

- 4 . Berlin, p. 20.
- 5 . Ibid., p. 20.
- 6 . Styan, p. 126.
- 7 . W.I. Oliver, "Between Absurdity and Playwright", in *Modern Drama: Essays in Criticism*, ed. by T. Bogard (London: O.U.P., 1965), p. 7.
- 8 . Ibid., p. 14
- 9 . Esslin, pp. 44-45
10. Thomas Postlewait, "Self Performing Voices: Mind, Memory and Time in Beckett's Drama", in *Twentieth Century Literature*, ed. by M. McBrien, Vol: 24, No: 1978, p. 479.
11. Esslin, p. 11.
12. Ibid., p. 43.
13. Samuel Beckett, *waiting For Godot*.  
(London: Faber and Faber, 1956), p. 66.  
(all other references will be to this edition. The title and the page number will be cited between brackets).
14. Esslin, p. 60.
15. Ibid., p. 60.
16. Mousa Al Soudani, "Samuel Beckett's stage Plays: The Search For a New Form", M.A. Diss., (Leicester Univ., 1973), p. 14.
17. Rolf Bruer, "The Solution as Problem: Beckett's *Waiting For Godot*, in *Modern Drama*, ed. By, W. McBrien, Vol: 19, No: 3, 1976, p.226.
18. Ibid., p. 226.
19. Esslin, p. 30.
20. Raymond Cowel, *Twelve Modern dramatists* (London: Pergamon Press, 1967), p. 114.
21. Martin Esslin, "Godot and His children: The Theatre of Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter", in *Modern British Dramatists*, ed. by John R. Brown.  
(New York: Englewood Cliffs, Printice Hall Inc., 1968), p. 60.
22. Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, p. 66.
23. Adbdulla A. Metwally, *Studies in Modern Drama*, Vol:2 (Lebanon: Berrut Arab Univ. 1971), p. 119.

root at all in an established society for the tramp, in his clumsiness and poverty, represents the general human condition as constitutive of the meaning of man: a condition of solitariness as Beckett sees it. In the same way Pozzo and Lucky represent the relationship between an exploiter and his victim. Although Vladimir and Estragon have no ambition, no special purpose, no home, they only care about having a place to wait in. Moreover, both of them suggest a mental issue when they continue to wait all their lives. This is clearly expressed when Vladimir says: We are not sadists but we have kept an appointment. (*Waiting For Godot*, p. 80).

One final idea reflects, to my understanding, the most general idea in the play when Vladimir looks carefully at Pozzo when he expresses his idea which "stresses the transience of human life, the mysterious reversals of fortune and the absurdity of human existence" (23).

Pozzo: One day is that not enough for you, one day like any other day, one day he went dumb, 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, is that not enough for you"?

(*Waiting For Godot*, p. 89)

Nothing but fruitless repetition can take place. Pozzo is by no means the only one to express the barren cycle of life which ends where it starts, Estragon affirms the same idea when he says "Nothing happens, no-body comes, nobody goes, it's awful!" (*Waiting For Godot*, 0. 41). This lack of change presents the suffering of human beings. Thus Beckett presents in *waiting for Godot* a new way of looking at the suffering and sadness of man in a society which is void of humanistic characteristics. He presents a new search for the reality that lies behind mere reasoning in conceptual terms.

## NOTES

- 1 . Nermard Berlin, "The Beckettian O'Neill", in *Modern Drama* ed. by John H. Astington, Vol: 31, No: 1, 1988, p. 19.
- 2 . Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of The Absurd*(London:Penguin Books, 1961), p.44.
- 3 . J.L. Styan, *Modern Drama in Theory and Practice 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1981), p. 125.

pass the time". For them, their hope of seeing Godot saves them from more despair, because they still have hope that Godot will come and give their existence a purpose and meaning. As Raymond Cowell says, "Beckett's achievement in the play is to suggest the emptiness of the state represented by Vladimir and Estragon. Like millions of others, the two tramps, for all the void of their lives, still cling to the comforting hope that Godot is going to rescue them one day from their life" (20). Vladimir shouts expressing this idea:

Let us not waste out time in idle discourse (Pause Vehemently) Let us do something, while we have the chance. It is not everyday that we are needed... To all mankind they were addressed, these cries for help still ringing in our ears. But at this place, at this moment of time, all mankind is us, whether we like it or not. Let us make the most of it before it is too late... What are we doing here, that is the question. And we are blessed in this immense confusion one thing alone is clear. We are waiting for Godot to come.

