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**Endless Waiting: An Analysis of the Element of Time in  
Samuel Beckett's Play "Waiting for Godot"**

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of the requirements for Master's degree in Literature and Civilization

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## **Dedications**

They say give your people their flowers while they can still smell them,

To my Father, the more I grow up the more I realize how great you are,

To my Mother, thank you for everything you have done for us

To my Brother, No matter where life takes us, you will always be my brother

To my Sister, I admire you more than words can express

Blessed for having such an amazing family, you are all appreciated.

**Bernaoui Mohammed El Amine**

## **Dedications**

To my parents, who raised me with equal parts warmth and determination—your sacrifices are stitched into every success I’ve ever had. You believed in me even when I didn’t, and I hope this small piece of writing reflects just a fraction of your love. To my two brothers and my sister—my forever crew. Whether it was loud debates at the dinner table, ridiculous inside jokes, or quiet support when things got tough, you reminded me who I am, and why I started this path in the first place. This memoir isn’t just mine. It’s all of ours.

**Benchohra Mohammed Rafik**

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## **Abstract**

“Waiting for Godot”, the most well-known and successful play of the “Theatre of the Absurd”, is widely acknowledged as a landmark in the latter. However, its significance extends far beyond that. Written and first performed in the early 1950s, Waiting for Godot predates the formal emergence of postmodernism, yet it remarkably anticipates many of its defining characteristics. Time is one of the crucial themes in Waiting for Godot. Through varied manifestations of repetition, the play explores the problem of time in the larger frame of Postmodernism, the timeless wait for meaning and Godot which never comes is the most exciting part of the play and one of research findings. Beckett’s presentation of the characters’ daily routine and their attempt to seek clarity reveals that time and absurdity go hand in hand in reflecting the vulnerability of human existence in the crucible of an unforgiving temporal existence.

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## General Introduction

What if existence offered no answers, only silence? Imagine a life defined not by progress or purpose, but by repetition, delay, and the gnawing uncertainty of what, if anything, lies ahead. Each day arrives as a copy of the last, not with new beginnings, but with the same unanswered questions and the same hollow routines. Time stretches endlessly, not forward but in circles, mocking all hopes of change or resolution. In such a world, waiting is not an act of patience, but a condition of being, and the absence of meaning is not a tragedy, but a fundamental truth. Faced with this bleak terrain, human beings respond in different ways: some confront the void with resilience, while others retreat into denial, creating rituals and routines to shield themselves from the overwhelming weight of their pain. In more severe cases, this need to escape can spiral into hopelessness and even suicidal ideation. This existential paralysis lies at the heart of *Waiting for Godot*, where two characters fill their days with absurd conversations and repetitive gestures, clinging to the hope that someone (Godot) will arrive and offer them purpose. Yet as time drags on and Godot never appears, it becomes painfully clear that their waiting is not a path to salvation, but a reflection of the human condition itself: stranded in an indifferent universe, longing for meaning that may never come.

Samuel Becket's play "*Waiting for Godot*" (1953) is one of our time's most catchy and magical allegories. Premiered in 1953 and set in what seems to be a post-apocalyptic world, the play's protagonists are engaged in a pointless, never ending task, waiting for someone or something called Godot. However, this Godot never shows up. The play does not depict any dramatic conflicts, no character development is to be found, and there is no beginning and no end, the entire action can be described in one word: "Absurd", wherefore it was classified within "Theatre of The Absurd".

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the postmodern traits in “Waiting for Godot” which came to be in a time of great change, a time connected to the beginning of postmodern narratives, a detailed examination of the play reveals the plethora of several postmodern traits that surrounds the play. Furthermore, this research will examine one of the postmodern literature and the play’s important element, which is time, and how Beckett’s complex treatment of it highlights “Absurdism,” one of the famous philosophical movements of the 20th century. Therefore, this study aims at addressing the following research questions:

1. How did “Waiting for Godot” contribute to setting the framework of postmodern literature?
2. How does Beckett use time to represent the absurd human condition?

To achieve this objective this thesis is organized into two chapters. The first one will function as a literature review, by putting the play in its historical context and exploring existing critical interpretations and scholarly discussions, it will be revealed how Beckett captures the essence of postmodern characteristics before the formal movement of postmodernism begun to take shape, moving to the second chapter will investigate how Beckett's manipulation of time serves as a theatrical technique and a fascinating philosophical commentary on the vulnerability, resilience, and sheer defiance of the human spirit in an indifferent universe.

In conclusion, the aim of this study is to showcase how “Waiting for Godot” is not just a mere entertaining play, but an artwork that presents a sight of humanity paused between despair and perseverance, between annihilation and absurd hope. It captures the important paradox of existence: that in the face of meaninglessness and inevitable death, it is the very act of not stopping, of waiting, and of striving that imbues life with its most fragile yet most enduring significance.

# **Chapter One**

## **Literature Review**

# **Chapter One: Literature Review**

## **1.1.Introduction:**

Literature has always been authors' haven to express their deepest thoughts and to expose their surroundings. Indeed, the dire condition that man has reached during the twentieth century made literature the perfect place for humanity to express their bleak emotions and to explore the monotonous life man was experiencing. The core purpose of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive overview of the research related to the topic of "Endless waiting: an Analysis of The Element of Time in Samuel Beckett's play "Waiting for Godot".

This chapter will focus on "Absurdism" the philosophical movement that portrayed the conflict between the needs of humans and the world's irrationality and "Theatre of the Absurd", the artistic phenomenon that emerged after World War 2 , after that it will discuss the concept of time in the theatre and its evolution over the years, then it will shed light on "Postmodernism" another cultural, intellectual, and artistic movement and particularly in literature. The focus will shift then to Samuel Beckett, the Irish author and the great innovator who changed the way we approach the art of the stage, and then it will explore his most well-known play, "Waiting for Godot", which has captured the attention of spectators and critics alike. and its impact in shaping the framework of postmodern literature.

## **1.2.Absurdism:**

Absurdism is a philosophical outlook that emerged as a response to the disillusionment and the paralyzed psychological state of people caused by the horror of the World War I and II, this feeling of depression and futility dramatically contributed to a sense of alienation and confusion about human existence. This philosophy was born out of the European existentialist movement when the French philosopher Albert Camus (1913-1960) rejected certain aspects of the existentialist line of thought and went ahead to publish his chief work "Myth of

Sisyphus”( 1942), in which he uses the Greek myth of Sisyphus; the condemned man whose eternal task was to roll a boulder up a hill only only to watch it fall again once he got it to the top, as an allegory for man's incessant struggle against the essential absurdity of life.

According to Camus (1942), the absurd originates from the conflict between the human's desire to seek inherent value and meaning for his life in a universe that offers none. He holds that reality in its entirety poses a peculiar problem for man, whose rationality is insufficient to search, look, struggle, and look critically at life in general. In the Myth of Sisyphus, Camus (1942) considers absurdity as a confrontation, an opposition, a conflict, or a “divorce” between two ideals. Defining the human condition as absurd, as the conflict between man's desire for significance, meaning, and clarity on the one hand, concluding that recognition is the only defensible option. For Camus, encountering an experience of the absurd or fully realizing it leaves the individual with three choices: suicide, resort to religion, or revolt ( embracing the absurd).

