

## THE THEATRE OF THE ABSURD: BECKETT AND PINTER

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Dramatic works, from the very origin, aimed at giving a message, solving a problem or reaching a resolution, with well-presented and motivated characters, a developing and resolving plot with particularly constructed dialogues and settings to emphasize the main strive. Though methods or aims to write or to produce a play have changed, playwrights have always grounded their plays on such predetermined dramatical structures. Till the modern times, all these were an attempt to mimic life in one way or another with varying methods and objectives. Thus, such well-constructed plays assumed life as a well-constructed play with an orderly designed plot with a beginning, middle and end in which clearly depicted characters acted out actions of easy comprehensibility and left the audience with a proper resolution to the problem.

As a reaction in view of life reflected in form and content to conventional dramas, came “The Theatre of the Absurd”. The dictionary definition of the word absurd is something which is out of harmony without reason or logic. In the general sense, it means ridiculous however this is not the sense it is used for to define the absurdist plays. The term “absurd” is narrowed down ... *to connote man trapped in a hostile universe that was totally subjective, and made to describe the nightmare that could follow when purposelessness, solitude and silence were taken to the ultimate degree.*<sup>1</sup> In his essay on Kafka, Ionesco defined the term absurd as something which is ... *devoid of purpose. ... Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions became senseless, absurd, useless.*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Styan, J. L., (126) **Modern Drama in Theory and Practice**, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

<sup>2</sup> Esslin, Martin, ed. (5) “**The Absurdity of the Absurd.**” **The Theatre of the Absurd**, New York: The Overlook Press, 1973.

The term “The Theatre of the Absurd” is coined by the critic, Esslin deriving from Camus’ *Myth of Sisyphus*. Camus, in his essay reflected the man’s absurd existence based on the *Myth of Sisyphus* who was given the task to roll a rock up to the peak of a mountain yet the rock would definitely roll down and Sisyphus had to do it every day, obviously reaching nowhere. Camus conceived postwar man not much different from Sisyphus. He too, wakes up, washes his face, shaves, has his breakfast and goes to work only to do the same tasks day after day. Camus gives a picture of postwar world in his essay as;

*A world that can be explained by reasoning, however faulty, is a familiar world. But in universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile, because he is deprived of memories of a lost homeland as much as he lacks the hope of a promised land to come. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity.<sup>3</sup>*

Thus the postwar man feels locked up in a world of irrationality for there is no way to give a meaning to his life that composes of but his daily routines. Esslin deriving from that essay, traced the elements or the ways in which the plays expressed the absurdity of human life and grouped those plays under the term “absurd.” Plays meriting the term “Theatre of the Absurd”, abandoned conventional dramatic structures and staged a reflection of the absurdity of life.

As a direct consequence of long and brutal wars, the world witnessed the destruction of the established values of life. It was shocking to witness such a massive destruction for a long time for no apparent reason. European peoples in the 1940s and 1950s were very much disillusioned by the wars, directly experienced the lurking sense of despair, losing understanding of one another, themselves and the world around them, alienation and at times failing to communicate. Apart from the war leading to the feelings of emptiness, anxiety and horror, faith in religion started to fade with the enlightenment and the social revolution’s turning into a totalitarian regime. All these served people well to be in a position where they cannot find any rationale to explain their existence and the surrounding world. Now

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., (5)

the self that was alienated fragmented and unable to communicate had to face such a world of irrationality. Introduction of the unknown unconscious in the field of psychoanalysis was another factor that added much to the sense of not being able to understand fully the self and the world.

It is no coincidence that absurd plays in the modern sense started to be produced at those times. It is in nature of the artist to reflect the vision of the world in way that he/ she can do best. Absurdist playwrights theorized and produced plays that thoroughly expressed the absurd human condition in universe. Absurd plays are also responses to the dominant philosophy of the postwar times; the philosophy of the absurd, in broader sense is the existentialism, in the way of expressing human condition. Existentialist thought basically rejects validity and reality of general concepts. In idealistic philosophy, the concepts as the good or the evil are conceived as real and contain the reflection of the particular of the good or the evil in themselves. Thus the particular mirrors the essence and essence comes before the existence. Existentialism reacts against the idealistic philosophy and argues that existence comes before essence. In this way human beings become the particular, individual and unique. Everyone has his or her own ways of being. This concludes in that human being is responsible for his or her own actions and that there is free will. However, one cannot find the answers to the questions; why human exists, why we are here and what life is after all. In contrast to such ambiguities, what is clear is that human existence is absurd for the efforts of humanity to find a meaning in universe will definitely fail as life carries no such meaning at least at the level of humanity. In this sense the theatre of the absurd reflected the negative side of Sartre's existentialism and staged futility of human condition and purposelessness of life.