(*Waiting For Godot*, p. 79-80)

The essence of Beckett's play is that there is an action which demonstrates the absence of action. If, for example, in the well-made play "the core of drama is action happenings, here the very purpose of the play is to say that nothing happens" (21). Thus *Waiting For Godot* is a drama of inaction.

Beckett's idea that human beings are waiting for the arrival of something or someone with whom they may or may not have any previous appointment, and his idea about his characters prove that his characters have psychological reality and probably Eslin's interpretation is the most sound of them:

... the psychological reality of Beckett's characters has often been noticed. Pozzo and Lucky have been interpreted as body and mind. Vladimir and Estragon have been seen as so complementary that they might be the two halves of a single personality, the conscious and sub-conscious mind (22).

Open offices that Beckett's characters become archetypal figures representing certain aspects of man. Vladimir and Estragon represent a social kind of insecurity and comic helplessness. They are tramps who have no

an event, a letter, a news or someone to come. and man is deprived of any freedom or choice, for he is governed by external powers greater than himself. Yet he hopes for some change. Both Vladimir and Estragon find themselves in a similar situation. They are faced with a choice between two illusory things: the illusory meaning of waiting for Godot and a vision of meaninglessness which overshadows their static situation. The theme also is enhanced by the language used and the stage directions; when both tramps do not move at the end of both acts:

Estragon: We'll, shall we go?

Vladimir: Yes, let's go

(They do not move)

(*waiting For Godot*, p. 54)

These lines are repeated in the second act. According to the stage directions, this inability to move is a sign of peaceful mind but "an indication of resignation and weakness while the tramps retain their yearnings and illusions" (18).

Some interpreters have casually talked about the two tramps waiting as something which deserves careful thinking, that it is not senseless or absurd because it is waiting which creates the goal. Vladimir's and Estragon's waiting or the spiritual search is set up in a way that the two tramps are lost as soon as they enter into it. Their behaviour generates their purpose. Then Godot will not come as long as they wait. This vision reflects Beckett's idea that man was born to suffer "for reasons unknown", and people will hear "all the dead voices".

(*waiting For Godot*, p. 54)

Other avenues have to be approached in treating Beckett's *waiting For Godot*. Since the play does not care for story telling in the conventional sense, still the task is not easy. Hence in considering this play, one could not apply the traditional yardstick, because it proves its failure with Beckett's plays. In this new form, Beckett can very well reveal himself as, "the most tormented and sensitive of human beings" (19). This baffles both critics and audience who come out with several metaphysical interpretations of the play. Vladimir and Estragon have an appointment and they wait for Godot. While they wait, they argue and "play just to

Vladimir: (to Estragon, indignantly) That's enough!

Estragon: I couldn't accept less.

Pozzo: Is it enough? No doubt. But I am liberal.

(*Waiting For Godot*, p. 39)

Such a dialogue reveals the vanity of human existence precisely. It shows Beckett's aim is to stress the idea that man is detached in such a world, where Beckett's characters fail to communicate even when using the same language and he strips the language of its essential elements. The questions sometimes terminated or end in a full stop instead of a question mark

The circularity of plot, time and structure which one notices in the play shows that plot is circular which is distinguished from the linear ones; shows that there is no sense of time which surely expresses the hopelessness of Vladimir's and Estragon's wait. Structurally, the second act repeats the first act. This repetition puts them in perspective. Then they become recognizable as "the tracks of a rolling wheel or circle and these are transmuted into symbols of never ending return of all that happens. In term of physical space, the idea of waiting is the attitude to wait and see on the one hand, and on the other hand, it is an expectation at a spiritual level. The two tramps know that no change in location will solve their problems:

Vladimir: We've nothing more to do here.