Nevertheless, does acknowledging the meaninglessness and absurdity of life necessitate suicide? Although much of human life often revolves around the hope of tomorrow, tomorrow comes and brings us closer to our death; the final enemy of human existence. Camus objected here that suicide would merely be a way to surrender to absurdity, even to yield to a leap of faith into the metaphysical realm is irrational and self-deceptive. His solution therefore is a total revolt against the absurd even if the final victory remains out of reach.

### **1.3.Theatre of the Absurd:**

Branched out in Ancient Greece and Drama (or so-called “tragedy” in those ages), the conventional drama centred upon six fundamental parts according to Aristotle (335 B.C); a plot, characters, diction, thought, spectacle, and melody, he defines tragedy as an imitation of action and life itself, in this regard, action and plot are far more important than the others to

him. However, nothing remains the same, as the world changes constantly, this depiction of drama is truly reshaped, specifically by the modern wave of playwrights and the appearance of the so-called “Theatre of the Absurd”.

“Theatre of The Absurd” is a post-war development in literature and one of the most creative movements in the modern theater. The name was coined by the Hungarian scholar Martin Esslin in his 1961 book of the same name, and he related it to Albert Camus's concept of the absurd. The term "absurd" may simply mean "ridiculous," However, Martin Esslin (1961) was referring to it in its original meaning: “out of harmony with reason or propriety incongruous; unreasonable; illogical” (Esslin, 2004, p. 20). This movement is composed of many diverse plays that were primarily written between 1940 and 1960. These plays shocked the audiences when they were firstly performed, as they were startlingly different than anything previously seen on stage. In fact, many of them were labelled as “anti-plays” as a way to clarify and define this radical movement. Esslin (1961) defined this movement as such, because, each play portrays man’s existence as illogical, moreover, meaningless, an idea that surfaced as a reaction to what Susan C. W. Abbotson (2003) called: “ the collapse of moral, religious, political, and social structures” (Abbotson, 2003, p. 1) which followed the Twentieth Century World Wars,

A close reading to Theatre of the Absurd will reveal that these plays heralds postmodern literature, a movement which came mainly as a reaction against Enlightenment ideas implicit in modernist literature and did not became prominent until 1960s. The absurdist deconstruct traditional conventions and play of language and offer works with plot that has no sequential logic, nor a beginning or an end, unordered and unconnected events, inconsistent characters and established new features that would be associated with postmodern, and one of a prominent writers who perfectly portrays the characteristics of the movement, and considered to be at the forefront of the absurdist movement and one of the pioneers of the Theatre of the

Absurd and whose works notably "Waiting for Godot" often seen as a precursor to postmodern literature is "Samuel Beckett".

#### **1.4. The Concept of Time in The Theatre:**

Time is a critical element of theatrical production, it governs its construction, rhythm, and philosophy. It works on several levels: the real-time of the performance, the fictional time of the stor. Playwrights manipulate time to shape audiences' perceptions, build suspense, create feelings, or explore philosophical concepts. The portrayal and manipulation of time have evolved alongside artistic, cultural, and philosophical perspectives, from classical tragedies through to contemporary dramas.

In theatre, time goes beyond simple chronology and functions as a dramatic instrument. Researchers have recognized multiple aspects of time in drama, such as linear time (the sequence of events), cyclical time (the idea of recurrence), and fragmented or nonlinear time (interrupted chronology). Aristotle's Poetics emphasized concept of the "unities", particularly the "unity of time", suggesting that classical plays should be within a day, a guideline frequently followed in ancient Greek and classical Western theatre.

During the Renaissance, the Aristotelian principles of unified time that have guided so much of Western theatre were embraced. French and Italian dramatists adhered rigorously to the unity of time, believing that compressed time on stage preserves "verisimilitude" (the appearance of truth) and heightens emotional engagement with the action by limiting the temporal distance between events. Yet, the English stage represented in its most well-known figure, Shakespeare, deviated from this basic and loosely followed the structures of linear time.

Influenced by the Enlightenment worldview of reason, order, and clarity, the Neoclassical theatre of the 17th and 18th century revived the classical ideals of Aristotle and adopted the unity of time as a central tenet of dramaturgy. Critics like Jean Chapelain and playwrights such as Pierre Corneille and Jean Racine saw time not merely as a practical concern in dramatic construction but as a reflection of aesthetic and moral discipline. Yet, critics and playwrights of the Romantic era would react against this limited dramatic experimentation, who saw that the time in drama should mirror the inner life of characters rather than conform to artificial rules.

The 19th century realism and naturalism in the shifted the perception and usage of time in theatrical performance. Theorists like Émile Zola advocated for theatre that depicts real life accurately, i.e., a more continuous, chronological depiction of time. Their focus was on rebuilding the temporal flow of reality, with real-time events unfolding in plausible sequences. In this sense, Time became a means for authenticity, used to construct lifelike social environments and psychological depth.

The Modernist and Postmodernist movements radically disrupted this linearity, perceiving time as fragmented, symbolic, and nonlinear. Modernist playwrights play around with the concept of time to explore the subjective time; the characters' internal experience of the past, present, and future and how they remember, anticipate, or feel it passing. Though fragmented, time in modernism still have some sort of coherence, it remains a path to find the deeper truth beneath the chaos. By contrast, postmodernist theatre, the theatre of existential angst, especially in the wake of two world wars and the ascendancy of absurdism, the audience senses a dislocation in time that can only be comic or tragic, no effort are made to unify or make sense of time, because postmodernism rejects the idea of a single truth or coherent narrative, time therefore is no longer a window into truth but a tool for questioning reality itself.

## **1.5. Postmodernism:**

Postmodernism is a broad cultural, intellectual, and artistic movement that emerged in the mid-20th century as a reaction against the ideas and values of modernism. The term “Postmodernism” was used for a wide range of phenomena and consequently a wide range of styles, therefore trying to give it a clear definition was always a subject of heated debates, as Hans Bertens (1995) explains postmodernism has meant different things to different people over time, it started out in the 1950s as a fairly modest idea in literary criticism, but by the 1980s, it had grown into a broad concept used to describe global cultural and intellectual trends, but what is sure is that postmodernism succeeds modernism, as Lyotard (1984)) points out that while the exact timelines can vary, a common view is that modernity stretches from the Enlightenment up to the mid-1900s, and postmodernity begins sometime after that.

In literature, the term “Postmodern” is used to describe works of literature that were produced after World War 2, and one of the works that is widely recognized a seminal work of 20th-century literature, particularly in the realm of postmodernism Samuel Beckett's play “Waiting for Godot”. Although linked to the Theatre of the Absurd, the play's themes, structure, and unique storytelling techniques have undeniably impacted postmodern literature. Beckett’s work challenges conventional narrative forms, interrogates the essence of existence, and incorporates aspects of uncertainty, intertextuality, and metafiction, which later emerged as defining features of postmodern literary creations.

