

Human Conditions in Samuel Beckett's

Waiting for Godot

Ghassan Awad Ibrahim

Asst. Instructor - Department of English

Al-Turath University College

الملخص :

هذا البحث يعني بتأثيرات الحرب وعواقبها الوخيمة على أعضاء المجتمع الذي يعاني منها. لهذا السبب، أفراد المجتمع المتحارب أجبروا ليعانوا صدمة فقدان أقاربهم وأصدقائهم، وجميع أشكال الدمار، ناهيك عن التفكك الاجتماعي والمشاكل النفسية والجسدية وكذلك الأمراض الاجتماعية الأخرى مثل المتاجرة بالشرف، السرقة، وجميع أنواع الاعمال الإجرامية.

البحث يهدف لتعريف القاريء عن معالجة صاموئيل بيكيت في مسرحيته أنتظار كودو للحرب العالمية الثانية المدمرة (1939-1945) وتأثيراتها السلبية على الناس. بيكيت يحاول أن يعطي جو ومكان كونيان في مسرحيته كأنه يخاطب كل شعوب العالم ويحذرهم من مخاطر الحروب. تقديم بيكيت لمعاناة الإنسان في خمسينيات القرن الماضي في مسرحيته ربما ينبع من مسؤوليته الأخلاقية ككاتب مسرحي مدرك للمكونات الرئيسية المحفزة للكرامة، الأيمان، المجد، الحرية، التقدم، الرخاء وكل علامات السعادة لتسود بين الناس. عند كتابة المسرحية، بيكيت كان مدركا للحرب العالمية الكارثية الماضية والتي عانت منها المجتمعات الأوروبية ومن ضمنها المجتمع الإنجليزي صدمة فقدان الآباء والأمهات وحتى الأطفال ناهيك عن الذكر البطالة، المجاعة، المتاجرة بالشرف والفقر وما شابه. بيكيت يصف في مسرحيته الصورة المقززة الحقيقية لواقع الإنسان المزري حيث أن المعاناة أمتزجت مع الشك بالمستقبل المجهول في القرن العشرين بعد الحرب العالمية الثانية ومذكرا بصورة غير مباشرة مشاهدي تلك الحقبة التاريخية للعواقب الوخيمة للحرب ومعطيا وميض أمل، أيمان، وراحة لتغيير أنفسهم ومجتمعاتهم لتصبح أكثر تحضرا وازدهارا.

Abstract :

This research deals with the effects of war and its terrible consequences on the members of the community where it breaks out. Hence, individuals are made to suffer the trauma of losing their relatives and friends, and all forms of destruction, not to mention the social disintegration and physical and psychological problems as well

as the other social diseases, like prostitution, robbery and all sorts of criminal actions.

The research aims at acquainting the reader with Samuel Beckett's treatment in his *Waiting for Godot* of the devastating Second World War (1939-1945) and its negative effects on people. Beckett tries to give a universal setting and atmosphere in his play as if he addresses all people worldwide and warns them of wars risks. Beckett's presentation of human sufferings in the fifties of the last century in his drama may stem from his moral responsibility as a dramatist conscious of the main ingredients conducive to dignity, faith, glory, freedom, progress, prosperity, and all signs of happiness to prevail among his people. When writing the play, Beckett was fully aware of the past catastrophic global war from which Europe communities, including English one, had suffered too much the trauma of losing fathers, mothers and even children not to mention unemployment, starvation, prostitution, poverty, and the like. Beckett in his play depicts the real disgusting image of human squalid conditions in which suffering is mixed with uncertainty in the 20th century after World War II, reminding indirectly the spectators at that time of the war's terrible consequences and giving glimpse of hope, faith, and relief to them to change themselves and their societies to be more urban and prosperous.

Waiting for Godot (pronounced godo) is Samuel Beckett's translation of his own original French version, *En attendant Godot* and it is classified as a "tragicomedy in two acts"¹. The original French text was composed between "Oct. 9, 1948 and Jan. 29, 1949"² and it was acted at the Theatre de Babylone in Paris on Jan. 5, 1953.