Modern drama introduced realistic, naturalistic and surrealistic ways of dealing with life and absurd plays went deeper than such superficial rationalizations. The Theatre of the Absurd is often traced back to the avant-garde experiments of the French playwrights as wells as basic elements of it can be detected in surrealist plays. One of the direct descendants is Stringberg who moved from photographic depiction of life in naturalistic way to open expressions of dreams, nightmares or obsessions in plays such as *Ghost Sonata*, *Dream Play* and *To Damascus*. Another play considered as an ear-

ly absurd play is Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi* which presents the adventures of a grotesque figure that is fat and brutal, making himself the King Poland in a nightmarish and mythical atmosphere. The whole play is a poetic image intended to confront the Parisian bourgeois with their own monstrous side and the lowest human instincts. As a surrealist play, Apollinaire's *Les Mamelles de Tiresias* has several grotesque images, forming the basis of the action of the play; Tiresias, the hero, changes sex by letting her breasts float. Such surrealist plays of Jarry and Apollinaire provided the base for Dadaist movement which finally gave way to the philosophy of the absurd. Brecht's *In the Jungle of the Cities* has resemblances to Dadaist movement as the audience is confronted with a chain of poetic images of an unmotivated struggle of a man with himself. Another playwright, Antonin Artaud created "Theatre of Cruelty", intended to shock the audience, staging the horror of human condition. There are also absurdist elements in German expressionism as it was concerned with the burden of an uncaring society upon the individual. In the modern sense, Ionesco's *Amédée or How to Get Rid of It* is a prominent example of the absurd theatre. In the bedroom of an elderly couple is a growing corpse as the whole play focuses on a static poetic image. Esslin traces absurd drama back to ancient dramas and traditional forms however, as I do not tend to consider them as direct origins, I will present them as elements that are discernable one way or another; traditional miming and clowning of the antiquity, the Italian Comedia dell'Arte, archetypal symbolism of English nonsense verse and allegorical and symbolic drama like morality plays can one or two or all together be detected in the plays that are grouped under the label of absurd.

Absurd plays generally do not have a plot and characters in the way that conventional drama has. They do not stage a story that starts, develops and resolves as in the conventional plays. Conventional modern plays as they mirror up life in realistic, naturalistic or symbolic ways, build up their performance on the supposition that life is like a well-made play with a beginning, middle and a proper resolution to the conflict. In the absurdist plays, there is almost no conflict so the focus of interest rather lies in the poetic images and dream situations. There are recurring *situations* rather than events. Caught up in those situations that generally represent human position in life, characters appear as anonymous and hardly to grasp figures, as if thrown randomly on stage, completely unmotivated. They do not

know one another and even themselves. They usually have no idea why they are there. As the dialogues make no sense most of the time, there is not much given through dialogues to the audience except what they might be their own interpretation.

Characters that are purposeless and imprisoned in absurd conditions have to live or rather fill up the time through committing nonsensical acts that are mainly daily routines. As absurd plays depict the modern men, characters are anti-heroes who are pathetic and guilty. They are constructed in the way that the audience would not identify themselves with them and even are not put in a position to grasp who they are, instead there is always a distance kept between the audience and what is shown on the stage. This very much responds to the very feeling of alienation that the postwar man suffers from.

Probably the most criticized element of conventional plays and the most realistically depicted element of our daily lives is the language or rather the treatment of language in absurd plays. Above all, absurdist plays dysfunction the language, making it the very medium of the evasion of communication. Many times, characters do talk but nonsense with repetitive words. Language becomes a vehicle for passing time, expressing daily routines and meaningless babbling; a vehicle for anything but not communication. Time and place references, names and events are mixed up not to convey a meaning. Nor the utterer neither the receiver can make up anything of what is said. Thus no point is ever made, questions are many times left unanswered and no progress is achieved.

