

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 12. Issue 2. 2025 (April-June)

ISSN  
INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA  
2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

## Impact of Irish Movement in Modern English Drama with Special Reference to Samuel Barclay Beckett's "Waiting for Godot" and "Endgame"

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[doi: 10.33329/ijelr.12.2.165](https://doi.org/10.33329/ijelr.12.2.165)



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### Article information

Article Received:09/05/2025  
Article Accepted:04/06/2025  
Published online:14/06/2025

### Abstract

The present study is an attempt to deal with the impact of Irish Movement in Modern English Drama, taking Samuel Barclay Beckett's two plays- *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* as an example. Both the plays *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* belong to the genre of the Theatre of the Absurd which is unconventional in not depicting any dramatic conflicts or anything else. The phrase 'Absurd Drama' or 'The Theatre of the Absurd' came into light after Martin Esslin's book 'The Theatre of Absurd' which was published in 1961. Martin Esslin points out that there is no such thing as a regular movement of Absurd dramatists. The term 'Absurd Drama' or 'The Theatre of Absurd' is useful as "A device to make certain fundamental traits which seem to be present in the works of a number of dramatists accessible to discussion by tracing the features they have in common." Samuel Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot* belongs to the genre of the Theatre of the Absurd. It is unconventional in not depicting any dramatic conflicts or anything else. In the play, practically nothing happens, no development is to be found, there is no beginning and no end. ... The waiting for uncertainty of the characters Vladimir and Estragon continues but in despair. *Endgame* belongs to the theatre of the Absurd as it views life as meaningless and beyond human rationality to understand. It shows the influence of existentialist philosophy. With its emphasis on the idea of circularity and non-meaning *Endgame* highlights the theme of absurdism.

**Keywords:** Absurd Drama, human rationality, unconventional, meaningless, waiting for uncertainty, despair.

### Introduction

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century Irish Play is globally acknowledged for its rich quality and quantity. Irish Play attracts people from far and wide across the globe. In India too, people read and appreciate Irish Play. But this remarkable achievement is rooted in the Irish Literary movement in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This

literary movement was associated with a revival of interest in aged long Ireland's Gaelic heritage and the growth of Irish nationalism. The Fay brothers formed W. G. Fay's Irish National Dramatic Company in 1902, focused on the development of Irish acting talent. W. G. Fay's Irish National Dramatic Company was the precursor to Dublin's Abbey Theatre. The pioneers of modern Irish plays are George Bernard Shaw (1856 - 1950), Samuel Barclay Beckett (1906 - 1989), W.B. Yeats (1865 - 1939) and J. M. Synge (1871 - 1909). Samuel Beckett is considered one of the last modernist playwrights, and one of the key figures in the "Theatre of Absurd" movement. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1969 for his play *Waiting for Godot*. He also wrote *Endgame*, *Words and Music*, *Catastrophe*, *Breath, Happy Days* etc. ; among them *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* have made him famous in world literature. Both these novels introduce a new trend in the English theatre. In my present dissertation paper I have made an attempt to analyse Impact of Irish Movement in Modern English Drama with Special Reference to Samuel Barclay Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*. Though both the plays were written in different ways, somehow, they play an extraordinary impact on modern English Drama. The play, *Waiting for Godot* ran for 400 performances and enjoyed highly critical praise. *Endgame*, Samuel Beckett's second published play, is considered a masterpiece of modernist absurdity. The plays *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* visualize us hopelessness, anguish and dejection have become the most illustrative experiences of modern man in contemporary era.