The Irish Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) is the most famous modern absurd dramatist in his *Waiting for Godot* in which two tramps wait endlessly for a mysterious man who never arrives. The play is considered by some critics to be one of the most well-known works of the Theatre of Absurd because it has much ridiculous and nonsense actions and it lacks of a plot. The absence of plot emphasizes the futility and monotony of human existence. Thus, the characters have

no motivation and dignity necessary to achieve genuine stature and are seen to spend their time waiting for something to happen or engaged in meaningless exchanges of words.

Theatre of Absurd is a term applied to a group of dramatists in the 1950s and 60s such as Samuel Beckett, Jean Genet, Eugene Ionesco, Edward Albee, Arthur Adamov, and Harold Pinter. Their attitude is based upon the belief that the condition of man in this world is absurd, ridiculous, and irrational. The term (absurd) was coined by Martin Esslin in his study of contemporary playwrights, *The Theatre of the Absurd* (1962). In the play, the characters are isolated from other human beings, engaging in circular, meaningless conversations and the life in which they live is seen as absurd, without purpose, sad to the point of anguish and at the same time funny. Thus, the mode of most absurdist plays is "tragicomedy"³ as Nell says in *Endgame* "Nothing is funnier than unhappiness ... it's the most comical thing in the world"⁴ Moreover, it is clearly seen that the characteristic mood of *Waiting for Godot* is tragicomic, inevitably so, since the play expresses a nihilistic view of human meaningless existence. Therefore, Beckett has emphasized the meaninglessness of life in his play. Besides, unresolved mysterious, absence, emptiness, and nothingness are central characteristics in many absurdist plays⁵, for example, the action of the alleged character Godot in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is centered on the absence of a man named Godot, for whom the characters (Vladimir and Estragon) perpetually wait with no avail since he would never come. Similarly, in the Romanian Eugene Ionesco's *The chairs*, an old couple welcomes a large number of guests to their home, but these guests are invisible so all we see is empty chairs, as a sign of their absence.

The absurdist have become widely known since World War II (1939-1945) that left Europe, including England, devastated and wrecked. The seven-year destructive war affected negatively the European people in general because it left 62 millions of them, half of them were civilians, killed and dozens of millions others injured and

disabled. Moreover, it caused catastrophic disintegrations in the social tissues of the European communities due to the loss of most of their family members due to the scourges of the fierce war. Furthermore, it left plenty of widows, orphans and destitute people homeless and without breadwinners not to mention unemployment, prostitution, chaotic killing, and robbery that posed serious problems for the survived people to suffer not only disintegration and physical diseases but psychological problems that left most of them feeling lost and lonely in their countries.

At the end of the Second World War, there were millions of homeless and refugees in Europe alongside the breaking down of the continent economy because the devastating war had destroyed 70% of the industrial infrastructure, leaving English people in particular in very squalid conditions⁶.

"By the end of the war (World War II) in September 1945, England had suffered not only the loss of hundreds of thousands of young men but the devastation of wide areas in London and elsewhere and staggering blows to its economic system and its financial life and character"⁷

Moreover, the Second World War caused terrible suffering to England much more than that during the First World War, because:

"in this conflict not only the military forces but the civilian population were intimately involved; it was not merely armed forces that paid heavily in what Prime Minister Winston Churchill tersely described as... (blood, sweet, and tears)."⁸

As a matter of fact, literature is the mirror of society that reflects the realism of the factual daily life, pushing Beckett as a dramatist aware of the blights of the war and its terrible consequences to present his masterpiece *Waiting For Godot*. to show the nature of European human miserable life and to raise his idea of human dignity after a

devastating war that caused much suffering, particularly to the European people, leaving them tortured, humiliated, incoherent, and lost in their war-torn countries.

The main idea of the Absurd School which appeared as a natural result due to the scourges of the Second World War and its terrible consequences is that the world in which we live is meaningless since the absurdists themselves do not see any logic or truth or value in the importance of man as long as he lives in a chaotic and irrational world due to the devastating previous war. Besides, the word "absurd" itself originally means out of harmony in music and ridiculous in common sense, but in drama it means "irrational, unreasonable, or illogical"⁹. Moreover, Oscar G. Brockett says "the word...in its earliest uses (in Latin) ... refers to disharmony or dissonance"¹⁰ As a result, the English literature of the absurd is pessimistic and comic having satire and parody as Jean E. Kennard describes as it "is often pessimistic in vision, comic in tone, and contains strong elements of satire or parody,"¹¹

So, it is quite clear that *Waiting for Godot* is not a play written in intellectual isolation but it is the product of the spirit of the age since it portrays a strong relationship to European thoughts that came increasingly to world attention after World War II. Besides, Beckett has given his characters a wider identity to represent the European human race when he varies their names: Vladimir is Russian; Estragon is French; Pozzo is Italian; and Lucky is English. In a broader sense, Beckett's characters are representatives of European people at that time and of their responses.