Settings are constructed to emphasize basic human needs and/or symbolical along with being grotesque images that we encounter in the early examples of the absurd plays. Setting may carry importance or have symbolical values yet this depends much to the audience. It is never for sure the reason the playwright used such stage props is symbolical or not. Yet, in the early sense, the sole intention of the grotesque images portrayed was to shock the audience and such images were very much symbolical for example they came to symbolize or rather allegorize the conformist fascism in Ionesco's *Rhinoceros*.

Thematically, the absurdist plays do tackle with the despair caused by the realization of futility of the routine events that make up the whole life, of the hopelessness and of having nothing to be done about it. Yet, absurdist plays rather than discussing such situation of human through highly intellectual dialogues, and settings and characters of far away quality in depicting such state, stage the reflection of the absurd life as it is. To pursue this end, plays of the theatre of the absurd combine content and the form. In such ways; absurd theatre depicts as Esslin, puts it;

*... a grotesquely heightened picture of [our] world: a world without faith, meaning, and genuine freedom of will. In this sense, the theatre of the absurd is a true theatre of our time.*<sup>4</sup>

Beckett, an Anglo Irish playwright, educated in France, wrote in French. When asked by a student why he wrote *Waiting for Godot* in French, his reason was to keep the level of meaning and structure minimum, he needed to write in another language. *Waiting for Godot* with its distrust of language as a means of communication and a brilliant production of human life as totally meaningless merited being the prominent example of the theatre of the absurd.

*Waiting for Godot* opens at a bare stage of a tree and a road, with two tramps in tattered clothes, waiting for their appointment about which they are not quite sure. It is as if they are thrown at that spot by an unknown force to do nothing but try to exist in a very suffering way. They do not know who they are as the audience is not given much. Although many critics defined them as “tramps”, Beckett stated that they may come to symbolize each human being, came to this world with no purpose and had to fill the time in this purposeless life of anguish.

Soon, we learn through the messenger boy that they are waiting for Godot and that he is not to come by the other day. Godot, to many critics represented the thing that every human being waits for to come for it will add a sense to this absurd condition of man. However, our duo are not even

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<sup>4</sup> Esslin, Martin. (223) “**The Theatre of the Absurd.**” **Theatre in the Twentieth Century**, Ed. Robert W. Corrigan. New York: Grove Press, 1963.

aware of the personality of Godot or whether it is human or not and why they are waiting for him. It is clear that man that waits for Godot, do not know exactly what it is. It must be something that would end this desperate situation that the man in real life and the characters in the play suffer.

At that point, the audience is immediately taken into the illusion of the play's following a linear story line, assuming that Godot will come and action will proceed into some events that will be finally concluded in a proper way. This is where the absurd plays' very significant feature that distinguishes them from conventional plays in form. *Waiting for Godot* as a prominent example of the theatre of the absurd will not trace the sequences of events but will only stage the static image of the two tramps, caught up in the absurd condition of man, struggling to exist. Thus the play will end with what it started. Thus, what is emphasized is not the coming of Godot but the act of waiting; a static situation of despair going on. That there is not a resolved conflict and no conflict at all will leave the audience uncomfortable as this would not be what they wished for. They will not have a well concluded ending instead they will have something to ponder and the very image of the whole play in their mind will disturb them continuously.

What is worth noticing is that the play opens with the very words of Estragon's *Nothing to be done*.<sup>5</sup> The initial sentence sums up Beckett's view of life. Both characters are already fed up with a life of routines going on and on yet reaching nowhere. We see Estragon taking off his boot, that he spent the night in a ditch and beaten. Then, Vladimir suggests committing suicide yet they even could not succeed in doing so. After struggling with boots, Vladimir takes up to tell about the Bible however, for Vladimir, it is something to be listened only to *pass the time*.<sup>6</sup>

Vladimir and Estragon act as complementary figures. Vladimir seems to be the clever one, having the authority. He tries to conduct the language when Estragon breaks off. He tries to bring about topics to form a dialogue, yet Estragon never answers or never gets what he says. Vladimir even reminds him whatever he seems to be forgetting. He also is the one who

<sup>5</sup> Beckett, Samuel, (1) **Waiting for Godot**, Great Britain; Faber and Faber Limited, 2000.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., (5)

keeps the sense of coming of Godot alive. Moreover, it is him who forms the dialogue with the boy. Estragon is the weaker one. He is beaten every night by some unknown people. As much as they differ in their personalities, they have to stand together to carry on that static situation which is seemingly keeping up an appointment. Gordon suggests that *Vladimir and Estragon's only certainty is the terrible uncertainty of the world, together with their accompanying need to assume that somehow and someday meaning will become manifest.*<sup>7</sup> Moreover, in their way of talking and acting, it is revealed that Estragon and Vladimir are also the very element of slapstick comedy of musicals.