Samuel Barclay Beckett (1906 - 1989), well known as Samuel Beckett is an Irish novelist, playwright and poet. But he is best known for his plays. He was born on April 13, 1906, in Dublin, Ireland and brought up there. His father was William Frank Beckett who worked in the construction business and his mother, Maria Jones Roe, was a nurse. In his youth Beckett attended Earlsfort House School in Dublin; then at the age of fourteen, he went to Portora Royal School, the same school attended by Oscar Wilde. He received his Bachelor's degree from Trinity College in 1927. Referring to his childhood, Beckett himself once remarked, "I had little talent for happiness." In his youth, he would periodically experience severe depression keeping him in bed until mid-day. This experience in life would later influence his writing. In the year 1928, Beckett found a welcome home in Paris where he met and became a devoted student of James Joyce who was an established playwright then. In the year 1931, he embarked on a restless sojourn through Britain, France and Germany. He started writing poems and stories and did various odd jobs to support him. On this journey, he came across many persons who would inspire some of his most interesting characters. In the year 1937, Beckett settled in Paris. Shortly thereafter, he was stabbed by a pimp after refusing his solicitations there. While gradually recovering in the hospital, he met the lady Suzanne Dechevaux-Dumesnil, a piano student in Paris. Since then the two would become life-long companions and eventually marry. After meeting with his attacker, Beckett dropped the charges, partly to avoid the publicity. From 1939 to 1946, during World War II, Beckett's Irish citizenship allowed him to live in Paris as a citizen of a neutral country. He had fought in the resistance movement until 1942 when members of his group were arrested by the Gestapo. To escape from arrest, he and his wife fled to the unoccupied zone until the end of the war. After the World War-II, Beckett was awarded the Croix de Guerre for bravery during his time in the French resistance. He permanently settled in Paris and began his most prolific period as a writer. In five years, he wrote plays *Eleutheria*, *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame*, the novels *Malloy*, *Malone Dies*, *The Unnamable*, and *Mercier et Camier*, two books of short stories, and a book of criticism. The 1960s were a period of change in Beckett's life. He found great success with these plays across the globe. Invitations came to attend rehearsals and performances in theater which led him to a career as a theater director. In the year 1961, he secretly married Suzanne who took care of his business affairs. A commission from the BBC in 1956 led to offers him to write for radio and cinema through the 1960s. Beckett continued his writing throughout the decades 1970s and 80s mostly in a small house outside Paris. There he could give total dedication to his art evading publicity. In the year 1969, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature for his play *Waiting for Godot*. He declined accepting it personally to avoid making a speech at the ceremonies. However, he should not be considered a recluse. He often met with other artists,

scholars and admirers to talk about his works. In the late 1980s, Beckett was in failing health due to age burden and had moved to a small nursing home. Suzanne, his wife, had died in July 1989. Beckett confined his life to a small room where he would receive visitors and writers. He died on December 22, 1989, in a hospital of respiratory problems just months after his wife. His death was a star fall in the realm of modern drama.

Samuel Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot* belongs to the genre of the Theatre of the Absurd. It is unconventional in not depicting any dramatic conflicts or anything else. In the play, practically nothing happens, no development is to be found, there is no beginning and no end. ... The wait of the characters Vladimir and Estragon continues but in despair. Habit, boredom, monotony, ignorance and impotence which enveloped the world after the wars, created an absurd existence. *Waiting for Godot* recreated these. Beckett captured these situations and depicted them through the deadening condition of the two tramps in a null and void state without any real action. The play has often been interpreted as a parable where Godot stands as God, or for a mythical human being or for the meaning of life, death or something eventful.

Samuel Beckett's play *Endgame* belongs to the theatre of the Absurd as it views life as meaningless and beyond human rationality to understand. It shows the influence of existentialist philosophy. With its emphasis on the idea of circularity and non-meaning *Endgame* highlights the theme of absurdism. The play is both comic and tragic at the same time. One of the characters describes the experience of unhappiness as funny. It is absurd when one says that nothing is as funny as unhappiness. The minimal use of language, minimalist use of setting, self-consciousness of characters and the fact that nothing happens in the play support the labeling of the play as absurdist one. At the very beginning of the play we notice the word finished which deeply pin in the mind of the readers. The word shows the character's preoccupation with death. Since there is no meaning in life they are obsessed with death. The characters too are doing nothing and obsessed with death. The setting shows imprisonment of people who can have no control over their own lives. They cannot move freely. Their lives are manipulated by some external force. There are no values and beliefs by which they can live. The conversation is full of comic overtones. The play ends where it began. There is no development in the plot. Nothing can help to bring out the existential angst of the characters so silence is better than speech. When there is any speech, it too is senseless and repetitive. The play shows the pain of life without expressing it. Hamm takes a painkiller to mitigate the pain of life. He and Clov know what they are doing and the audience also knows it. Though the play goes against the conventional idea of drama, it is intellectually appealing as it deals with the meaninglessness of life which makes the play absurd.