### **1.5.1. Uncertainty:**

In the aftermath of global upheavals like the World Wars and the collapse of grand ideologies, postmodernism emerged as a cultural and intellectual movement that questioned the foundations of certainty, progress, and truth. Unlike Enlightenment and Modernist thought, which upheld reason and universal meaning, postmodernism embraced ambiguity,

fragmentation, and multiplicity. Central to this shift is the notion of uncertainty; a refusal to accept fixed meanings or linear narratives. Postmodernism challenges belief in objective knowledge, viewing reality as constructed by culture, power, and subjective experience. It reflects skepticism toward metanarratives, those overarching explanations of history or human nature as Jean-François Lyotard (1984) famously described postmodernism as "incredulity toward metanarratives," pointing to the loss of confidence in ideas that once provided certainty, such as religion, science, or nationalism.

This philosophical shift means that truth is no longer a fixed point but something contingent and situational. Identity becomes fluid, history becomes unstable, and time is often experienced as nonlinear or fragmented. In such a framework, uncertainty is not just a theme but a condition of existence, one that is deeply disorienting yet also liberating. It opens up space for multiple interpretations, voices, and experiences, but at the cost of clarity and coherence.

Postmodern literature reflects and amplifies these ideas through form, structure, and content. Unlike traditional literary works that offer clear plots, resolved conflicts, and stable character development, postmodern texts often deny readers the satisfaction of closure. They employ techniques like metafiction, pastiche, temporal disruption, and unreliable narration to mirror the ambiguity and multiplicity of contemporary experience.

Characters in postmodern literature frequently struggle with identity, purpose, or understanding of their world. Narratives may begin without context, meander without direction, or end without resolution. Language, once seen as a tool for conveying truth, is exposed as inherently unstable, a system of signs without fixed meanings. This literary uncertainty becomes a reflection of the postmodern condition itself: fractured, ambiguous, and resistant to final interpretation.

### **1.5.2. Intertextuality:**

Intertextuality is another critical feature accompanying this sense of disorientation. In a world where originality is viewed with suspicion and the idea of an autonomous text is dismantled, intertextuality becomes the means through which meaning is both deferred and multiplied and its main purpose was to challenge the notion of originality by arguing that all writing is a kind of rewriting, and meaning arises not from the text alone but from its interaction with other texts. The term "intertextuality" was first introduced by Julia Kristeva in the 1960s, building on the ideas of Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin had proposed the idea of dialogism, where every utterance is part of a dialogue with prior expressions. Kristeva expanded this into the concept that every text is a mosaic of quotations, a blending of voices and cultural references. Thus, reading becomes an act of interpretation shaped by one's familiarity with other texts. A reader who recognizes the references or the structures borrowed from other works will understand a text differently than one who does not.

Postmodern literature is especially rich in intertextuality. In a cultural landscape where originality is questioned and boundaries between genres are blurred, postmodern writers often construct their works by weaving together references to older texts. This layering creates irony, ambiguity, and multiplicity of meaning. The reader's role becomes active, as they must constantly interpret and reinterpret the text in relation to others. Intertextuality in postmodernism is not only a technique but also a philosophical stance, it reflects the belief that meaning is not fixed but endlessly deferred among texts.

However, intertextuality also raises questions. If all texts are made from other texts, can anything truly be considered original? Does intertextuality limit creativity, or does it expand it by encouraging dialogue and reinterpretation? Critics are divided. Some see it as a liberating force, freeing writers from the burden of novelty. Others view it as potentially empty, a game

of references without substance. Yet even in such critiques, intertextuality remains central, because it forces us to think about how meaning is produced and transmitted.

Ultimately, intertextuality reveals that literature is not a closed system but an open, dynamic process. Texts are not isolated objects but nodes in a web of cultural and historical relations. Meaning is generated not solely by what a text says, but by how it connects with what has already been said. Whether through overt allusions or unconscious echoes, intertextuality shapes every act of reading and writing, making it one of the most influential concepts in modern literary thought

### **1.5.3. Metafiction:**

Metafiction arises as another defining trait of postmodern literature. The term "metafiction" was coined by William H. Gass, an American writer and literary critic, in 1970. He introduced it in his essay "Philosophy and the Form of Fiction", where he used the term to describe fiction that self-consciously reflects on its own nature as a constructed narrative. Metafiction is a defining characteristic of postmodern literature, where the boundaries between fiction and reality are deliberately blurred. Unlike traditional narratives that seek to immerse readers in an illusion of reality, metafiction draws attention to its own artificiality. It is self-aware storytelling (a story about storytelling) that exposes the mechanics behind the narrative.

In the postmodern context, metafiction reflects the broader skepticism towards objective truth and stable meaning. Postmodern writers often use metafictional techniques such as breaking the fourth wall, addressing the reader directly, or including authors as characters, to emphasize that what we perceive as reality is often constructed through language and narrative conventions.

This self-referential style challenges readers to question not only the content of a story but also how stories are made and why we believe them. It undermines the idea of a single authoritative perspective, favoring multiplicity, irony, and playfulness. In doing so, metafiction becomes a tool for exploring deeper philosophical issues such as identity, authorship, and the reliability of language itself while aligning with postmodernism's broader distrust of grand narratives and fixed structures.

A foundational influence on these postmodern developments can be found in early absurdist works that predate the term "postmodernism" but anticipate many of its concerns. One such pivotal work; *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett, subtly reverberates through the architecture of postmodern literature, not only for its radical disruption of narrative expectations but also for the way it embodies the instability of meaning, the futility of structured time, and the performative absurdity of human existence. Its circular dialogues, absence of resolution, and deliberate suspension of plot offer a theatrical experience that mirrors the fragmentation and disorientation later embraced by postmodern writers. Beckett's play, with its emphasis on the act of waiting over the arrival of anything, destabilizes the very notion of progression and purpose, setting a precedent for literature that challenges the reader's desire for closure.

Its legacy is evident not in direct imitation but in how it helped lay the groundwork for a literature that no longer seeks answers, but rather interrogates the very form of the question. *Waiting for Godot* becomes not just a play, but a framework of uncertainty, one that legitimizes narrative silence, indeterminate symbols, and self-aware performance. This foundational influence opened a space for subsequent writers to break with tradition, to craft literature that resists definitive interpretation, and to invite the reader into an active dialogue with the text. Through uncertainty, intertextuality, and metafiction, postmodernism builds a

literary space in which meaning is never fixed, stories fold back on themselves, and every text echoes another. In this echo chamber of language, what remains is not clarity, but the persistent hum of questioning, a questioning that Beckett's early theatrical work helped articulate, and which continues to resonate throughout postmodern literature.