Beckett is not only famous in his play *Waiting for Godot* but is also well-known for his plays as *Endgame* (1957), *Act Without Words I* (1957), *Kapp's Last Tape* (1958), *Act Without Words II* (1960). The two other well-known absurd dramatists are the French Jean Genet (1910-1989) in his plays *The Balcony*, *The Blacks*, *The Maids*, and *The Screens* and the Romanian Eugene Ionesco in his famous plays; *The chairs*, *The Lesson*, and *The Killer*.

Beckett's presentation of human sufferings in the fifties of the last century in his drama *Waiting For Godot* may stem from his moral responsibility as a dramatist conscious of the main ingredients conducive to dignity, faith, glory, freedom, progress, prosperity, and all signs of happiness to prevail among his people. When writing the play, Beckett was fully aware of the past catastrophic global war from which Europe communities, including English one, had suffered too much the trauma of losing fathers, mothers and even children not to mention unemployment, starvation, prostitution, and poverty. Throughout his life, Beckett witnessed the war's calamities and its torturing to the peaceable people when he joined the French Resistance Movement against the German invasion of France in 1940 during World War the Second.

Beckett's *Waiting For Godot* is a very significant play since it depicts the real disgusting image of human squalid conditions in which suffering is mixed with uncertainty in the 20th century after the World War II, reminding indirectly the spectators at that time of the war's terrible consequences and giving glimpse of hope, faith, and relief to them to change themselves and their society to be more urban and prosperous. Moreover, and because of the play's importance, it is translated into about twenty languages and it is acted about four hundred performances at the Theatre de Babylone in Paris before it moved to another theater in the French capital. The English version, translated by the author himself, was first acted successfully in London in 1955 and then it was acted in 1957 at U.S.A. San Quentin Prison where hundreds of prisoners attended there. It is notable to mention that the play was acted in front of enormous number of prisoners might be because the play has no female characters.

Asked about his objection to female actors, Beckett pointed out "Women don't have prostates"¹² in a reference to the fact the Vladimir, one of the characters in *Waiting for Godot*, frequently has to leave the stage to urinate. It is hard for Vladimir to pee specially when he becomes so annoyed as he tells angrily his only friend Estragon who is at that very moment busy in taking off his boot" No one ever

suffers but you, I don't count. I'd like to hear what you'd say if you had what I have." (Waiting for Godot.p.10)¹³

Waiting for Godot follows two days in the bitter lives of the two tramps (Vladimir and Estragon) who distract themselves in talking and keeping asking each other trivial questions, eating, sleeping, exchanging conversations, shouting obscenities, arguing, singing, playing games, hopping on one foot, examining their hats to pass time and to get rid of thinking so that "We're in no danger of ever thinking any more," (p.64). as they wait hopefully and unsuccessfully for someone named Godot to arrive whom they claim him as an acquaintance "Oh, he's a ...he's a kind of acquaintance,"(p.23) but in fact they hardly know him "Nothing of the kind, we hardly know him,"(ibid) Moreover, their attempts to hang themselves in the first day of the play due to their feelings of despair went in vain because they have no rope that's why they finally decided to go and come back the next day "Then we can bring a good bit of rope," (p 94). In fact, the two tramps do not only want to get rid of their thinking but they want to put an end to their lives so that they can finish their sufferings since they have been torturing from the very beginning of the play when it opens as Estragon, sitting on a low mound, struggling to remove his boot from his foot and muttering the first words of the play "Nothing to be done" (p.9) as he and his friend Vladimir wait expectantly and impatiently for an alleged savior (Godot) to come and save them from their miserable life.

