no importance to Lucky, and again, "I can't talk in a vacuum." His speech reveals his inward emptiness. In Act I he speaks in platitudes: "From the meanest creatures one departs wiser, richer, more conscious of one's blessings." Or, he elevates the simplest remark into an exaggerated performance. Thus, when Vladimir asks him a question, Pozzo prepares his answer like a teacher or priest. He twice sprays his throat with the vaporizer, then groups the audience about him in anticipation, and finally spells out the answer with pedantic logic. If Lucky has found a substitute Godot, Pozzo avoids the tramps, waiting by filling his life with illusion. Pozzo, on his journey, clings to his condition; the tramps, who remain where they are, are always seeking to change theirs.

Pozzo's Blindness : Frightened and utterly dependent on his slave, Pozzo is nevertheless the man who cannot stay in one place. Once the whip-cracking master of men and worldly possessions, Pozzo is yet unable to give up the myth of action even when his powers fail him. Through blindness he has entered the shadowy world of indeterminate space and time, a universe which is "like nothing". His sightlessness, as he himself states, is that of Fortune, an absurd blindness. Unlike Tiresias, he does not possess a third eye which would allow him to look into the future. A grotesque Oedipus at the crossroads, led by an idiotic slave, Pozzo is as cut off from any future as from his past. He does not recall having met Estragon and Vladimir before perhaps because these were of no importance to him except as a temporary and accidental audience; nor will he remember them the next day.

Pozzo and Lucky Relationship : There seems to be some sort of allegory in the relations between Pozzo and Lucky, though on the surface it seems to be the relationship merely of a cruel master and a pliant servant who is prepared to bear every hardship so long as he can continue in his master's employment. Pozzo treats Lucky with the greatest brutality and, on top of it, claims that it is he who is the aggrieved party. The tramps at first take Lucky's side but after Pozzo's complaint they blame Lucky for being nasty to such a kind master. In Act II, the relationship between the two seems to undergo a significant change. The voluble Lucky, at least in his fits of thinking, has now been reduced to dumbness. The overbearing Pozzo, who used to order Lucky about with a jerk of the rope, is now dependent upon him for finding the way. Still, Lucky is seen to be patient and unrebelling as before.

Thus they are totally inter-dependent. Without Lucky, Pozzo cannot move forward, sit down to eat or get up. Lucky cannot move either, except in response to Pozzo's shouted orders and whip-cracks. Together they compose a functioning from which the two tramps are excluded, or have opted out.

Pozzo a Representative of Upper Class : It is ultimately Pozzo who is a representative of a stagnant upper class. Pozzo is a sadistic monster ; Lucky the submissive slave. In Act I Pozzo is rich, powerful, certain of himself, he represents worldly man in all his facile and shortsighted optimism and illusory feeling of power and permanence. Lucky not only carries his heavy luggage, and even the whip with which Pozzo beats him ; he also dances and thinks for him. They represent the relationship between body and mind, the material and spiritual sides of man, with the intellect subordinate to the appetites of the body. Now that Lucky's powers are falling, Pozzo complains that they cause him untold suffering. He wants to get rid of Lucky and sell him at the fair. But in Act II, when they appear again, they are still tied together. Pozzo has gone blind, Lucky has become dumb.

A Caricature of God : In the portrayal of Pozzo, Beckett has given us a caricature of God, the absolute monarch. Pozzo is the living

symbol of the Establishment. Nothing must discourage him. When Vladimir asks him : "What do you do when you fall far from help ?" he answers unhesitatingly, using the royal 'we', or perhaps including his slave, "We wait till we can get up. Then we go on. On !" Were Pozzo to stop for one moment he would be faced with the clear and unbearable image of his gradual disintegration. We know this for it is Pozzo who formulates a striking definition of the human condition when he says : "They give birth astride of a grave."

5. Lucky

Introductory : Lucky is a contrast to Pozzo and has been incorporated by the dramatist to illustrate the following statement in "Ecclesiastes," one of the sections of the Old Testament :

Two are better than one; because they have a good reward
- for their labour.

For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow : but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.

Again, if two lie together, then they have heat; but how can one be warm alone ?

Waiting for Godot is structured upon the contrast of the two races of men. In contrast to Gogo and Didi, the fraternal pair, we have the Pozzo-Lucky couple. Gogo and Didi choose to stay together, but Pozzo and Lucky are visibly tied to one another.

The Biblical Ass : Pozzo is the Biblical ass. In the beginning, Lucky the slave is driven by Pozzo by means of a rope tied round his neck. More dog-like than human, he responds to the cracking of a whip he himself carries between his teeth till his master has need of it. He has also to carry upon his shoulders the weight of Pozzo's belongings. Bent under the weight of his burden, Lucky resembles a mule, or perhaps that most humble and useful of creatures, the Biblical ass. He is also a caricature of Atlas, a name by which Pozzo calls him at a moment of fear and anger (Atlas in ancient mythology had to carry the weight of heaven on his shoulders while he stood on earth.)