### **1.6. Samuel Beckett's Biography:**

Samuel Beckett was a postmodernist Irish novelist, absurdist playwright, and poet, born on April 13, 1906, in Foxrock, Dublin. He was the second son of a middle-class Protestant family and attended Portora Royal School, where he excelled in French and sports, especially cricket. At 17, he entered Trinity College Dublin, studying French, Italian, and German. After earning his MA in 1928, Beckett moved to Paris to teach at L'École Normale Supérieure.

In Paris, he met James Joyce, who greatly influenced his early literary development. Beckett assisted Joyce with *Finnegans Wake* and, inspired by him, wrote his first poem *Whoroscope* (1930), followed by the critical essay *Proust* (1931). He returned briefly to Dublin to lecture at Trinity but soon resigned and moved to Paris, beginning his novel *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*. After limited success, he relocated temporarily to London, where he completed *Murphy*, and eventually settled in Paris in 1937.

There he met Suzanne Deschevaux-Dumesnil, who became his life partner. During the Nazi occupation in 1941, they joined the French Resistance and fled after being betrayed, taking refuge in Roussillon. While in hiding, Beckett worked on *Watt*. After WWII, he returned to Paris, began writing in French, and produced significant works such as *Mercier et Camier* and the trilogy *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, and *The Unnamable*. His first play, *Eleutheria*, was followed by his breakthrough drama *Waiting for Godot* (1948–49), which premiered in Paris in 1953 and brought him international acclaim.

Throughout the 1950s and 60s, Beckett produced numerous major works including *Endgame*, *Krapp's Last Tape*, and *Happy Days*. His prose also became more experimental, with texts like *How It Is* (1961) and *The Lost Ones* (1970). He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1969. Beckett reacted to the attention by writing *Catastrophe* (1986), a short play reflecting his discomfort with fame.

Though less prolific in the 1970s and 80s, Beckett remained active, writing television plays, directing his stage works, and publishing prose such as *Company* (1979), *Ill Seen Ill Said* (1981), *Westward Ho* (1983), and his final prose work, *Stirrings Still* (1988). In his final months, bedridden and widowed, he composed the poem *What is the Word* (1988).

Samuel Beckett died on December 22, 1989, in Paris, a few months after his wife Suzanne, and was buried in Montparnasse Cemetery.

### **1.7. Summary of Beckett's "Waiting for Godot":**

"Waiting for Godot" is a tragicomedy by playwright Samuel Beckett that covers the destructed world and the deteriorating human being state due to the perils of the Second World War, a unique cyclical two-act play classified as the absurd drama, where the first and second act events are almost the same with slight variations. Plotted in an absurd setting of a leafless tree and a barren road, the play starts and ends with the same premise, with two lonely tramps, Estragon (often called Didi) and Vladimir (sometimes known as Gogo) awaiting the arrival of an enigmatic figure called Godot, a character who seemingly will never come. Drowned in the world of waiting, the protagonists spend their journey repeating the same very actions; reuniting with each other, waiting, dialoguing, entertaining themselves with funny gestures, encountering two other characters (Pozzo and Lucky), receiving Godot's disappointing message from a little boy (Godot's messenger), contemplating suicide, deciding to leave but eventually they do not move. Critics concluded that the second act is just a

replica of the first, in other words, Estragon and Vladimir may forever be stuck in the act of waiting. As they watch the play, the audience falls into the same dilemma as the characters, uncertain of Godot's identity, and whether he will turn up or not, as Anthony Jenkins (1990) writes: "There can be no answers; Godot may or may not exist and may or may not arrive; we know no more about him than do Vladimir and Estragon" (Jenkins, 1990, p.40)

### **1.7.1. Act I:**

The play opens with Estragon trying to pull off his shoes while informing Vladimir of the miserable night he had as he was beaten up in the ditch and asking him for help in taking off his shoes. After a long trouble, Estragon succeeds in pulling off his boot, he looks inside it to see if there is anything there while Vladimir does the same with his hat. They then dialogued about the story of the two thieves mentioned in the Gospels, wondering why there different versions of the story and only one is considered more authentic than the others.

Estragon falls asleep, but Vladimir wakes him saying that he feels lonely, Estragon then raises a question, if they should break away, but Vladimir insists that Estragon would not go far without him. Estragon suggests leaving, but Vladimir reminds him that they cannot because they are waiting for Godot, who is supposed to meet them by the tree and they wonder if they are waiting in the correct place, or if it is even the correct day, it will be revealed later that they do not even know why they are waiting for Godot or what they would ask him if he comes. Estragon and Vladimir involve themselves in vaudeville acts to kill time and even think of hanging themselves from the tree but they retreat from this idea, Estragon feels hungry and Vladimir gives a carrot. While chatting, two other characters appear on the stage, Pozzo the cruel master, and his half-crazy slave Lucky who is tied and dragged by Pozzo with a rope around his neck on their way to the market for Lucky to be sold, besides amusing the spectators by dancing and thinking, Lucky do nothing rather than holding Pozzo's bags and stool, obeying his master and enduring physical and verbal abuse. Estragon

and Vladimir try to inspect Lucky whom they find odd, they ask him about his servitude to Pozzo but he never answers, Pozzo eventually tells them that Lucky is afraid of being given away which is why he keeps holding the bags the entire time, Lucky starts to cry and Estragon goes to wipe away the tears but he gets kicked in the shin. Pozzo commands Lucky to dance and then think and asks Estragon and Vladimir to evaluate his performance, Lucky dances but Estragon is unimpressed even though he tries to imitate it, Lucky then starts to think aloud and he delivers a nonsensical monologue in which he always starts ideas but never brings them to completion, in an attempt to stop this gibberish speech, the three men throw themselves on Lucky and yank off his hat which made him stop talking. Pozzo confesses that he is on his way to the market to sell Lucky because he is such a burden, the master-slave couple then depart the scene leaving Estragon Vladimir to their own burden, waiting for Godot.

Eventually, a young boy arrives presenting himself as Mr. Godot's messenger, Estragon is outraged why it took him so long to come and scares him, Vladimir yells at Estragon for that and asks the boy if he remembers him, the boy says this is his first time seeing them and delivered a message from Mr. Godot which states that he is not coming this evening, but he will surely come tomorrow. Vladimir asks the boy if he works for Mr. Godot, and the boy informs him that he minds the goats and that his brother who minds the sheep, is always getting beaten by Mr. Godot, Estragon and Vladimir instruct the boy to tell Mr. Godot that he has seen them and then he goes off the stage. When the boy departs, Estragon proposes to leave, and again Vladimir reminds him that they can't as they must wait for the arrival of Godot and they remain still. (the curtain falls)

### **1.7.2. Act II:**

Another day and apparently another futile waiting for the so-called Godot at the same time and place of Act I. Estragon's boots and Lucky's hat are still on the stage. Vladimir enters and

starts singing. Estragon shows up barefoot and assumes that Vladimir seems happier without him, they both confess that they feel better when separated but still they keep bound to each other. Estragon forgot everything that took place the previous day and Vladimir reminds him about Pozzo and Lucky and about about Pozzo and Lucky and the moment when they were about to hang themselves.