Beckett's play is full of human sufferings, as man suffers despite his progress and advances throughout his life. Everyone suffers, not only Estragon who always complains bitterly that he is beaten by unknown people who "certainly ...beat me"(ibid) for reasons he knows nothing about, but Vladimir is plagued by difficulties with urination, while Pozzo and Lucky, two other characters in the play, who interrupted the tramps' waiting by their coming in Act 1 also suffer, especially Lucky who suffers from the beginning when he is driven by his master Pozzo, carrying a heavy load and threatened by his whip.

Enter Pozzo and Lucky. Pozzo drives Lucky by means of a rope passed round his neck, so that Lucky is the first to appear (on the stage)...before Pozzo appears. Lucky carries a heavy bag, a folding stool, a picnic basket and a greatcoat. Pozzo a whip. (P.21).

Eventually, Pozzo and Lucky become blind and dumb respectively. Ironically, Pozzo, the self-centered figure in the play, imagines proudly that he will never suffer, believing that he is unlike other human beings who are made to suffer; "Do I look like a man that can be made to suffer?" (p.34).

Beckett successfully depicts the meaninglessness of life at that time as his play reflects the real human critical conditions such as an incapability to solve a very simple problem-the taking off Estragon boot, diseases, poverty, prostitution, ignorance, alienation of religion, and the like as corollary of the previous fierce war when he presents a slice of an inferior society represented by deformed and crippled characters (Vladimir and Estragon) whose future is uncertain as the two men endlessly waiting for Godot whose identity and arrival are not sure, as there is no guarantee that they have; for instance, an appointment with him or that he will ever come in a deserted place, where we find nothing more inspiring than a road and a single bare tree. The process of waiting itself for another who never comes is to some extent boring and almost unbearable. Apparently, the two tramps force themselves to keep waiting since they have no other choice left for them due to their cruel circumstances though "the act of waiting is itself a contradictory combination of doing nothing and doing something,"¹⁴ However, waiting with no avail for someone would never come is not only suffering but tedious and tiresome, reflecting the absurdity of miserable life, loneliness, bitter realism, resentment, doubt and ambiguity.

Indeed, Vladimir and Estragon look as if they have been held in confused solitary confinement though faint hope mixed with uncertainty future still flickers in their breasts, wishing to be released

by an exterior force outside the self which is represented by the alleged Godot who will apparently help them to get rid of their misery. Thus, Beckett's characters can be considered solitary figures attached to isolated spot in a closed world; the road where the tramps settled seems unrelated to any other spot and definitely Vladimir and Estragon seem attached to that place and are chained to the process of waiting since all of their frequent decisions to go away end in inaction, hearing with Wordsworth "The still, sad music of humanity,"¹⁵. Moreover, the two partners demonstrate slavery rather than freedom for example when Vladimir and Estragon frequently ask each other to leave, they agree but "They do not move" (p. 94).

However, the two tramps who search for meaning for their life while waiting for Godot in such bleak landscape have ambiguous feelings about their role in the world discuss repentance probably as an attempt to approach mighty God so that they can find a meaning for their existence and end their miserable life when Vladimir suggested to repent, particularly in relation to the religious story mentioned by him of the two thieves crucified along with Jesus Christ "Two thieves, crucified at the same time as our Savior."(p.12) as one of the four evangelists says that one of the two thieves was saved.

Vladimir: And yet ...(pause)... how is it-this is not boring you I hope-how is it that of the four Evangelists only one speaks of a thief being Saved. The four of them were there-or thereabouts-and only one speaks of a thief being saved. (Waiting for Godot p.12)

This is the first of numerous religious references in the play which may be linked to its putative central theme of salvation and the search of the two tramps for reconciliation with God despite their hesitation due to their non-confidence with religion represented by the Evangelists. Vladimir mentioned that "One out of four[evangelists]. Of the other three two don't/ mention any thieves at all and the third says that/ both of them abused him" (p.13) as a reference to Jesus

Christ who according to the Bible was crucified just like the thief. Here, Vladimir criticizes the religious men of the church (Evangelists) that only one of them said the truth that one of the two thieves "being saved" (ibid) and the third unmasked the two other evangelists that "both of them abused him" ibid. referring to the oppressed Christ according to the Christian religion. Thus, Vladimir believed that the two others evangelists "must have been damned" ibid, while Estragon painfully described people in general as "bloody ignorant apes" ibid.