After we are confronted with the duo of Estragon and Vladimir, what now we see on stage is a reversed version of the two; Pozzo and Lucky whom can be taken to symbolize the notions in life. They enter the stage Pozzo as master and Lucky as his slave. Their relationship is a sadistic one as Pozzo whips Lucky, makes him carry his luggage, dance and even think for himself. Pozzo makes Lucky drive a way with no apparent reason whereas Vladimir continuously reminds Estragon of the appointment they try to keep.

Apart from the futile act of waiting or the confined stated of man in a world where nothing happens, another point is made in the projection of time. The messenger boy, in his second entrance swears that he had never seen the duo before, no matter how Vladimir tries to insist that he is the same. In the same way, Estragon finds it quite hard to accept that it was the same boy, whereas stage directions do state that it is the very same boy. Moreover, in the second entrance of Lucky and Pozzo, we see that one gone blind and the other became dumb. Willow tree's losing or having leaves have no importance. Estragon even voices the meaningless of time; *But what Saturday? And is it Saturday? Is it not rather Sunday? [Pause.] Or Monday? [Pause.] Or Friday?*<sup>8</sup>

There are many issues concerning life, mocked and doubted. To look

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<sup>7</sup> Gordon, Lois, (58) **Reading Godot**, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Beckett, Samuel, (7) **Waiting for Godot**, Great Britain; Faber and Faber Limited, 2000.



at one of those issues, Vladimir takes the story Bible and tries to tell it to Estragon:

*VLADIMIR: Our Saviour. Two thieves. One is supposed to have been saved and the other . . . (he searches for the contrary of saved) . . . damned.*

*ESTRAGON: Saved from what?*

*VLADIMIR: Hell.*

*ESTRAGON: I'm going.*

*He does not move.*

...

*VLADIMIR: One out of four. Of the other three, two don't mention any thieves at all and the third says that both of them abused him.*

*ESTRAGON: Who?*

*VLADIMIR: What?*

*ESTRAGON: What's all this about? Abused who?*

*VLADIMIR: The Saviour.*

...

*VLADIMIR: But one of the four says that one of the two was saved.*

*ESTRAGON: Well? They don't agree and that's all there is to it.*

...

*ESTRAGON: Who believes him?*

*VLADIMIR: Everybody. It's the only version they know.*

*ESTRAGON: People are bloody ignorant apes.<sup>9</sup>*

The two obviously get mixed up with biblical references and they even

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9 Ibid., (4-5)

talk about Bible as if it is something trivial and Beckett clearly states that even the Bible does not hold the ultimate truth for it is contradictory in itself.

Dialogues between characters do not make sense and in the case of Estragon and Vladimir, their exchanges remind very much of the cross talk of Irish musical comedians with repetitive words, long silences, unanswered questions and not being able to make a clear point ever;

*ESTRAGON: All the dead voices.*

*VLADIMIR: They make a noise like wings.*

*ESTRAGON: Like leaves.*

*VLADIMIR: Like sand.*

*ESTRAGON: Like leaves.*

*Silence.*

...