Poetically, Estragon and Vladimir speak of "all the dead voices" they hear, sounds of nature that are hunting them, particularly rustling leaves, Vladimir shouts at Estragon to help him find a way to not hear the voices anymore and proposes to ask each other random questions.

Vladimir notices that the tree that was bare yesterday has sprouted leaves and Estragon comments that it must be spring and claims that they were not here yesterday. However, when Vladimir looks at Estragon's shin, it is still wounded from where Lucky kicked him. Vladimir asks Estragon about his boots, and Estragon replies that he threw them away because they were hurting, Vladimir spots the boots Estragon took off last day and asks him to try them, Estragon claims that they are not his, and Vladimir says that someone must have to change them, but when he tries them they fit.

Vladimir offers Estragon a radish, but he rejected it since he only likes carrots, Estragon feels tired and wants to leave but Vladimir reminds him that they can't as they must wait for Godot, Estragon asks what they will do and Vladimir states there's nothing they can do. Estragon falls asleep after Vladimir sings him a lullaby but he soon wakes up after seeing a nightmare. Vladmire finds Lucky's hat and feels pleased because it confirms that they are in the right place, Vlademir and Estragon start exchanging hats, Vlademir asks Estragon how he looks in Lucky's hat they then decide to play the role of Pozzo and Lucky, but to no avail, Estragon leaves for a moment but he soon comes back saying "they are coming", Vlademir excitedly things that it must be Godot coming to save them, Estragon hides behind the tree, but he realizes that he is not completely hidden and comes out, the two men then start the

lookout, Estragon and Vladimir start to speak once, they get frustrated and the conversation degenerates into insulting phrases, After finishing insulting each other, they embrace and they continue waiting.

Pozzo and Lucky enter, yet unlike the first act Pozzo is now blind and Lucky is mute but still has the rope around his neck, Lucky stops at the sight of the two men, and Pozzo bumps into him and they both fall along with all the baggage they carry, Vladimir is overjoyed that reinforcements arrived, as they would be a welcomed company to pass the time. Pozzo starts crying and calls for help, when Vladimir tries to assist him he falls to the ground too, Estragon decides to leave and Vladimir begs him for help promising that he will leave with him if he helps them up, Estragon extends his hand to help but ends up falling as well.

Estragon and Vladimir finally get up and they pull Pozzo up who tells them that he does not recognize them because he is blind, they ask him about his sight and he replies that it is gone suddenly and that he has no notion of time. Pozzo asks Vladimir and Estragon about Lucky and Vladimir says Lucky seems to be sleeping or he might be dead, Estragon goes to check on Lucky and begins kicking him to wake him up. Vladimir asks Pozzo to make Lucky dance and think for them, but he tells him that Lucky is mute, when Vladimir asks him since when Pozzo explodes with anger and tells Vladimir to stop asking about time since he has no notion of it. Pozzo and Lucky exit the stage and leave Vladimir and Estragon to their waiting.

The boy from yesterday arrives, Vladimir asks him if he recognizes him, the boy replies that this is his first time seeing him and that he did not come yesterday and the typical statement is repeated; Godot is not coming but he will surely come tomorrow, Vladimir demands the boy to make sure that he saw them and yells at him “You're sure you saw me, you won't come and tell me to-morrow that you never saw me!”. The sun sets, and Estragon pulls off his boots and announces that he wants to leave, Vladimir tells him that they can't go far because they have to come back tomorrow and wait for Godot. Estragon and Vladimir

contemplate hanging themselves but they do not have a rope, Estragon suggests using his belt, but when they test it, it breaks. Vladimir says that they will bring a rope and hang themselves tomorrow, unless Godot turns up, They decide to go but again they remain still. (the curtain falls).

Uncertainty about life, its purpose and existence in the world are the dilemmas of postmodern society where human beings are incapable of setting a course of life or unable to fully comprehend the order of the world in which they live. Estragon and Vladimir are the representative of postmodern man who has got insecurity and helpless attitude towards life where someone from outside is expected take charge of the lives of those who are suffering and searching for purpose and meaning of life, the only way for these two to feel their existence through meaningless and ambiguous conversations and communication.

### **1.8. Conclusion:**

Samuel Beckett is one of those writer that can be called a genius, often compared to incongruent thinkers of the time such as Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud, and Jean-Paul Sartre. Challenging fundamental Western conventions of the theatre, his works offer his audience an existentialist point of view and serve as a stimulative that forces them to consider the meaning of their existence in a world that appears to be devoid of order or meaning. Samuel Beckett works and particularly "Waiting for Godot" is one of the successes of the post-war theater, the play that commenced the trend that became known as the "theater of absurd", and in which Samuel Beckett break away from the traditional conventions and assert the uniqueness of his own style, which contributed to development of postmodernism making it the example of postmodern absurdist play.

**Chapter Two**

**Postmodern Traits and The**

**Notion of Time**

## **Chapter Two: Postmodern Traits and the Notion of Time**

### **2.1.Introduction:**

Beckett's ambiguous work exhibits up to a great extent the time factor, through its repetitive structure and narratives, Beckett uses the element of time to mirror the existential dilemma of humanity, and the very setting itself underpins this aspect. In both acts the action takes place at exactly the same time; each act begins in the evening time and closes with the moon having risen, in the same very place, a lonely, isolated road with one single tree. Thus, there is no discernible difference in either the setting or in the time in act two. Yet, what triggered audience' attention more than the repetition of setting and time, is the repetition of action, as if the characters are stuck in a time loop. Besides, *Waiting for Godot* is steeped in postmodern traits; therefore, this chapter will focus more on the play itself by analyzing the postmodern traits, and then it will analyze the notion of time in "Waiting for Godot".

### **2.2. Waiting for Godot: The Precursor to Postmodernism:**

Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* stands as a seminal work that anticipates and exemplifies key traits of postmodern literature. Emerging in the aftermath of World War II, the play captures a world disillusioned with grand narratives, stable meanings, and linear progression, hallmarks of modernist confidence now called into question. Through its fragmented structure, self-referential gestures, and philosophical ambiguity, *Waiting for Godot* embodies the uncertainty, metafictionality, and intertextuality that would later define postmodern thought. The play's minimalist setting, repetitive dialogue, and absence of traditional plot serve not only to deconstruct dramatic conventions but also to mirror the existential dislocation of the postmodern condition. In this context, Beckett's work may be read as both a precursor to and a reflection of postmodern aesthetics, challenging audiences to confront meaninglessness through form as well as content.

### **2.2.1. Uncertainty:**

In *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett captures postmodern uncertainties by presenting a world where answers and meaning are perpetually deferred. Beckett's refusal to provide clear resolution or answers exemplifies this uncertainty, just like postmodern works reject conclusive answers or final interpretations.