Throughout the tramps' conversation we can perceive easily the possible religious implications in the play when the two tramps expressed their sympathy on Christ and their antipathy towards those who treated him unjustly. Moreover, Estragon compares himself to Christ when he left his boot for "Another will come, just as ... as ... as me, but with smaller feet, and they'll make him happy" (p.52), as he answered his partner Vladimir "Christ did" (ibid), and then he confirmed "All my life I've compared myself to him" (ibid), in reference to Christ. Furthermore, William R. Mueller and Josephine Jacobson point out in an essay entitled "Samuel Beckett's Long Saturday"¹⁶ the religious implication of the day on which Estragon and Vladimir are seen discussing the cross while their waiting for Godot in Act one as Saturday which is special one that occurred between the Crucifixion of Christ and the Resurrection of him. Rather, what we have in Beckett's drama is a symbolic image of man as being perpetually trapped between hope and non-arrival. To Muller and Jacobson, the tramps seem to live through this long Saturday, without the arrival of Resurrection Sunday. However, the next day for the tramps is as bad as the previous day due to Godot non-arrival. Unfortunately there is no new day for the expectant tramps despite the appearance of some leaves on the once naked nearby tree on the next day which is another symbolic image of new life.

The tree which is compared by the tramps to a "shrub"(p.14) or a "bush" (ibid) stands in general as a symbol of hope and life, but its appearance bare on the first day of the tramps' lives signifies despair and death, reflecting hopelessness and misery of people daily factual

life. Moreover, its appearance bare, resembling the cross metaphorically signifies oppression, violence and complete absence of religion of people when some of them crucified Jesus of Nazareth on it. Therefore, the bare tree is a painful memory for the tramps and the whole atmosphere in which they wait for Godot is gloomy specially Estragon who describes unwillingly the entire landscape as a "muckheap" (p.61). But on the next day in Act 2 the tree was covered by some leaves which means there is still a hope and life, making Vladimir amazed because it happened only in a "single night" (p. 66), and pushing him to wonder "But yesterday evening it was all black and bare. And now it's covered with leaves"(ibid).

Beckett has an extraordinary ability to show the current problems of human beings in society. He is interested, for instance, in the problems of community where people represented by the tramps have no suitable place for living; in the relationship between God and the individual who feels lost without God's care and has nothing to do and nowhere to go just like the tramps who believe that "Nothing to be done"(p.10); in the relationship between the individual and the state, and the state responsibility towards its citizens in providing them support and aid to make their life better; and in the way in which certain pressures tend to reduce the individual to a slave such as Lucky, the absolutely subservient slave of Pozzo, or at least to someone without dignity just like Estragon who couldn't prevent himself from asking humiliatingly Pozzo about the chicken bones which are thrown by the latter after having sucked them, "Er...you've finished with the ...er...you don't need the...bones, sir?(p.26). Pozzo explains to Estragon that the bones "go to the carrier" (Lucky) (ibid), whom Pozzo then asks him whether he wants the bones or not but he doesn't answer and remain silent and that's why Pozzo gives them to Estragon who shamelessly picks them up and begins to gnaw them and this thing embarrassed Vladimir who describes the situation as "scandal!" (ibid). Moreover, Vladimir also blames Pozzo for his bad treatment to Lucky when he resolutely tells him "To treat a man...

like that...I think that...no...a human being...no...it's a scandal!" (ibid).

Lucky represents slavery owned by Pozzo who drives him by a means of rope tied around his neck and he does not put down his load, at least not unless his master (Pozzo) prevails on him to do something else. Pozzo explains that Lucky does so to mollify him and to prevent him from selling him.

"He imagines that when I see him indefatigable I'll regret my decision. Such is his miserable scheme. As though I were short of slaves! (*All three look at Lucky.*) Atlas, son of Jupiter!". (p. 31)

Lucky indefatigable spirit helps him to cope with his slavery. He serves Pozzo as a "dog-like devotion"¹⁷. He is the absolutely subservient slave of Pozzo because he unquestioningly does any order said by his master who treats him as an animal. Pozzo controls his heavily-laden slave by means of whip and an extremely long rope by which Pozzo frequently jerks and tugs him whenever he likes. Lucky speaks only once in the play and it is a result of Pozzo's order to think for Estragon and Vladimir. Though Lucky serves Pozzo for a long time, since they have been together for sixty years, the latter scorns and barks orders at him as well as he frequently calls him "pig". Nevertheless, Pozzo wants to get rid of him in a horrible way by selling him as an animal in a fair because he became old.

