

Waiting for Godot: A Representation of Departure from Conventions and Audience Expectations

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Abstract

The present paper attempts to critically analyse *Waiting for Godot* in the light of its departure from conventional play's attributes. The paper will delve into the intricacies of the absurd play's temporal and cyclical milieu. The paper will also look into how the drama defies the classical rules of tragic drama, which consist of a reversal of fortune, recognition, or sorrow, making it a straight forward production. The paper will also deliberate upon how the striver can be liberated from the cycles of birth and death.

Keywords : absurdity, classical, liberation, theatre

Introduction

Samuel Barclay Beckett was an Irish novelist, dramatist, short story writer, theatre director, poet, and literary translator. He was born on April 13, 1906, and passed away on December 22, 1989. His name is pronounced. He had spent the majority of his adult life in Paris, and he was a writer who was fluent in both French and English. Beckett participated in the French Resistance as a member of the Gloria SMH network (also known as Réseau Gloria) during the Second World War. The literary and theatrical works of Beckett are characterised by gloomy, impersonal, and tragicomic depictions of everyday life, which are frequently paired with absurdity and black humour. As he advanced further in his career, it involved more aesthetic and linguistic innovation, yet it grew increasingly minimalist. One of the essential figures in what Martin Esslin referred to as the "Theatre of the Absurd," as well as one of the last modernist writers, he is considered to be one of the most influential authors.

The present study looks into *Waiting for Godot* to examine how this play is ludicrous in light of its rejection of classic drama's attributes. The absurd drama movement emerged in France, at a time when it was regarded as the world's hub of art. Absurd drama stands in opposition to older styles of conventional drama, which has a long and storied history. *Waiting for Godot* shuns the classical plot and “instead of following the tradition which demands that a play have an exposition, a climax, and a denouement, Beckett’s plays have a cyclical structure which might indeed be better described as a diminishing spiral” (Worton 69). In Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, there is no plot. In a temporal and cyclical milieu, the drama relies on two wandering people who spend their time waiting but not realizing for whom or what. The absurd theatre's discourse is twisted, full of absurdities, puns, and unnecessary remarks; in other words, the characters in this work utilize informal language, exactly as the worthless discussions between Vladimir and Estragon. In the twentieth century, the absurd theatre flourished in opposition to the forms and principles of classical play. Dramatists and critics agree that the current situation of humanity is absurd and lacking in purpose. Moreover, the audience is given the opportunity to imagine the story's conclusion.

The play by Samuel Beckett is now widely regarded as a great tragicomedy, however, it deviates from several characteristics of conventional tragedy, for that, according to the definition of Aristotle - “tragedy is an imitation of action”, which is not the case with this play. It is composed of two acts, neither of which depicts any major event; instead, it depicts two individuals waiting while conversing about nonsense. As a result, drama defies the classical rules of tragic drama which consists of reversal of fortune, recognition, or sorrow, making it a straight forward production. The story's comedy element falls short of Aristotle's and traditional expectations, because some error or humiliation that does not involve suffering or destruction is required, according to Aristotle. However, *Waiting for Godot* contains suffering in an underhand manner, which is not clearly expressed in the characters' speech; nevertheless it is represented through the dedicated and aimless waiting of two people for someone who will never arrive. Hence, the play lacks many conventional attributes of a tragicomedy, thus offering a new style in writing to greet the audiences with a new taste and flavour. In the Act I of *Waiting for Godot*, Estragon says “Nothing to be done” (Beckett 5). Beckett's pessimistic thoughts are displayed in this way. Then, a few paragraphs later, the same character says “there’s nothing to show” (7). According to the playwright, human life is absurd, and hence the writer's works must have an insane style. For

the two idle protagonists, waiting for Godot meant hope. Beckett uses silly characters to convey the meaninglessness of existence to the readers and spectators. The action of the play is in a static position because Vladimir and Estragon are unable to do anything as a result of their paralyzing circumstances, they are obliged to design new games or replay old ones in order to believe that they exist as Estragon puts it. The majority of these games are of greeting and farewell, or insults and reconciliation. Here, too, we see a reduced form of the dramatic: their discourse no longer has the power to affect a situation or a character's actions, as it did not do in classic Greek theatre, nor does it traditionally introduce the characters in the beginning of the act.