One of the points of uncertainty in the play is that the protagonist have no sense of certainty of Godot's entry time. When Estragon and Vladimir were talking about Godot's time of arrival, they did not have a slightest certainty of when he appears, and what makes it worse they do not even know who Godot is, what he looks like, what exactly they expect from him and whether the Godot is truly his name. He is never seen on stage, and even his name seems arbitrary. The characters merely have faith in Godot's arrival and providing them with some sort of salvation, although this is never clearly defined. This unclear equation invites multiple interpretations: Godot as God, as hope, as death, or as a metaphor for meaning itself. By keeping Godot's identity or intentions ambiguous, Beckett emphasizes the uncertainty as an inherent characteristic of the human condition.

Additionally, Vladimir and Estragon's ongoing struggle with their identities and roles, often forgetting and confusing past events, as well as each other's names, makes the embodiment of uncertainty itself. Their constant shifting between states of mind; from hopefulness one moment to despairing in the next, strengthens an impression of unpredictability. The introduction of Pozzo and Lucky in both acts, with significant alteration in their conditions i.e., the blindness of Pozzo in the second act and the silence of Lucky creates an additional layer of ambiguity. The unrevealed reason for these alterations contributes to the play's ambiance of arbitrary change devoid of reason or logic. Estragon's and Vladimir's life is full of uncertainties, what is certain though is that Godot is the savior who will come and save

them from their sufferings, and he might be the reason for their damnation ( Vladimir's reference of the two thieves).

### **2.2.2. Intertextuality:**

Waiting for Godot is a play built around Biblical allusions. In this play Samuel Beckett provides several key concepts in Christianity. For instance, in act I, Vladimir says to Estragon that one of the thieves was saved and the other was damned ( Beckett, 1954, p. 9) representing a fundamental Christian belief salvation, that can be attained only through genuine repentance. Additionally, Estragon's reference to the Holy Land as an ideal paradise where they will be eternally happy ( Beckett, 1954, p. 8)

Other explicit Christian elements mentioned in the play include the story of the two thieves. Vladimir remark about the inconsistencies of the four evangelists, St. Mathew, St. Mark, St. Luke and St. John narratives and his subsequent reference to the Saviour showcase the playwright deep insight into the Bible's narratives and also his negative attitude toward religion., suggesting that even sacred stories are not infallible, and subject to scrutiny and skepticism, this blurry image captures a broader anxiety about the unreliability of traditional religious knowledge, and raises a question of how can they serve as a stable guide to truth if the cardinal narratives of faith are inconsistent? reinforcing the idea that belief systems may be based on shaky ground.

This reflects a crisis of faith; the feeling that God is no longer present or responsive to human suffering. The idea of divine promise without fulfillment mirrors the experience of many who feel abandoned by religion in the face of modern tragedies, especially the horrors of war, genocide, and existential despair. Beckett, writing in the aftermath of World War II, captures the disillusionment of a world where traditional faith can no longer explain human suffering or provide spiritual reassurance.

There are also theatrical and literary allusions embedded in the play, Beckett engages with Shakespearean motifs, whose influence is woven throughout the dialogue and structure. The most direct allusion is to Hamlet, especially in the existential tone and the constant questioning of meaning, purpose, and identity. Just as Hamlet contemplates action and inaction in an indifferent world, Vladimir and Estragon fill their time with meaningless routines, speculations, and contradictions. Estragon's forgetfulness and Vladimir's philosophical musing echo the duality of Hamlet's introspection and madness. The famous "nothing to be done" sentiment that opens the play is in itself a bleak paraphrasing of Hamlet's paralysis in the face of absurd reality.

There is also an echo of King Lear, especially in the imagery of two characters wandering a desolate landscape, confronting their own insignificance. In King Lear, the king and his fool wander on the heath stripped of status, and the play interrogates madness, loyalty, and cosmic indifference. Vladimir and Estragon, like Lear and his fool, engage in a tragicomic relationship that blends sharp wit with despair. The breakdown of authority in Pozzo's character; who first appears as a commanding figure and later returns blind and helpless, parallels Lear's own fall from grandeur into vulnerability.

### **2.2.3. Metafiction:**

In theater, metafiction is referred to as metatheatrical, and *Waiting for Godot* is a drama about drama, the protagonists are self-conscious of their own fictional status as a theatrical pretence and that what is known as metafiction. Samuel Beckett breaks the fourth wall and makes this theatrical element explicit.

An example of a moment that solidifies the metafictional aspect is when the onstage characters occasionally reach out across the footlights as if momentarily sensing the presence of the audience. In a climactic moment, Vladimir heard sounds heard off-stage believing that

Godot is coming, he went to the right stage and scans the horizon whereupon Estragon panicked and went to left stage but he found no exit, Vlademir went to check the back stage but he found it closed too, the only side left for them was the auditorium side. Even though the audience's presence is denied “not a soul in sight” (Beckett, 1954, p.47), when Estragon recoils from the sight of the auditorium, the fourth wall has been technically broken. The auditorium becomes as Stanislavski (2008) describes it “black hole” (Stanislavski, 2008) yet instead of ignoring the black hole and continuing the onstage action, the actors acknowledge the presence of this ontological abyss with horror.

Beckett likens the stage ( the claustrophobic space, surrounded at all sides) to the confine human condition to which the characters and humans are condemned: an infernal space from which there is no escape but death. These scenes might be comical, but in fact they are discomfoting, especially when experiencing a strange feeling that somebody is starring at you despite the fact that you are supposed to be the watcher, through this technique, Beckett assaults on the fourth wall create metatheatrical fractures that undermine the egotistical nature of performance and spectating.

### **2.3.Indefinite Present:**

At the beginning of the second act, Samuel Beckett (1954) presents to the audience a scene where Vladimir sings a song while for Estragon who seems to have disappeared in an attempts to kill the time:

“A dog came in the kitchen  
And stole a crust of bread.  
Then cook up with a ladle  
And beat him till he was dead.  
Then all the dogs came running

And dug the dog a tomb-  
He stops, broods, resumes:  
Then all the dogs came running  
And dug the dog a tomb  
And wrote upon the tombstone  
For the eyes of dogs to come:

A dog came in the kitchen ..." ( Beckett, 1954, p. 37 )

On the surface, the tramp's song may appear as another whimsical attempt to while away the time. However, this song holds a profound allegorical significance, serving as a symbol of the entire production of the play. Much like the play itself, the song lacks a clear beginning or end, pausing ominously whenever Vladimir reaches the line "And dug the dog a tomb" ( Beckett, 1954, p. 37). The circularity of the verses renders the tragic end of the song inevitable. Ensnared in cyclical processes within a closed system, the dog and the cook are fated to reenact the scenario repeatedly.