Pozzo: But instead of driving him away as I might have done, I mean instead of simply kicking him out on his arse, in the goodness of my heart I am bringing him to the fair, where I hope to get a good price for him."(p.32)

Pozzo here shows ungratefulness for Lucky long service. In fact, Pozzo doesn't only want to sell him but to kill him "The truth is you can't drive such creatures away. The best thing would be to kill them".

(ibid). Once again, Vladimir blames Pozzo for doing so, saying "After having sucked all the good out of him (Lucky) you chuck him away like a ... like a banana skin." (p.34). However, Lucky doesn't give up his companionship to Pozzo and remains completely faithful to him despite the latter's horrible treatment, even in the second act when Pozzo has inexplicably gone blind, and needs to be led by Lucky rather than driving him as he had done before, Lucky remains loyal and has not tried to run away. It is clearly that they are tightly bound together by more than a piece of rope in the same way that the two tramps are "tied to Godot"¹⁸.

However, the strong attachment of the two hopeless tramps to Godot indicates not only despair but doubts which are parts of human sufferings since even if Godot comes, they are absolutely not sure whether he will help or punish them specially after Vladimir questions the Boy, another character in the play, who claims that he works for "Mr. Godot" (p.51) as the shepherd of the latter's goats. The Boy indirectly shows in his answers non-satisfaction to Godot as the latter beats his brother who minds the sheep and he doesn't know if he happy or not, prompting Vladimir to resembles himself to the Boy as saying "You're as bad as myself" (ibid). Thus, the salvation of the tramps at Godot's hands is shaky and doubtful because Godot himself seems biased in his treatment of the two brothers. Hence, the long-awaited Godot might bring damnation to the tramps as Vladimir says "Christ have mercy on us!" (p.92). Moreover, Estragon has been also shocked and become so frightened as he hears that Godot is coming when he says; "I'm in hell!" (p.74) just after Vladimir triumphantly brings good news to Estragon, saying: "It's Godot! At last! Gogo! It's Godot! We're saved!" (p.73). Thus, the tramps' confidence in Godot became fragile and their case seems cynical as they began to fear Godot as Vladimir emphasized that he would punish them if they "dropped him" (p.93).

Apparently, the two tramps have no choice but wasting their time in waiting for Godot who would never appear. As a matter of fact,

when man, for example, is obliged to live unwillingly in squalid conditions, just like the two tramps, he unconsciously wishes strongly that time passes quickly to see change as soon as possible that it may make him happy but when there is no change, everything would seem to him as a matter of routine and he certainly feels desperate. Thus, Vladimir who is dejected and hopeless according to his experiment in life telling us that the condition of man in life is like crucifixion "To every man his little cross.... Till he dies.... And is forgotten" (p.62), so life for the tramps means nothing since it is hard for them to endure it under such bad conditions and that's why they frequently want to hasten their death to seek relief by hanging themselves as an alternative because they have no other choice if Godot doesn't show up or as Vladimir suggests to celebrate their death by throwing themselves from Eiffel tower, saying "hand in hand from the top of the Eiffel Tower", (p.10). Unfortunately, even committing suicide is unattainable as Godot because they are not allowed to mount the French high tower so that they can throw themselves off it as Vladimir explains "They wouldn't even let us up", (ibid).

In general, time is so important throughout human practical life because life itself is very short. When someone has a job to do, he needs enough time to finish it and sometimes and because of man's many obligations, for example, he doesn't find more time to finish all his work throughout his life, thus we can see easily the process of finishing work for such busy man is a race against time. But for the two tramps, time is not only boring but disgusting because they have nothing to do but trying to pass it and kill it to ease their boredom caused by their ceaseless waiting. All that they are sure of is that "the hours are long, under these conditions" p.80. Yet, time passes quickly when someone for example enjoys happy times and this thing has been emphasized by Vladimir when he says "How time flies when one has fun!" (p.76) just after he and his partner spent a good time by exchanging obscenities and have some fun. However, the current time in which they exist is not only meaningless and purposeless as they have no aim to achieve in their life but it is so heavy and slow that

they couldn't feel any change in it, forcing Vladimir to think that "time has stopped" (p.36). Moreover, the tramps' future seems uncertain and unpredictable and that's why any attempt carried out by them to avoid time by changing place they soon face the same problem. Therefore, any "effort to escape time by changing place...is a foolish and impossible idea"¹⁹.