*VLADIMIR: What do they say?*

*ESTRAGON: They talk about their lives.*

*VLADIMIR: To have lived is not enough for them.*

*ESTRAGON: They have to talk about it.*

*VLADIMIR: To be dead is not enough for them.*

*ESTRAGON: It is not sufficient.*

*Silence.*

*VLADIMIR: They make a noise like feathers.*

*ESTRAGON: Like leaves.*

*VLADIMIR: Likes ashes.*

*ESTRAGON: Like leaves.*

*Long silence.*<sup>10</sup>

Lucky's famous speech in Act II, apparently reminds us of the very language of the philosophers with its totally gibberish quality:

*LUCKY: Given the existence as uttered forth in the public works of Puncher and Wattmann of a personal God quaquaquaqu with white beard quaquaquaqu... if that continues and who can doubt it will fire the firmament that is to say blast hell to heaven so blue still and calm so calm with an unfinished crowned by the Acacacademy of Anthropopometry...*<sup>11</sup>

Much has been written about what the name Godot may come to symbolize. Most probably it would be a derivation from the word God, as biblical illusions in the text may support. Yet, it would be an allusion to Simone Weil's *Attente de Dieu* and Balzac's much talked about and never seen character Godeau in his *Le Faiseur*. Moreover, *Godot is also virtually a contraction of their nicknames, Gogo and Didi, the inner self that might alternatively give cohesion to their lives.*<sup>12</sup>

In Britain, Harold Pinter might be classed under the branch of absurdist playwrights. He writes what is called comedies of menace with common characters and settings with an atmosphere of fear and mystery. Thematically influenced by Kafka and Beckett, his plays, having the elements of absurd, present uneasy scenes of existential struggles for survival and identity in the irrational and inexplicable world. Characters isolated in confined spaces, struggle with themselves and with the outside world. Speaking of menace, there is a threatening notion in Pinter's plays. The term menace can roughly be identified with haunting past memories, distressing news from outside, mysterious calls or knocking on the door or an immediate physical violence. Menace has also absurd or surreal qualities. The term Pinteresque involves such menacing situations.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., (54)

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., (36)

<sup>12</sup> Gordon, Lois, (61) **Reading Godot**, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002.

Knowles sums up the position of Pinter in the context of modern drama, as combining realistic and the absurdist elements, not presenting a didactical aim;

*In comparison with the realists Pinter did not speak from a recognizable political platform. In contrast, he deconstructs social realism by divorcing the identification of character and environment, defamiliarising the pedestrian and destabilising the audience with ultimately self-recriminating laughter. For the realists the accurate presentation of the material conditions of persons in society was a didactic end itself.<sup>13</sup>*

*The Dumb Waiter* opens with two characters, Ben and Gus, in a basement, waiting for an order. Ben reads a newspaper when Gus is trying to do his laces up. At the back there is a lavatory that does not flush. After a while, they wish to prepare a tea yet they do not have a match. They get into a fight for whether to light the kettle or put the kettle is the right phrase to use. After a while, they get an envelope with matches in it under the door yet they soon realize that they do not have the gas. All of a sudden, the dumb waiter comes down, Ben and Gus try to send up what is ordered yet they have nothing but milk, tea and chocolate. Finally, they discover a speaking tube to communicate with the up floor. Upon hearing that the food sent up was rotten, Ben apologizes continuously.

Pinter at the very beginning shows his characters closed up in a confined space suggesting the confinement in real life that people suffer. Cohn states ... *by the end of each play, [these places] ... become sealed containers, virtual coffins.*<sup>14</sup> Moreover, their fight for the trivial thing of using the right phrase for lighting the kettle and the lavatory that does not flush shows the scenes of trivial routines of the man in real life.

Ben seems to be authoritative whereas Gus seems to be more obedient and suppressed. Ben is the one who reads the newspaper and tells the news to Gus. Ben pretends to know high class dishes that are ordered from the

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<sup>13</sup> Knowles, Ronald, (74) “Pinter and the Twentieth Century Drama” **The Cambridge Companion to Harold Pinter**, Ed. Peter Raby. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

<sup>14</sup> Cohn, Ruby, (79) “The World of Harold Pinter.” **Pinter: A Collection of Critical Essays**, Ed. Arthur Ganz. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972.

upper floor, though they are both from lower class. Apart from that, Ben constantly watches Gus, checking about what he is doing. Above all, we are not given much about their psychologies, past lives, characteristics, motives and most importantly their jobs. The two while waiting for an order, they, themselves become dumb waiter to the orderer and to one another.