Waiting for Godot is a play that offers a series of repetitive actions and circular dialogues instead of a narrative that advances from one event to another, for example the emphasis on Estragon's boots, Vladimir using typically the same words when he notices Estragon, "So there you are again" ( Beckett, 1954, p. 7)(Act I) and "There you are again" ( Beckett, 1954, p. 38) (Act II), the first discussion revolves around the beating which Estragon had received the night before, Vladimir and Estragon emphasize that they are there to wait for Godot. Towards the end of both acts Vladimir and Estragon contemplate the idea of hanging themselves, and in both, they decide to bring some strong rope with them the next day. In addition, the subject of eating, and the tramps' involvement with hats, their mutual insults, and their reconciling embraces becomes a central image in each act, but what matter most are the larger concepts such as the suffering of the tramps, their futile attempts to pass time, their

attempt to part, and ultimately their everlasting waiting for Godot, this circular actions distort the time frame, by instilling a sense of perpetual present, the playwright forces both the characters and the audience to confront the disorienting, paradoxical nature of time, one where every moment is simultaneously new and unavoidably the same as the one before as Andrew K. Kennedy (1992) describes it:

“We watch Estragon and Vladimir jointly trying to tinker with the wheels of time, so to speak. But their perceptions of time are comically opposed. As for Vladimir, “today” is indeed a new day, after a night spent lone. In contrast, Estragon denies the separateness of today and yesterday and claims a kind of total amnesia”(Kennedy, 1992, p. 21)

In this repetitive pattern, events have transpired numerous times, implying the pattern may continue indefinitely, unless Godot actually arrives to rescue them. It's understandable that Estragon struggles to distinguish one day from another and that they find it difficult to remember what happened during each day, when Vladimir questions Estragon about what he done last night he replies saying that they spent then night arguing about nothing. It can be argue that the failure of memory is what keeps the play in a seized evolution since the characters cannot confirm a logical relationship between past and present, as Bergson (1965) states: “without an elementary memory that connects two moments, there will only be the one or the other, consequently a single instant, no before or after, no succession, no time” (Bergson, 1965, p. 48). Furthermore, not being able to remember certain things can tied in with the uncertain nature of identity. In Act II, Estragon fails to recognize his own boots, his inability to identify objects that somehow construct his identity and define him could be symbolic of Estragon’s failure to assert his own identity. However, Vladimir's memory is in a relatively better condition, yet if no one remember having met you before and if the only person who shares with you the same plight cannot remember anything how can you be sure of your own memory if nobody confirms it? Even worse how can you be certain of your own

existence? As Vladimir asks himself in the second act, thinking that he is dreaming and that what he is going through is not real.

In the cyclical flow of time, the significance of the process fades, making time's passage untethered, and rendering the importance of any specific element or event irrelevant. For Vladimir and Estragon, this cycle morphs into a wearisome force that illustrates the futility of time. Just as in the previous day, each day serves the same purpose; to await an unknown individual who never arrives. The duration they've already spent waiting, along with how much longer they will wait, is uncertain; yet neither facet holds any importance, as time holds no meaning for them. Each day, they persist in waiting for the enigmatic figure Godot. Consequently, due to this extraordinary absence of change, time loses its significance. If yesterday held no meaning and the days prior also lacked meaning, then time itself must surely be meaningless, as Estragon said at the beginning of the second day in reference to that day, "For me it's over and done with, no matter what happens"( Beckett, 1954, p. 38). Time and its immobility become the main source of hardship and torture for the characters; it gives Estragon and Vladimir the impression that no matter what they do, their actions are purposeless and their existence is meaningless.

On the other hand, Pozzo and Lucky undergo a duality of change and changeless. In one of his monologues, Pozzo burst out and declared that life can change in an instant and that humans entire existence is just a brief stretch between birth and death ( Beckett, 1954, p. 57). His words echo philosopher Heidegger's idea that the moment we're born, we're already old enough to die. Time as a manipulator of change can change the human in an instant, without any warning. However on an existential level nothing change because nothing actually happens. If the universe is absurd and has no logic, time as a changing agent has no logic either.

If Estragon and Vladimir are presented as characters obsessed with killing time, Pozzo on the other hand is transcribed as someone very particular about time because for him time is an agent of change, he is sure that he has travelled for six hours and he keeps repeatedly checking his pocket watch. Pozzo's wanderings are what provided him with satisfaction, moreover it what render his life meaningful. These wanderings have him feel that he is going somewhere (the fair for example), and hence his constant command "On!". However, in the second act, Pozzo loses his "Wonderful sight"(Beckett, 1954, p. 55) as he describes to complete blindness, as he declares when he is questioned by Vladimir when did he loss his sigh to not question him because the blind have no motion of time! (Beckett, 1954, p. 55), Pozzo no longer has a destination, and his journey turns out to be an aimless wandering, thus he comes to realize that all his travelling have led him nowhere, Much like Estragon and Vladimir situation, the audience acknowledge that all Pozzo and Lucky did was to go in circles, even with the flow of time the basic human condition remains the same. Similarly, despite the transformation that he had, from being a thoughtful creature in Act I to a dump oneble even to groan in Act II, the outside position remains the same, Pozzo's reins are in Lucky's hand and still unaware of his power and status and remains a servant. It is implied that he is more used to being a servant and that he accepted his absurd destiny no matter what happens.

#### **2.4. The Stillness of Time and Inevitability of Death:**

Human attempts to impose any control or power over time are mere illusions. Despite any regulation, the unyielding nature of time continues and its speed never changes. However, the perception of time is malleable, in other words, when one is engaged in activities his focus is directed outward, making him fell that time is moving faster, in contrast, during periods of inactivity, it moves slower than usual. Vladimir and Estragon embodiment of idleness spend the entire play waiting for a person who never appears. In a such situation, time becomes a

tangible burden because spending a long amount of time waiting on another person is certainly emotionally and mentally draining. In this play, it can be fairly stated that Beckett succeeds in demonstrating this with a smooth comedic relief which comes these tramps' trivial distractions.

“VLADIMIR: What about trying them.

ESTRAGON: I've tried everything

VLADIMIR: No, I mean the boots.

ESTRAGON: Would that be a good thing?

VLADIMIR: It'd pass the time.” (Beckett,  
1954, p 44)

This dialogue is one of many other unsuccessful, humorous attempts to pass the time because trying on a pair of boots would not occupy these two men for a long time. Thus, they will soon have to look for another entertaining thing to do. Consequently, Vladimir and Estragon are enslaved by time in their constant situation. Instead of finding agency, walking away, and putting an end to their imprisonment, they prefer to remain in a state of inertia, filling up their empty state with insignificant yet comical activities. Eventually, all actions done by these two share the same purpose, which is to pass the time, stripping their actions of any significance; the act of killing time then becomes a survival mechanism, more precisely, a buffer zone that keeps Gogo and Didi comfortable against the terrifying recognition of time's relentless. Yet, when the moment of confrontation comes (nightfall), they acknowledge the absurdity of their situation: that they are doomed to wait and that no matter what rituals they engage in, no matter how many stories they have told each other or games they have played, nothing can stop the merciless flow of time, nothing can keep them away from the dull

monotony it brings, and they remain in despair, “bored to death” ( Beckett, 1954, p 52) as Vladimir states. A seeming contradiction in comparison to a previous one, Vladimir happily says “How time flies when one has fun!” ( Beckett, 1954, p 49) . This statement highlights the changing perspective that these two tramps have on the passage of time when one stays occupied with other things and has fun. Furthermore, Vladimir and Estragon naively think that they are giving a meaning to their existence and keeping up some action. Yet, what they are doing cannot truly be called actions. One may say that Beckett tries to emphasize that Didi and Gogo are universal characters. People of the modern age live in delusions, believing that their pastimes and actions render their life meaning, but from an existential perspective, they are just living bodies waiting for an unknown death. In this sense, we are all Sisyphus, pushing the rock to the top of the mountain and seeing it roll all the way back down. All days are similar; the only difference is how we spend it, and we cope with this absurdity through our preoccupation with the aesthetic aspect of living. Estragon and Vladimir’s meaningless life, as well as the pointless attempts to “kill time,” becomes an existential mirror to the audience's daily life and their mechanical and useless activities. Thus, the absurdity of life is underscored, and the audience is left with a feeling of discomfort, bewilderment, and anxiety, as they question the identity of Godot and whether what they were watching is just a play.