For Pozzo, time means nothing but he frequently consults his watch because time passes slowly in the play and he at the same time wants to assure Vladimir that time is passing. In fact, Pozzo doesn't care about time because he considers it atrocious "Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time! It's abominable!" p.89. Besides, Pozzo also remonstrates furiously with Vladimir and Estragon, crying: "one day, is that not enough for you", (ibid). Truly, Pozzo has a pessimistic view about life. He believes that events throughout man's life are just routine and uninteresting and its days are the same, saying:

"...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..." (ibid).

In general, the passage of time in which events are the same or just like routine leads to nothingness, because man is born to die as he sooner or later goes to his grave just like the sequence of day and night and birth itself is also similar to death as light comes out of a grave-like dark womb as Pozzo explains "They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more" (ibid). Moreover, the idea of death resembling birth is also confirmed by Vladimir as both womb and birth are resembled by grave, as saying: "Astride of a grave and a difficult birth. Down in the hole, lingeringly, the grave-digger puts on the forceps. We have time to grow old." (pp.90-91). Thus, time is no more than an interval of life between birth and death and it does nothing but speed up our death.

However, Beckett's play demonstrates the power of environment which is all the circumstances, people, things, and events around them that influence their life as we see in the play in which particular natural surroundings wrap tramps life and make it gloomy and at the same time the play attempts to show the power of imagination in rescuing of the individual mind from degradation, materialism, selfishness, and despair. Unfortunately, the idea of waiting for Godot captured the imagination of the tramps whose efforts to meet Godot were to no avail; as a result, they were indirectly compelled to feel the slowness of time which almost makes everybody, including the Boy, desire to forget. Besides, the past time in which the tramps exist is full of horror and terror as they frequently hear the voices of the dead in it. (p.19). Psychologically speaking, bad conditions and hard circumstances oblige people unconsciously to try to forget so that they can get relief due to horrible or disastrous events that they lived in the past that make them even imagine that the very near past events seem as if they are very remote and hard to remember. For the tramps, the past day in which they had waited in vain was not even clear to both of them, as Vladimir tried hardly to remind himself and his companion, about what did they do yesterday evening when Estragon hardly remembered as saying "oh...this and that, I suppose, nothing in particular....Yes, now I remember, yesterday evening we spent blathering about nothing in particular. That's been going on now for half a century" (p. 66). However, Vladimir is not convinced by the answer of Estragon who seemed annoyed as saying wearily "Don't torment me, Didi" just after his partner asking him that he doesn't "remember any fact, any circumstances? (ibid). So, the mere mention of past events for the tramps triggers off mental suffering and boredom and that's why the two companions keep trying to forget what they said and what they did and even what others have said or done to them to avoid the dullness of their miserable life.

Beckett successfully implies comic and tragic elements in his play by depending on a sense of incongruity which appear in dynamic fusion, making us as spectators to laugh at the tramps when they are

messing around over food, games, exchanging hats and shouting obscenities and the like and to sympathize with them since their apathetic behaviors occur within a context of despair. Yet, the issue is more complicated than that. The sense of incongruity which is the base of the Theater of Absurd occurs when man in general reflects upon his position in the environment which has become meaningless for him, because he looks at it through different eyes, the very thing that makes him recognize the shortcomings of reason and thus he comes to feel isolated from other people in his community as if he is shackled by his confined thinking which pushes him to alienate from his current surroundings and therefore he becomes useless. Moreover, there are frequently ominous notes in the play which we cannot ignore such as "We're waiting for Godot," (p.14) and "Nothing to be done"(p.10) the two phrases which continually remind us of the futile purpose of the tramps whom we take to heart the hopelessness of their position in the universe as Estragon emphasizes their uselessness and worthlessness when he cries shrilly to Vladimir saying "Who am I to tell my private nightmares to if I can't tell them to you?" (p.16)

