

ABSTRACT

This dissertation deals with Samuel Beckett's treatment of religious material and his presentation of religious experiences in his writing with a focus on his plays, particularly *Waiting for Godot* but references will certainly be made to his short stories, novels and other writings. As said by Beckett's favorite Marcel Proust that in order to know (understand) a writer we should begin by asking, "What are his religious belief?", this dissertation will look into Beckett's life through his biographies to find out his religious beliefs whatever these may be. Since the dissertation is dealing with 'nothing' written by the most enigmatic of the authors the conclusions are bound to be complex and not very simple. As the research is trying to define 'nothing' and dealing with a kind of writing that says 'nothing' and a kind of author who is interested in 'nothing', a bit of complexity has to be expected and forgiven.

Having said that the research aims at drawing some definite conclusion regarding the nature of religious experience as presented by Beckett and the manner in which it is presented. In order to examine Beckett's treatment of religious material and presentation of religious experience, the research will explore the biographical dimensions of the topic, literary and social influences on him, his development or non-development as a writer and most particularly his language. As Beckett's use of language is unique and most original, the research will focus on the linguistic dimensions of the topic under discussion.

Literature Review will mostly focus on the books written on the like topic and these are *Beckett and Zen* by Paul Foster, *Samuel Beckett and the Idea of God and Myth and Rituals in the Plays of Samuel Beckett* This will be done to highlight the agreement and disagreement of the present research with these works.

Chapter I will explore the biographical details that gave him the religion or non-religion he believed in and the influences that helped shape his idea of religion and religious beliefs. The character of his 'religious' mother and the influences of Dante along with the division of Irish society into the well-to-do Protestants and the poor Catholics and the Irish hatred for Jews will get the most of the attention while some of Beckett's own statements regarding religion will be analyzed; all of this will be discussed with references to his writings.

Chapter II will discuss the treatment of religious material in his plays and other writings. This will be done to emphasize the importance of Beckett's knowledge and use of the Biblical and Christian thought. Chapter III will envelope the nature of Religious experience in Beckett's writings with an emphasis on Beckettian impasse. This will be done in the light of the details put forth in the earlier chapters. Chapter IV will deal with the most literary question that is the manner in which the religious experience is presented.

Chapter V will deal with the linguistic dimensions of the topic. Presupposing "We think in a language", the relationship of thought, language and literary presentation will be explored. The influence of Christian thought onto English and other European languages and Beckett's dissatisfaction with language will be discussed to his knowledge of his own failure in presenting the experiences he wanted to present; thus establishing the

supremacy of language over religion, literary art artist; thus explaining Beckett's "Texts without Words" and his fanatic adherence to his stage settings.