Estragon: Nor any where else.

(*Waiting For Godot*, p. 52)

The general theme in *waiting For Godot* is related in one way or another to Beckett's conception of human existence. When his characters yearn for death, this clearly expresses the greatest suffering of man in the twentieth century as one sees Vladimir and Estragon try to commit suicide several times:

We should have thought of it a million years ago, in the nineties ...

Hand in hand from the top of the Eiffel Tower, among the first.

(*waiting For Godot*, p.10)

This shows the futility of patience; that waiting patiently without end is a form of mental inertia. The act of waiting itself is an important aspect of our human condition. Everyone always waits for something to happen

In an attempt to associate Beckett's work with the philosophy of Jean Paul Sartre, Esslin thinks that both of them hold the hope of salvation as an invasion of the suffering and anguish facing the human condition. The saviour should emerge, then, from inside man, unlike the religious point of view:

There is here a truly astonishing parallel between the existentialist philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre and the creative intuition of Beckett,

who has never consciously expressed existentialist views (14).

When man has the duty of facing the human condition as a recognition that there is nothingness then "Godot might well become an image of what Sartre calls bad faith. The first act of bad faith consists in evading what one cannot evade, in evading what one is" (15).

The absurdist's technique and form prove that the conventional forms of realism are a failure. In *Waiting For Godot*, the audience for the first time found a new experience on stage. The play presented to them "in action crystalized into dramatic action" (16). Because Beckett's plays are also characterized by different kinds of structure which is mainly based on repetition, the producer must take this fact carefully into account, because the traditional exposition, development and denouement do not achieve the proper value of the play. The comic elements in *Waiting For Godot* could not be brought out accurately to enable the play giving serious meditation on the human condition without a meticulous production of this kind:

Pozzo: Gentlemen, you have been. . . civil to me.

Estragon: Not at all.

Vladimir: What an idea!

Pozzo: Yes, yes, you have been correct. So that I ask myself is there anything I can do in my turn for these honest fellows who are having such a dull time.

Estragon: Even ten francs would be welcome

Vladimir: We are not beggars!

Pozzo: Is there anything I can do, that's what I ask myself, to cheer them up? I have given them bones, I have talked to them about this and that, I have explained the twilight, admittedly.

But is it enough, that is what tortures me, is it enough?

Estragon: Even five.

traditionally has had little patience for the life of the mind, away from the social and moral decision. Drama usually tackles the problem of good or bad acts more easily than it does the difficulty of knowing the form of the good. For Beckett, however, drama raises, "questions about the social good—questions about social justice and moral community—are apparently secondary and even irrelevant if the mind cannot know if the good itself exists (10)". In such a case, the playwright's role is to hold a mirror up to the act of reflection, not only the outside appearance but the inside. Beckett reflects his ideas and concerns in a fictional way and adapts his way to the need of the stage and he always tries to give his work an aspect of detachment when he says: "If I know, I would have said so in the play (11), i.e., the meaning of the work of art as a whole cannot be separated from the form, structure and from artist's statement. He is not concerned with abstract truth or universal lessons or philosophies but he is concerned with situations that explore the meaning of human life as it is in its full reality. Thus, accordingly, Esslin describes Beckett's work as, "spontaneous and always has its starting point the deeply concentrated evocation of the voice within his own depths (12)". From the above discussion one may venture to conclude that Beckett's drama shares one thing with the theatre of ideas. It is less boring than it seems at the first impression. It makes one "think". After watching or reading a Beckett play, one finds oneself directly involved in thinking, and since thought is always, in a sense, comforting; Beckett's plays become less boring.