The phrase 'Absurd Drama' or 'The Theatre of the Absurd' came into light after Martin Esslin's book 'The Theatre of Absurd' which was published in 1961. Martin Esslin points out that there is no such thing as a regular movement of Absurd dramatists. The term 'Absurd Drama' or 'The Theatre of Absurd' is useful as "A device to make certain fundamental traits which seem to be present in the works of a number of dramatists accessible to discussion by tracing the features they have in common." By 'Absurd', Camus meant a life lived solely for its sake in a universe which no longer made sense because there was no God to resolve the contradictions. In other words, what Camus called 'absurd', Kierkegaard called 'Despair'. Based on this philosophy, Beckett created his famous play 'Waiting for Godot'. Before the genre of Absurd Drama gained popularity in the hands of Beckett, Adamov, Ionesco and Gennet, plays were characterized by clearly constructed story and subtlety of characterization and motivation. However, the absurd plays were characterized by non specific unrecognizable characters who are presented almost like mechanical puppets or inactive men. These dramas speak to a deeper level of the audience's mind and make them think. It challenges the audience to make sense of non-sense, to face the situation consciously and perceive with laughter the fundamental absurdity.

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## Research Methodology & Data Collection

My present study has followed a standard research methodology that is characteristic of the disciplines of humanities and literature, following as it does the methodology of interpretative analysis of texts. The theoretical framework used in the present study is largely based in measures on key theoretical underpinnings of related fields of studies like Modern English Drama, Irish Literary movement, Irish Plays and Absurd Drama . The analysis of the selected works has been done through the theoretical understanding of the necessary critical concepts developed in modern and postmodern fields of study.

This research work is mainly based on secondary sources of information, such as published documents, books, literary reviews, autobiography, journals, critiques etc. Primary data have been collected from Samuel Beckett's plays *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*. In these two plays, *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, reveal his tendency to employ some existentialist concepts such as despair, anxiety and thrownness on the way to authenticity.

### Waiting for Godot:

Samuel Beckett's first publication, *Molloy*, enjoyed modest sales, but more importantly praise from French critics. Soon, *Waiting for Godot*, achieved quick success at the small Theatre de Babylone putting Beckett in the international spotlight. The play ran for 400 performances and enjoyed critical praise. Beckett wrote in both French and English, but his most well-known works, written between World War-II and the 1960s, were written in French. Early on he realized his writing had to be subjective and come from his own thoughts and experiences. His works are filled with allusions to other writers such as Dante, Rene Descartes, and Joyce. Beckett's plays are not written along traditional lines with conventional plot and time and place references. Instead, he focuses on essential elements of the human condition in dark humorous ways. This style of writing has been called "Theater of the Absurd". *Waiting for Godot belongs to this new genre of theatre*. The play focuses on human despair and the will to survive in a hopeless world that offers no help in understanding.

Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* was written in the absurd tradition. The play is without any plot, character, dialogue and setting in the traditional sense. The setting of the play creates the absurdist mood. A desolate country road, a ditch, and a leafless tree make up the barren, otherworldly landscape whose only occupants are two homeless men who bumble and shuffle in a vaudevillian manner. They are in rags, bowler hats, and apparently oversized boots- a very comic introduction to a very bizarre play. There is a surplus of symbolism and thematic suggestion in this setting. The landscape is a symbol of a barren and fruitless civilization or life. There is nothing to be done and there appears to be no place better to depart. The tree, usually a symbol of life with its blossoms and fruit or its suggestion of spring, is apparently dead and lifeless. But it is also the place to which they believe this Godot has asked them to come. This could mean Godot wants the men to feel the infertility of their life. At the same time, it could simply mean they have found the wrong tree. The setting of the play reminds us the post-war condition of the world which brought about uncertainties, despair, and new challenges to the all of mankind. A pessimistic outlook laced with sadism and tangible violence, as a rich dividend of the aftermath of wars. It is as if the poignancy and calamities of the wars found sharp reflections in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*.

