

Samuel Barclay Beckett's *Waiting For Godot*: The Post-Modern Perspective**Azmi Azam**MA English Literature
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Abstract: *Samuel Barclay Beckett's Waiting for Godot is a masterpiece in English literature for encapsulating the turmoil of postmodern individuals. The work is considered to be the last of modernist literature or the first of postmodernist literature. The characters Vladimir and Estragon represent the quintessential subjective dilemmas of postmodern society. Their dialogue presentations and actions in the play highlights the features of human quandaries as a result of postmodern effects. Moreover, the subplot of Pozzo and Lucky mark some other major issues of postmodernism.*

Keywords: *despair, nothingness, absurdity, existentialism, postmodernism, identity crisis.*

Analyses:

Illustrious post-modern dramatist Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is a splendid piece of post-modern absurd literature for its thematic and stylistic aspects. It represents the post-modern society of 21st century imbued with the stygian marks of communication gap, absurdity, existentialism, identity crisis, xenophobia, megalomania, despair, meaninglessness, nothingness, selfishness, anarchy, and humanism. Side by side, as a post-modern literary work, the play has its literary features such as fragmentation, non-traditionalism, self-reflexive and alimentary writing at its disposal.

Vladimir and Estragon has no family ties nor have their future plans been illustrated in the play. They avoid helping each other, sharing their views and suffer from sheer claustrophobia. They try to change the place of waiting but do not materialize any of their resolutions. These activities denote decentralization, absurdity, identity crisis, frustration, and confusion. They feel afraid of Pozzo and Lucky indicating their sense of uncertainty, insecurity and xenophobia.

Megalomaniac Pozzo's treatment towards social pariah Lucky indicates Marxism, industrialization, imperialism, and racism. Pozzo, representing the bourgeoisie commune, wants Lucky, representing the proletariat commune, to be sold because he is bored of him though Lucky proved to be very helpful to him. The rejected bone is given to well-subjugated Lucky by Pozzo marking neo-imperialism, Estragon's competitive suppression marking ultra-imperialism, and combined subjugation of Pozzo, Vladimir and Estragon suggest super-imperialism. Lucky's silence can be marked as "Oriental Silence", coined by Post-modernist Edward Said, and his kick towards Estragon can be marked as his antipathy as a subjugated entity of racial hegemony.

Pozzo's statement "The tears of the world are a constant/quantity. For each one who begins to weep, somewhere else another stop. The /same is true of the laugh" (1:837-840) indicates ambiguity, existentialism and depression that is akin to the morbidity of stark realism as says Thomas Carlyle: "Life is no idle dream but a solemn reality".

Estragon statement "All my life I've compared myself to him" (1:1539) echoes atheism in the play. Though there is the mention of Adam, Cain, Abel, *The Bible, Gospel*, Christ, and Saint but the characters look for a rope to commit suicide, considering life as a burden and time as a torture, and devalue the existence of God, believing Him unsympathetic and vindictive. It seems as if they believed- "weeping is cold comfort and does little good. We men are wretched things and the gods who have no cares themselves, have woven sorrow into the very pattern of our lives" (Homer, *The Iliad*, Book-24). Vladimir's statement "I remain in the dark" marks the spiritual bareness for deviation from transcendental and religious realm. It seems that the post-modern world is too dark where men can easily lost his inner vision as Portia says "how far that little candle throws his beams, / So shines a good deed in a naughty world" (*The Merchant of Venice*, 5.1).

In the present post-modern society, we find chaotic situations with gradual degradation of kinship, disobedience of children towards parents and teachers, fornication of married couples, drug addiction of the youth and suicide attempts by dismantling ideologies. The technological advancement has turned men into machines, devoid of feeling and emotions, as if men are living in a waste land, "he who was living is now dead- / We who were living are now dying/ With a little patience"(Eliot, Thomas Sterns, *The Waste Land*, 328-330). Vladimir and Estragon, representing all the above features, do not share their dreams nor exchange views randomly, feel alone and unsecured, mistrust each other, avoid to help, and are waiting for Godot whose coming is as uncertain as W. B. Yeats's "The Second Coming". They do not know exactly how beneficial or devastating Godot could be for them but they still wait for him as if they have nothing to do instead of waiting as A. E. Housman says to show the travesty of human life -

*Yonder see the morning blink:
The sun is up, and up must I
To wash and dress and eat and drink,
And look at things, and talk and think
And work, and god knows why.*

Waiting for Godot is a play which follows no traditional conventions but is unique in itself as an absurd play. We find the use of stichomythia, very short exchange of dialogues-

*Boy: I don't know sir.
Vladimir: You don't know me?
Boy: No, sir.
Vladimir: It wasn't you came yesterday?*

Boy: No, sir.

Vladimir: This is your first time?

Boy: Yes, sir. (1:1468-1493)

We find leitmotif which means the repetition of the same statement to unify a single phenomenon such as “Nothing to be done” marking the theme of nothingness. We also find the use of clipped dialogues such as-

Vladimir: Consult his family

Estragon: His friends

... ..

Estragon: His bank account (1:393-398)

Pozzo’s speech “Let/us not then speak ill of our generation, it is/ not any unhappier than its predecessors...It is true the/population has increased” (1:840-846) indicates the post-modern literary feature- fragmentation, abrupt linking of different ideas, and alietory writing, presenting random thoughts. The play itself speaks of its short-comings such as “Nothing” which indicates that there is no story, no unity in the setting of time and place and no action.

In spite of featuring post-modern perspectives, *Waiting for Godot* is a mirror of contrast between the western and eastern post-modern contexts. The western context, under which the play is formed, is deprived of religious idealism which led the characters to the stygian part of life. But the eastern context, rooted into the realms of idealism, is in much better position compared to that of western world which is a dystopia in itself. To harp on the same tune, we find Oscar Wilde saying “A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing.”

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