It is safe to say then that Beckett aims at alerting us that Estragon and Vladimir are all humanity, all that human beings do is just an implicit distraction from the inexorable passage of time proceeding to death, this view is not completely gloomy though, because those actions are what give our existence a meaning and our life a purpose. In other words, Estragon and Vladimir still do nonsensical actions and speak aimlessly in order to flee the heavy torment of time and stay away from confronting the void and the inevitability of death. It is inevitable to die and it is inevitable to race against time, therefore, humans instinctively

try to escape the discomfort of being aware of time's relentless progression by composing a routine of simple or tough tasks in order to survive and that is what keeps them alive and gives them a purpose to stay alive until death collects us all in the end. Nevertheless, by placing his characters in an absurd situation of perpetual waiting Beckett highlights the meaninglessness of the human condition and the oppressive effect that time has on individuals when it comes to unexpected changes that may arise and human innate drive to cope with the relentless march of time. Keeping this habit of "killing time" in mind, it must be mentioned that even though Estragon and Vladimir's sense of futility and that they are condemned to confinement in the wheel of time, they believed in themselves as being "magicians" ( Beckett, 1954, p 44) who capable of finding a goal to their existence.

In this sense, it is notable that these two tramps do not surrender to the absurd situation they are living in, and to the hopeless state of waiting in which they are stuck. They keep on struggling to give meaning to their lives, even if what they do seems ridiculous and senseless. This echoes Albert Camus' existential philosophy, particularly as expressed in "The Myth of Sisyphus". In "Waiting for Godot", Beckett crafted a staged version of Camus' "Myth of Sisyphus". As a matter of fact, the repetitive task that Sisyphus keeps on executing mirrors Estragon and Vladimir's cycle of futility and repetition; their seemingly everlasting waiting for Godot is filled with repetitive utterances and activities, highlighting the monotony of time and the lack of progression; a kind of stasis that reflects the absurd nature of their condition. Nevertheless, they are not a type of breed known for surrender, and perhaps that is the reason why they persist in coming back each day to endure the torture of time and the pain of waiting, which underscores the fact that human beings constantly try to give a purpose to their lives and to accept its absurdity in order to face the unknown and to transcend beyond negativity. The pursuit of a purpose is what keeps humans capable of moving forward in a losing battle against time. It does not matter who wins, what truly matters is fighting until the

last breath. Therefore, *Waiting for Godot* centres not on Godot himself but on the experience of waiting and how to confront the heaviness of time. It emphasises the very essence of waiting itself, which symbolises the absurdity of life, as Martin Esslin (1961) points out: “Waiting is an essential characteristic of the human condition”. All our lifetime is an endless wait for something, and Godot simply seems to represent that object of our waiting. We wait for “an event, a thing, a person, death”. If we are active, we hardly remember the passage of time, then the time flies but if we are inactive, perhaps waiting, “We are confronted with the action of time itself” (Esslin, 1961, p. 17)

This can be chiefly regarded as Beckett’s attempt at dramatizing the futility of human life and the inevitable passage of time which culminate in leading human beings to their demise, no matter how successful a man can be, it is inescapable to grow old, and it is inescapable to die, in a sense, all humans are waiting for Godot while being entangled to time. Maybe that where human beings’ power lies, in distracting themselves from the inevitability of death for the sole reason that they unwillingly accept being entrapped in an inevitable mode of being, enduring it until they finally dissolve into the positive nothingness.

## **2.5. Conclusion:**

One might conclude saying Samuel Beckett wrote a play in a way that makes it a permanent topic of discussion and interpretations, a play that is open to so many different perspectives. It is open to religious and psychological interpretations, yet above all it is a complex existential play that mixed philosophical assumptions with the concept of time. Samuel Beckett dramatize the notion of time to present the human condition in the light of an absurd universe, the repetitive utterances and the compelling conversations his characters engage in leave the audience hanging in puzzlement for the reason that it uses time as an oppressive power that controls individuals. The play’s fragmented structure, circular narrative, and lack of resolution reflect key postmodern traits such as indeterminacy and the rejection of grand narratives. Its

self-referentiality and resistance to fixed meaning have significantly influenced postmodern literature and theatre, paving the way for works that embrace ambiguity and question the nature of reality itself.

## General Conclusion

“Waiting for Godot”, the earliest and most successful work of “Theatre of The Absurd” overturned centuries of tradition by rejecting all traditional rules, that its effect continues all the way through postmodern era. Considering the common characteristics or conventions of postmodern era, and Waiting for Godot’s structure that broke away from traditions, we may reach the conclusion that the absurdist’s unconventional and ground breaking conventions, if not directly procreate, foreshadow those of postmodernists’.

“Waiting for Godot” is a play composed of two act, at the end of each act the messenger of Godot comes and delivers a message that Godot will surely come tomorrow ( the future), for Estragon and Vladimir, Godot is considered as the key for their enlightenment and his arrival will justify their present waiting. Yet If he will not come, and apparently he will never, they will remain engaged in perpetual state of present repeating the daily routine of waiting. Vladimir and Estragon are representative of all humanity and all humanity are Sisyphus, all humanity is destined to die, death is inevitable, as is the race against time, but even if life is finite, surrendering is not an option. In the face of absurdity, humans still persist, keep moving, keep doing, keep living, that persistence, even if small or mundane, it is a kind of quiet resistance. and maybe even a form of hope, Sisyphus is pushing the rock not because it leads anywhere, but because the act of pushing is life itself.

Despite its complexity, Samuel Beckett’s “Waiting for Godot” is indisputably important to read for anyone interested in the intellectual movement of the 20th century. Coated with philosophical assumptions, “*Waiting for Godot*” is the most critical and influential work Samuel Beckett has ever produced, simulating the predicament of humans in the aftermath of World War 2 in a bleak, sarcastic, ironic, and melancholic style, a combination that puts the audience in a paradoxical situation, whether to cry over the pains and plights of the human

experience or to laugh at it. It is no wonder then that this piece of theatre is regarded as a cornerstone of the 20<sup>th</sup> century literary movement, a masterpiece that exhibit human abandonment to the relentless course of the world and plunges the readers and spectators into a constant contemplation about the essence of their existence.

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