*Waiting for Godot* is divided into two acts. In Act - I, two tramps, Vladimir and Estragon; or "Didi" and "Gogo", are waiting on a country road for a mysterious Godot, who eventually sends a boy to inform them he is not coming but will surely come the following day. The tramps think about separation and even suicide in each act, yet remain dependent on each other and never do anything. In Act - II; arrival of the other two characters, Pozzo and Lucky. Pozzo and Lucky are physically linked to each other by a rope, make continuous purposeless journeys to fill their existence. In the Act-II, the action of the first act is essentially repeated, with a few changes: the tree now has leaves; Pozzo is blind

and has Lucky on a shorter leash. Once again the boy comes and tells them Mr. Godot will not come on that day and he also insists he has never met the tramps before.

*Estragon: I'm tired! Let's go.* (Act - I)

*Vladimir: We can't*

*Estragon: why not*

*Vladimir: We are waiting for Godot.*

Thus they surrender themselves to the 'absurd waiting' for Godot. Often they grow tedious of the wait and decide to go but they fail as they say:

The play concludes with a famous exchange:

*Vladimir: Well, shall we go?* (Act - II)

*Estragon: Yes, let's go.*

They do not move.

None of the characters in *Waiting for Godot* has a meaningful purpose. Waiting for Godot might seem to give Vladimir and Estragon a purpose, but the fact that Godot never arrives renders their waiting meaningless. Likewise, Pozzo and Lucky might seem to be traveling toward something, but their travels are ultimately shown to be equally purposeless. Pozzo initially professes to be taking Lucky to the fair to sell him, but this purpose is never fulfilled. The second time they pass by, they express no purpose at all – they are simply moving from one place to another. Their traveling may even be counterproductive because they cannot seem to go any distance without falling down. All the characters seem to be trapped in their purposeless roles by little more than habit, which Vladimir calls "a great deadener." The idea that life has no purpose is a recurring theme in the Theater of the Absurd, which *Waiting for Godot* helped define.

*Waiting for Godot* is often described as a play of the absurd in which nothing happens twice. The 'action' of the second act mirrors and reprises what happens in the first act: Vladimir and Estragon passing the time waiting for the elusive Godot, Lucky and Pozzo turning up and then leaving, and the Boy arriving with his message that Godot will not be coming that day. With this structure in mind, it is hardly surprising that the play is often interpreted as a depiction of the pointless, uneventful, and repetitive nature of modern life, which is often lived in anticipation of something which never materialises. It is always just beyond the horizon, in the future, arriving 'tomorrow'. Therefore *Waiting for Godot* is about an absurd wait. The play ends with the two tramps still waiting for Godot, who never comes. The two tramps resume their vigil by the tree, which between the first and second day has sprouted a few leaves, the only symbol of a possible order in a thoroughly alienated world. So many times in the play, a possibility is suggested and then immediately undercut by its unhappy opposite.

Samuel Beckett himself has repudiated all theories of a symbolic nature. But this does not necessarily mean that it is useless to search for such clues. The fundamental imagery of the *Waiting for Godot* is Christian. Even the tree recalls the Tree of Knowledge and the Cross. The life of the tramps at many points in the text seems synonymous with the fallen state of man. Their strange relationship is a kind of marriage. The play is a series of actions that are aborted and that give a despairing uniformity to its duration.

When Beckett was asked who Godot was, he replied, "If I knew, I would have said so in the play." Such a reply forced the critics to offer varied interpretations of the identity of Godot. Some critics have given the similarity between 'God' and 'Godot'. The very word 'Godot' is suggestive of a weakened or diminutive form of the word 'God'. They analyse the play as being fundamentally about

religion: God(ot) is supposed to be turning up but his arrival is always delayed with the promise that he will come 'tomorrow'.