Lucky's Past : Lucky is Pozzo's slave. But in the past he was his friend and teacher. He had "beauty, grace, truth of the first water." Pozzo admits that being overwhelmed with professional worries, he had no time for finer things such as dancing, singing, and thinking. Besides, such pursuits do not befit a master (Even the great rulers of ancient Rome left many decisions of state to their slaves, raised to the posts of ministers or councillors). Now Lucky's intellectual baggage contains only sand. But once "he used to dance the frandole, the fling, the brawl, the fandango, and even the hornpipe."

A Thinker and Philosopher : Lucky's long speech at the end of the first act reveals that he is a thinker and philosopher. He says that man has been unable to make a place for himself in this universe. Divorced from the intelligible world of essences, from God's world,

man "wastes and pines" and eventually "fades away". As to God, of the little God (Godot), asleep or absent, he is the victim of "apathia ... athambia ... aphasia". It is a God who leaves man to his sports: "dying ... flying ... penicillin". Scientific progress will unmake man. His consciousness moves from essentialism to existentialism. In this opinion, the philosophers and thinkers will be unable to halt the regressive motion by which the human creature will revert to its primitive condition. Man will "uncreate" himself to the point of becoming "the empty skull in Connemara."

Lucky presumes the existence of a personal God with a white beard, a God who "loves us dearly with some exceptions for reasons unknown and suffers like divine Miranda with those who for reasons unknown to time but time will tell are plunged in torment." (The phrase "for reasons unknown" occurs again and again in the course of Lucky's speech). Despite God's presence and the labours of all the authorities, it is discovered "that man ... in spite of progress man in short man in brief wastes and pines...and for reasons unknown continues to shrink and dwindle." In spite of the researches of science the intuition of the artist, the physical culture of sport, and the endurance of the earth, everything is condemned to waste into the great dark of nothing. This is the only certainty which Lucky's intelligence has discovered. Lucky's knowledge of this ends in despair, and his thinking in this speech, with its devaluation of art, progress, religion, and science, anticipates the extinguished world of Beckett's play, *Endgame*.

His Speech : Lucky's speech is not delivered voluntarily. It is made at the orders of Pozzo who has asked him to 'think' for the entertainment of the tramps. In many respects the speech is stupid; in part it is like a record that has become worn out and where the needle again and again gets stuck at a word or phrase. It is absolutely lacking in punctuation. It employs some of the stock phrases of the professional speaker in a manner which is that of parody—e.g., repeating words like 'I resume', 'for reasons unknown, but time will tell,' 'but not so fast,' 'in brief', 'in a word'. etc. The words which are reduplicated, or have some of their syllables lengthened out, include, 'quaqua quaqua' (a repetition of the Latin word 'qua') and 'Acacacademy' (lengthening out the word 'Academy'). The speech seems to flow on without aim or plan but can be seen to have a definite drift. But it is important to reveal the intellectual make-up of Lucky. It is full of truth.

His Mechanical Actions : Lucky has degenerated from the human level to that of a machine. He has gone below even the level of animals. In fact he reminds one of a robot. The only difference is that he goes to sleep every now and then and has to be awakened with considerable effort. This can be seen from the long stage directions that shortly follow the entrance of Lucky and Pozzo, when Pozzo's orders and Lucky's movements are described :

Up pig : [Pause.] Every time he drops he falls asleep.

[Jerke the rope]. Up hog! [Noise of Lucky getting up and picking up his baggage. Pozzo jerks the rope.] Luck ! [Enter Lucky backward.] Stop ! [Lucky stops.] Turn ! [Lucky turns] ... [To Lucky.] Coat ! [Lucky puts down the bag, advances, gives the coat, goes back to his place, takes up the bag]

Conclusion. Lucky, the submissive slave, the Biblical ass who always carries the burden is tied to his master Pozzo by a rope. He represents the intellect or the spiritual side which is subordinate to the body. His master wants to get rid of him. But in the end Pozzo has gone blind, Lucky has become dumb. Pozzo drives Lucky on a journey without an apparent goal. They are totally inter-dependent. Lucky is very vicious with strangers. He kicks Estragon viciously when the latter only wants to wipe away his tears. In the Second Act he is beaten by Estragon but takes no action even to defend him.

10

CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF THE PLAY

The Opening

Waiting for Godot has a very unusual opening. The bleakness and bareness is highlighted by the stage directions and the scene. The setting is a country road. The only physical landmark is a tree. The time is evening. One of the characters is on a mound, symbolic of the ash-heap on which the Biblical Job settles himself. The character is a tramp. He is Estragon. The very first sentence of the play uttered by Estragon is : "Nothing is to be done". The other tramp Vladimir takes his words in an absolute sense, as a comment on life. And he remarks : "I'm beginning to come round to that opinion. All my life I've tried to put it from me, saying, Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven't yet tried everything. And I resumed the struggle."

The Situation

The tramps have to make a long and hopeless Wait endurable. There is no 'work' that they can engage themselves in, except Estragon taking off his boots and examining them and his feet, and Vladimir taking off his hat and peering inside it. For the rest, they must employ every resource they have to keep the ball of conversation rolling. They are quite conscious of the natures of their task and from time to time even compliment themselves on the ingenuity which helps them pass