The realistic ideas that are reflected in *Waiting For Godot* have clearly expressed Beckett's influence by some other antecedent writers and philosophers. This influence is quite certain despite his insistence that he has not read them or understood their writings. He is fascinated by the *Divine Comedy* and he alludes to it frequently. For example, the enigma of the tree which grows leaves in Act II, despite the fact that it was bare completely in Act I.

Vladimir: But Yesterday evening it was all black and bare. And now  
it's covered with leaves.

Estragon: Leaves?

Vladimir: In a single night

Estragon: It must be Spring

Vladimir: But in a single night! (13)

suffering, the sense of despair and hopelessness are among the ideas reflected in *Waiting For Godot* and the other plays. Although the characters in the absurd theatre lack the motivation found in realistic drama, they "share a realist despair" (5). J.L. Styan adds affirming why absurdist do not follow tradition in their plays:

The absence of plot serves to reinforce the monotony and repetitiveness of time in human affairs. The dialogue is commonly no more than a series of inconsequential clichés which reduce those who speak them to talking machines (6).

Accordingly, the writers of the absurd theatre present different types of practical problems. They draw new content and techniques, not to make people laugh, but to represent the business of everyday living. However, one should not expect to find a plot in the traditional which develops from the exposition to the climax and denouement, nor could one seek or find logical developing action or character, because Beckett as well as the absurdist, "objected to the realist drama... that realism was an irritating, if not inferior, form of art that enslaved the artist in a photographic relationship to life (7)". The absurdist believe also that they reacted for a deeper look to human life and such a look enables them to penetrate reality. Thus the principal direction is to use the new form in an attempt to discover the causes of human being's failure and to find a way beyond it. Also the absurdist does not believe in surface reality, as he is a thinker and believes that man must recognize his absurd existence, otherwise he will be a "puppet dangled on the strings of dogma and illusion (8)".

Though Beckett's plays lack traditional plot, they present the dramatist's intuition of the human condition, as Martin Esslin puts it:

they confront their audience with an organized structure of statements and images that interpenetrate each other and that must be apprehended in their totality, rather like the different themes in a symphony which gain meaning by their simultaneous interaction (9).

Beckett's *Waiting For Godot* actually has its impact on the theatre and audience as well. People are faced with serious and fundamental questions concerning the nature of the play. The world of the play has empty and sterile hopes, although it seems that the tramps believe that Godot may come tomorrow. Beckett decides to restate concerns in a medium that



## Beckett's *Waiting For Godot*: Realistic

### Ideas in The Absurd Theatre.

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Beckett's *waiting for Godot* is one of most popular and distinguished works of Modern Drama. It is popular not only among the large number of audience, but among critics who consider it a great landmark in the English theatre. It is also popular because of the large amount of scholarly attention it has been paid to it. When *Waiting For Godot* was first performed in Paris at the Theatre de Babylone in 1953, it attracted increasing critical attention. The critical attention actually comes from the new movement of drama which breaks the law of traditional and conventional drama. Most properly this new trend is explained as a reaction to the atrocities and the atomic bombs of the second world war. According to dramatic stage conventions, it is true that such a play like *Waiting For Godot* does not follow the conventional aspects of drama. It lacks "conventional plot and setting"(1), but it reflects realistic ideas that are felt by audience and readers, and it is natural that plays written in such "unusual and baffling a convention should be felt to be in special need of an explanation that... would uncover their hidden meaning" (2). The theatre of the absurd does not intend to provoke laughter and to give entertainment only, but its basic purpose is "to express the helplessness and futility of a world which seemed to have no purpose"(3). Thus, this attempt is meant to show that the ideas reflected in *Waiting For Godot* are a reflection of reality but in an absurd form. According to the concept of the realists, the setting usually gives what is there in real life. The characters develop and they are not static. They also have stories to tell, whereas Beckett appears to present unlocalized and bare settings. His characters are not full or round and they cannot be specifically placed in a time or place. He does not present plots but he has stories to tell (4). When he has stories to tell, it means that there are ideas to present to people. Beckett reflects these ideas in a new form but the