The play is a superb construction of the dominant action of time and its experience by man. Throughout the play, nothing really happens, and the change is in itself an illusion. Structurally the play is of two acts and the second act is the replica of the first. The play is the dramatization of the themes of habit, boredom and monotony. Out of boredom and monotony Of waiting in Act - 1, Estragon says: "Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful."

### Endgame

Samuel Beckett's *Endgame* was written in French by Beckett in 1957 and translated in English in 1958. It is a one-act play with four characters only. These characters are father (Nagg), mother (Nell), son (Hamm) and servant (Clov). The original title of the play is *Fin de partie* (French); Beckett himself translated it into English later. The play was first performed at the Royal Court Theatre in London, opening on 3rd April 1957 in a French-language. The play is the follow-up to *Waiting for Godot*. The play is commonly considered to be among Beckett's best works. According to Harold Bloom (literary critic) *Endgame* is the greatest prose drama of the 20th century. He remarks "I know of no other work of its reverberatory power", but that he couldn't handle reading it in old age for its harrowing, barebones existentialism. Samuel Beckett considered the play as his masterpiece. The play is about a blind, paralyzed man and his servant who await an unspecified "end" which seems to be the end of their relationship, death, and the end of the actual play itself. Much of the play consists of the characters bantering; the sole significant plot point is a story-within-a-story the character Hamm is telling. Possible themes in the play *Endgame* include decay, insatiety and dissatisfaction, pain, monotony, absurdity, humor, horror, meaninglessness, nothingness, existentialism, nonsense, solipsism and people's inability to relate to or find completion in one another, narrative or story-telling, family relations, nature, destruction, abandonment, and sorrow.

*Endgame* is a powerful expression of existential angst and despair. The play depicts Beckett's philosophical worldview, namely the extreme futility of human life and the inescapable dissatisfaction and decay intrinsic to it. The existential feelings buried in the work *Endgame*, achieve their most vocal moments in lines such as "It will be the end and there I'll be, wondering what can have brought it on and wondering what can have... why it was so long coming," and "Infinite emptiness will be all around you, all the resurrected dead of all the ages wouldn't fill it, and there you'll be like a little bit of grit in the middle of the steppe," in both of which Hamm seems to contemplate the sense of dread awakened by the obliterating force of death. A negative feeling arises from the experience of human freedom and responsibility.

*Endgame* is also a quintessential work of what Beckett called "tragicomedy", as the theme is partly tragic and partly comic. The idea, as Nell herself in the play puts it, is "Nothing is funnier than unhappiness." Another way to think about this is that things which are absurd can be encountered both as funny in some contexts and horrifyingly incomprehensible in others. Beckett's work combines these two responses in his vast artistic vision of depicting not a segment of lived experience but the very philosophical nature of life itself, in the grandest view, as the central subject material of the play. To Beckett due to his existential worldview life itself is absurd, and this incurs reactions of both black mirth and profound despair. To Beckett, these emotions are deeply related, and this is evident in the many witty yet dark rejoinders in the play, such as Hamm's comment in his story:

Hamm: You're on Earth, there's no cure for that!", which both implies in a melodramatic fashion that being born is a curse, but sounds perhaps like a biting, bar-talk joke, such as telling someone "You're Irish, there's no cure for that!"

NELL (without lowering her voice): Nothing is funnier than unhappiness, I grant you that. But—

NAGG (shocked): Oh!

NELL: Yes, yes, it's the most comical thing in the world. And we laugh, we laugh, with a will, in the beginning. But it's always the same thing. Yes, it's like the funny story we have heard too often, we still find it funny, but we don't laugh any more.

. In the world of *Endgame*, there are very few players; the four characters we meet might very well be the last humans on the planet. We meet them in their endgame and watch as it slowly plays out. While Clov refers to their situation as “nearly finished,” i.e. death, Hamm often refers to their existence as a game. He wakes up at the top of the show and states “me to play.”