However, man mustn't take a wholly pessimistic view of life if he falls into despair just like the situation of the two tramps who submitted themselves to the process of waiting, hoping there will be an exterior power such as Godot would come and pick them up from their misery. It is a matter of fact that real power gushes out from inside man not from outside him, thus, man must have a great deal of faith in himself to feel confident about his ability to achieve his goal in life by working seriously on it. It is true that man for example is dying to finish his high school and start college and then he is dying to finish college and start working and then he is dying for his children to grow old enough so that he could go back to work, but then he is dying to retire and suddenly he realized he forgot to live. Man should appreciate his current situation and enjoy each moment throughout his life because life itself is short and time is passing whether he accepts or not. However, there are many examples in English literature, showing characters facing their problems seriously and defeating them

such as Viola in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. Viola and her twin brother Sebastian resemble each other so closely that even those who know them intimately couldn't distinguish the one from the other. It happens that during a sea journey they are shipwrecked and each one thinks that the other is drowned. Viola is the first to reach Illyria, an area lies near Italy, and she doesn't waste much time in mourning her brother not because that she doesn't care about her brother fate but the situation is more complicated than that and it needs her to gather all her wit, thinking, and self power to solve the difficult situation confronting her specially she is young and beautiful in an unknown country. Thus, she disguised herself as a man to avoid the snares of bad men and she could work as a page-boy in the Illyria governor palace. Because of Viola charming manners, wit, and intelligence she wins the satisfaction of her master and finally they got married. Another example is the character of Pamela in Samuel Richardson novel whose title carries its heroine name. *Pamela* or virtue rewarded is an epistolary novel²⁰ first published in 1740. It tells the story of a beautiful young poor maid named Pamela whose master, Mr. B. makes unwanted advances towards her. She is so sincere that she rejects him continually and her virtue is eventually rewarded when he shows his sincerity by proposing an equitable marriage to her. So, man must use his wit, will, resolution, persistence, and patience, to achieve his goals throughout his life even though they are difficult or other people against them and as I believe that what Beckett wishes for people to understand and work.

Notes :

- 1- Ackerley, C. J. and Gontarski, S. E., (Eds.) *The Faber Companion to Samuel Beckett* (London: Faber and Faber, 2006), p. 620.
- 2- Ackerley and Gontarski 2006, p. 172.
- 3- Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961). P.323-324.
- 4- Samuel Beckett. *Endgame: a play in one act, followed by Act without words, a mime for one player*. Grove Press, 1958. p.18-19.

- 5- Les Essif. *Empty figure on an empty stage: the theatre of Samuel Beckett and his generation*. Indiana University Press, 2001. pg.1-9.
- 6- <http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki>.
- 7- William Vaughn Moody, Robert Morss Lovett, eighth edition by Fred B. Millett *A History of English Literature*, (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964) p. 422.
- 8- Ibid p. 422.
- 9- Oscar G. Brockett, *The Theater: An Introduction* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), p. 340.
- 10- Eugene Webb, *The Plays of Samuel Beckett* (London: Peter Owen Limited, 1972), p.14.
- 11- Jean E. Kennard, *The Theatre of the Absurd* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1975). p.1.
- 12- Meeting with Linda Ben-Zvi, December 1987. Quoted in "Introduction" to Ben-Zvi, L., (ed.) *Women in Beckett: Performance and Critical Perspectives* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), p. x.
- 13- Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (London: Faber and Faber limited, 1978), p.10. All subsequent textual quotations and references which will appear in my paper within parentheses in the text are based on this reference book. All spellings are kept as in the original.
- 14- Ronald Hayman, *Samuel Beckett* (London: Heinemann, 1980), p.4.
- 15- A poetic line from the romantic poet Wordsworth poem (Tintern Abby 11.91).
- 16- Man in the Modern Theatre, Nathan A. Scott, Jr. (ed.), Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1965.
- 17- Kalb, J., *Beckett in Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p 175.
- 18- Mercier, V., *Beckett/Beckett* (London: Souvenir Press, 1990), p53.
- 19- David H. Hesla, *The Shape of Chaos: An Interpretation of the Art of Samuel Beckett* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1973), p.133.

20- An epistolary novel or story is one that is written as a series of letters.

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