The Absurdity playwrights have an impact on the shape and structure of their works, and they do not follow the classical drama's logical structure. Beckett removed most of the defining features of the conventional and classical vision of theatre and play. This is evident in the setting as well, which has a wide range of temporal and geographical features that are vague in themselves. The characters are not well-established by narrative and can only coexist in pairs. Consequently, they have a lesser social rank. Given the nature of the play, a narrative appears unrealistic, and hence no significant action can be found. Waiting for Godot's dialogues and communication are senseless and language seems deficient. The reader has no idea about the family of the characters or what their socioeconomic background is like. The play's conclusion is ambiguous. Because the second act appears to be nearly identical to the first, their reality has no cause and effect relationship and is made up of repetitive actions and gestures. They wait for Godot once more, Lucky and Pozzo show up, and Estragon is thrashed once more. Similar discussions between the youngster and Vladimir at the end of both acts demonstrate how life's cyclical element is meaningless and inconclusive:

Boy: Mr Godot – Vladimir: I've seen you before, haven't I?

Boy: I don't know, Sir. Vladimir: You don't know me?

Boy: No, Sir. Vladimir: This is your first time?

Boy: Yes, Sir. (Act I, 48) [...]

Boy: Mister...(Vladimir turns) Mr. Albert....

Vladimir: Off we go again. (Pause) Do you not recognize me?

Boy: No, Sir.

Vladimir: This is your first time.

Boy: Yes, Sir. (Act II, 88)

Waiting for Godot does not tell a story, it explores a static situation, “Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it’s awful”, says Estragon. (41) It belongs to the category of works that are essentially concerned with conveying the sense of mystery, anxiety when confronted with the human conditions, and their hopelessness at being unable to find a “meaning in existence”. So they are trying to give a message that, ‘by following the spiritual discipline every human being can attain salvation, can be liberated from the shackles of Birth and Death, but human mind is not ready to accept this fact firmly that they can be liberated from this world. Estragon and Vladimir, despite adverse circumstances do not leave waiting, so, giving a clear message that all strivers should accept the truth firmly that, they can be liberated from the cycle of Birth and Death, and secondly, all strivers should accept the truth that they have individual relationship with God while the body has its individual relationship with the world. Therefore, if we do any action with body, that will be for the world only, not for the self. Every action has its relationship with the world and the nature of ‘self is inactive’ and if we don’t want to do any action, what is the need of the body. So, a striver has to think over, when we can’t do anything with the body for ourselves then we can for the world. So, what can we do for self? By thinking over it, we come to know that “we can become desire-less for us”, that is, we can be free from the sense of desire, possession, and egoism.

The peculiar psychological reality of Beckett’s characters have often been noticed, Pozzo and Lucky have been interpreted as body and mind; while Vladimir and Estragon have been seen as complementary to each-other i.e. the two halves of a single personality, the conscious and the subconscious mind and clearly revealing the fact that, with body, mind, senses and intellect, which we acquired from the world, we can attain the world, not God, i.e. neither the body, nor the mind, nor the senses, nor the intellect can have access to God. Therefore, if a striver wants to attain God, he will have to renounce “dependence on the body, senses, mind and intellect as well as on action”, as God is not attained by insentient objects. God has bestowed upon us the human body only for the purpose of attaining ‘Him’. Can God, who pervades all spaces and times, be separate from us? And God is not realized by unreal (objects and actions) but ‘He’ is realized by renouncing affinity with the unreal. In order to renounce affinity totally with the unreal, it is essential for a striver to accept these facts:-

1. Nothing at all is mine.
2. I need nothing.
3. I am nothing.

Conclusion

In this sense, the play "Waiting for Godot" by Samuel Beckett contains virtually all of the components that are necessary for a play to be classified as insane. It does this by focusing on the two key characters, Vladimir and Estragon, and describing each and every component of the stupidity via their perspectives. The play Waiting for Godot highlights the absurdity of human life by exploiting redundant, purposeless, ludicrous, counter-intuitive, stupid, and baffling conditions that are against the truth or reason. According to Nealon, "Waiting for Godot" is an attack on innovation because of its philosophical content and its Grand Narrative that pretends to understand the world. Estragon and Vladimir are trapped by their innovative wistfulness for legitimation in Godot.

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