*Endgame* is a meticulously constructed and tightly-coiled play which achieves its powerful, diffuse effect through a range of technical devices. Samuel Beckett makes heavy use of repetition, in which certain recurrent short phrases or sentence patterns are spread out throughout the play and in various characters' dialogue. Many of the ideas are conceptually, logically novel, almost reminiscent of Lewis Carroll, such as the play beginning with the ingeniously, witty subversion of a rhetorical question “Can there be misery loftier than mine?” with the literal answer, “No doubt,” the sense of cleverness of design in the way the first thing Hamm requests after when Clov has woken him up is to be gotten ready to go back to bed, and in the odd yet entrancing way in which Hamm describes the scene of his story with recourse to a wide variety of instruments such as a heliometer. Beyond this high degree of conceptual playfulness, the play is suffused, in characteristic Beckett fashion, with everyday expressions which are subverted and take on either mind-bending, absurd meanings and/or an existential resonance, as if lurking beneath the surface of our most common daily doings and parlance lies the unmistakable absurdity, or illogicality, of life and the world. One small example of many would be when Hamm asks “What time is it?” and Clov replies “The same as usual.”

Most key to the overall functioning of the play seems to be core aesthetic ideas, new explorations of form that were at work throughout Beckett's oeuvre and very central to the foregoing *Waiting for Godot*, a play in which almost nothing happens, plot-wise, and furthermore, as many elements or levels of narrative craft seem to take a null value – there is seemingly no character development in the course of the play, and the location is vague and very poorly defined. Although Beckett had a reputation for keeping mum about the ideas behind his work, he specifically had published a conversation he had with a painter detailing precisely this aspect of his aesthetic vision which he wanted people to know – that his work was a realization of there being “nothing to express, no way to express it”.

Overall, the value, or effect, or the play is a unique, hypnotic aesthetic experience which gives a kind of slow-burning existential catharsis. Being unconventional in form and material, it does not have a traditional Aristotelian catharsis, importantly because it does not seek redemption for its characters. Beckett, who understood and wrote about his understanding of tragedy as the pure depiction or expression of a sorry fate, created the ultimate negative art form. Thus, while many people suffer quietly from existential fear or horror, only in Beckett is this feeling provocatively confronted, rather than ameliorated or suppressed. To gaze so clearly into the depiction of something so tragic yet so true has the true effect of art, which is expression. The mere act of a singer lamenting a sad story is an aesthetic act in itself; a listener takes value in the sentimentality of the experience. The same is true for Beckett; merely to encounter the direct, pure expression of existential feeling is experienced as inherently rewarding.

Hamm's story is broken up and told in segments throughout the play. It serves essentially as part of the climax of *Endgame*, albeit somewhat inconclusively. Hamm's story is gripping for how the narrative tone it is told in contrasts with the way the play the characters are in seems to be written or

proceed. Whereas *Endgame* is somehow lurching, starting and stopping, rambling, unbearably impatient and sometimes incoherent, Hamm's story in some ways has a much clearer, liquid, fluid, descriptive narrative lens to it. In fact, in the way it uses run-of-the-mill literary techniques like describing the setting, facial expressions or an exchange of dialogue, in slightly bizarre ways, it almost seems like a parody of writing itself. Beckett's eerie, weird stories about people at their last gasp often doing or seeking something futile somehow seems to return again and again as central to his art. It could be taken to represent the inanity of existence, but it also seems to hint at mocking not only life but storytelling itself, inverting and negating the literary craft with stories that are idiotically written, anything from poorly to put-on and overwrought. Extremely characteristic Beckettian features in the work, represented by many lines throughout the work, are bicycles, a seemingly imaginary son, pity, darkness, a shelter, and a story being told.

*Endgame*, as a typical example of Beckett's absurdist drama, depicts the feelings of meaninglessness and nothingness in the surrounding world and by using the elements such as silence, pause, repetitions, unconventional dialogues, no recognizable decor and no plot, this alienating effect is strengthened. In *Endgame*, we can see that the feeling of meaninglessness and chaos the world is in, is made concrete by the story about a tailor. The concept of an imperfect world sacrificed to a nonexistent creator is figured in the play, in which an Englishman orders a pair of trousers to his tailor. However, when the tailor continuously puts him off, the man gets angry and says that: "In six days, do you hear me, six days, God made the world. Yes Sir, no less Sir, the WORLD! And you are not bloody well capable of making me a pair of trousers in three months!" The answer that the tailor gives is striking: "But my dear Sir, my dear Sir, look [...] at the world [...] and look [...] at my TROUSERS!" In *Endgame*, Beckett focuses on "the sense of deadness".