Dialogues do not seem to make sense at all. They constantly repeat each others' words thus no point is ever made and questions are always left unanswered. Ben says one thing and Gus repeats it. Ben begins a sentence and Gus finishes it. If any point is ever fully made, there comes silence and the point is brought about again;

*BEN: We do the same.*

*GUS: Exactly the same.*

*BEN: Exactly.*

*(Pause.)*

*GUS: We don't do anything different?*

*BEN: We do exactly the same.*

*GUS: Oh.<sup>15</sup>*

There are long and recurring silences which very much add up to the sense of miscommunication, increasing the extent of it and emphasizing the effect of being lost in communication. Esslin comments on Pinter's use of language;

*Pinter is far from wanting to say that language is incapable of establishing true communication between human beings; he merely draws our attention to the fact that in life human beings rarely make use of language for that purpose, at least so far as spoken language is concerned.<sup>16</sup>*

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15 Pinter, Harold, (841) **The Dumb Waiter**, in The Bedford Introduction to Drama. Ed. Lee A. Jacobus. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989.

16 Esslin, Martin (38) "**Language and Silence.**" **Pinter: A Collection of Critical Essays**, Ed. Arthur Ganz. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972.

What is different from the absurd plays in dialogues is the long silences intended to create tension. Pinter's language is noted for such menacing situations deriving from long silences. Ben never answers the questions of Gus; this creates an atmosphere of threat that is to lead violence. In this sense, Pinter pauses are not for good. Moreover, they may come to symbolize sleep and death. When Ben gets the message of killing Gus, Gus never learns the content of that message which intensifies the sense of horror and tension in audience. Ben's never answering the questions of Gus is another example of verbal violence and the end of act of murder is the violence that the whole atmosphere has been created for.

The stage is almost bare, having but two beds and a toilet in a basement room that symbolize the basic needs of humans. The confinement represents the human condition of not doing the things that are wished to do. While we are trapped in this, we get caught with our routines and soon lose track of our reason of existence as routines progress to hide the core existence which is absurd.

Whole play is staged in an atmosphere of threat and mystery of what is to come. Danger is somewhere, most probably upstairs yet its pressure is always felt. Wilson, whom they take orders from, is never seen and somewhat presented as Godot. The play is open ended yet, most probably; Ben will act upon the order and murder Gus.

Obviously, what Beckett and Pinter try to depict is the absurd condition of the human being who has to exist in a futile life of routines. Apart from life's being futile and nothing but meaningless routines, the notion of existence is questioned. Beckett and Pinter in their works, try to find answers to the questions "What does it mean to exist?" Or "Is there a meaning in life?" One may even infer that finding the answer is a futile task, too. Man, in a life of daily routines easily lose track of their existence and even to be aware of it does not mean anything. Esslin sums up this notion as such;

*Beckett and Pinter confront us with the precariousness, the stark comfortlessness of the human condition; they remind us that we know little about our purpose in life and that there is no escape from the ravages of the time and death. They hold out no illusion of social progress or compensation for*

*our sufferings in an after life.*<sup>17</sup>

It is in the notion of absurd plays to depict life as it is, in the way that it is never done before. In doing so, what is reflected is but the anguish of the obligation of living a life which is completely absurd. What is seen and felt on stage is not different from the lurking sense of despair that we try to avoid in the course of lives yet this does not lead to depression instead with a noble attitude in coming to terms with conducting such a life, one feels freed and that freedom is the catharsis of the absurdist plays.

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17 Esslin, Martin, (69) “**The Theatre of the Absurd.**” **Theatre in the Twentieth Century**, Ed. Robert W. Corrigan. New York: Grove Press, 1963.

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## ABSTRACT

*As a direct consequence of long and brutal World Wars, Europe witnessed the destruction of the established values of life. The growing sense of despair and alienation, losing communication with one another were for a long time what people suffered in Europe that changed the whole world. Coupled with the decline in faith in religion and the rise of science with the enlightenment and the social revolution's turning into a totalitarian regime, the world will never be the same for anyone. Now the human beings had to confront their own selves which are however fragmented and largely unknown.*

*The plays that are termed as absurd originate from those times, aftermath of the Great Wars. Absurdist playwrights produced plays that staged the very the absurd human condition in universe. As opposed to the modern drama, the absurdist plays attacked the notion of a linear plot and traditional characterization. In the absurdist plays, there is almost no conflict to be solved but a static, a seemingly ever-present situation that haunts the whole play. This work will strive to examine basic tenets of the theater of the absurd and then will analyze Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and Harold Pinter's *The Dumb Waiter*.*