*Endgame* doesn't deal with contemporary issues and problems, instead it makes reference to global or universal problems and questions. The play, having no nationality, deals with general problems and question the place and function of man in the world: i.e. the world seems meaningless and everything is supposed to go to nothingness.

## Conclusion

Absurd Drama or the Theatre of the Absurd is the kind of drama that presents the absurdity of human condition and that combines characteristics such as silences, repetitions, unconventional dialogue, no recognizable decor, no story, no progression and no resolution. Beckett expresses that "every word is like an unnecessary stain on silence and nothingness" (Beckett). This statement in fact reveals perhaps the most important characteristic of the Theatre of the Absurd. The dramatist's retraction stands for a theatrical act in itself: by adopting a "no man's land" of reference points, he obtains the opposite effect of a multiplicity of interpretations – the textual capacity to generate permanently renewed meanings, and a maximum of pliability on the reader's/spectator's expectations. Universal, timeless, eternally human, Beckett's theatrical world seems to need a return to the topicality of the warfare representations of the 1950s simply for the sake of defining a new critical canon in the twenty-first century.

*Waiting for Godot* is part of the Theater of the Absurd. It is generally considered the starting point of Absurdist drama. In *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett addresses an essential question of existence in two acts that mirror each other: Why do humans exist? Vladimir and Estragon, because they are logical beings, assume there is a point to their lives. With no confirmation, they have made an appointment with Godot, who may or may not be real. The audience is presented with two sets of characters: one pair – Vladimir and Estragon – waits passively, and another pair – Pozzo and Lucky – fills the time with purposeless journeying. Beckett claimed his works begin where the implied happy endings of other literary works leave off. He strips away the false rewards of power, wealth, or marriage to present concentrated sparseness as a means of exploring existential questions. The absurdity and humor in his



works are meant to liberate his viewers from the angst of these questions. He intends to free his viewers from the experience of trying to make sense of the senseless.

*Endgame* was written by Beckett in 1957 and translated in English in 1958. There are several differences between the French original and the English translation, notably the title and the scene where Clov spots the young boy. The play falls into the category of Theater of the Absurd. It has been critiqued as a play where nothing happens once, as opposed to *Waiting for Godot*, a play where nothing happens twice. However, *Endgame* should be viewed instead as a much better version of *Waiting for Godot*. Many of the same themes exist in *Endgame*, but they are much denser and they do not require the two act repetition to get their point across. The one major difference between the two plays is that in *Endgame* the sense of despair is heightened by the fact that the characters are not waiting for anything (other than death, which is pronounced in both plays). When Beckett sent the manuscript of *Endgame* to Alan Schneider, he wrote in a letter that *Endgame* is "Rather difficult and elliptic, mostly depending on the power of the text to claw." The play is known to have been Beckett's favorite play and its condensed format likely contributed to his favoring it over *Waiting for Godot*.

Many critics consider Beckett's *Endgame* is a continuation of *Waiting for Godot*. In the plays *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, the characters show typical features of those of the postmodernist drama, they are somehow social outcasts and are representative for all mankind. They can be classified into pairs of related couples, whose relationships are based on "mutual antagonism and mutual dependence." Each of his characters is a deteriorated and damaged figure whose image suggests a present immobility in contrast to a past vitality. Instead of witnessing the image of a person actively engaged in life, we watch the remnant of an individual whose consciousness reviews a narrative that may relate to past, seeing himself and the objects that surround him as the residue of an earlier time (Lyons, 58). While Beckett's characters fail to be authentic men, the playwright manages to show what sort of a thing to exist is, and the fact that man is obliged to attain authenticity in order to avoid nothingness, and thus, he has to invent himself. Beckett makes use of Sartrean negation in his characters in order to uphold positivity among the audiences and the readers. It is known that positive can only come from negative. Beckett, a master of form, strove throughout his life to produce plays as much as possible to address essential questions of human existence.

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