

**A POSTMODERN SYMBOLIC STUDY OF BECKETT'S WAITING  
FOR GODOT**

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**ABSTRACT**

The Postmodernism movement arose in the aftermath of WWII with its indelible impact on the psyche of twentieth-century people. The effects of post WWII have been reflected in literature with focus on human sufferings and pessimism. The spectacles of such sufferings are observed in Samuel Beckett's play *waiting for Godot*. This paper looks into the consequences of WWII and its impact on people's minds and bodies with reference to *Waiting for Godot*. The focus of this research is on the play's symbols and how they are interpreted in a postmodern environment. Through a detailed examination, interpretation, and references of *Waiting for Godot*, this research aims to reveal the uncertainty, identity crises, nihilism, and absurdity to readers. This paper examines science's harmful involvement in WWII as well as postmodernism's disagreement with science. This study also aims to answer issues about postmodernism's and WWII's implications, as well as the impact on people and writers in the twentieth century. Samuel Beckett's uncertain language and links of symbols with characters in *Waiting for Godot* represent his state of mind and his aim to transmit the postmodern message of loss to his readers. It tends to prioritise features of Postmodernism in *Waiting for Godot*, WWII's effects, and the study of symbols.

**Keywords:** *uncertainty, nihilism, identity crisis, absurdity, symbols, postmodernism, WWII*

**Introduction**

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*Waiting for Godot* a tragic-comedy in two acts is written by Irish writer Samuel Beckett, which was originally performed in Paris in 1952, and since then has been translated into several languages. It is an absurd drama about insecurity, absurdity, existentialism, and identity problem. To put it another way, the play is about emptiness, as nothing particular happens in *Waiting for Godot* until the very end. The philosophy of absurdity arose in the wake of WWII with numerous definitions. Uncertainty, identity crisis, and nihilism were used to instill absurdity in people's minds. The fundamental reason for their ideas was that war, with its destruction and miseries, has rendered man's existence useless. Postmodernism began as a reaction to modernism. It was a counter-movement to modernism's realistic attitude.

The influence of postmodernism on literature and art cannot be overstated. *Waiting for Godot*, likewise, looks to be a fine example of postmodern absurd drama. Through meaninglessness, uncertainty, despair, and absurdity, it portrays the Post-World War II civilization of the twentieth century. Vladimir and Estragon, the two main characters, are shown to be without families and other social contacts, have no future plans, and are waiting for an anonymous character, Godot. They pass their time through arguments and fights, helping and avoiding each other, and attempting to change their waiting location, but nothing is in their control. Vladimir and Estragon are more than just two characters; they symbolise the minds and bodies of those in the twentieth century who were profoundly touched by the World War II. This influence of postmodernism on authors' ideas translates to its dominance over their pens.

Language was utilised as a weapon by the postmodernists. They used language to reveal the truth about human beings. They employed phrases like absurdity, uncertainty, and existentialism to promote their views to the public, but they preferred symbols to words, when advocating high-level concepts. They employed symbols to represent themes like love, God, and hypocrisy

that could not be expressed in words; similar elements may be found in Samuel Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot*.

He was the type of person who was less concerned with the storyline and more concerned with ideas. He wanted to advance, and we can see that he utilised this strategy on purpose in his play *Waiting for Godot*. His philosophy of life can be explained in the following words: Estragon: Nothing to be done. (Beckett, 1952, p. 51)

This paper focuses on postmodern symbolism as reflected in *Waiting for Godot*. The main purpose of this study is to show how postmodernism affects literature and the human mind, and how it became a huge cause of damage, leading to individuals' confusion, identity crisis, and absurdity in the twentieth century.

### **Literature Review**

*Waiting for Godot* for its dialogues and tragic acts, is considered one of the greatest masterpieces of literature. Many academics have looked at this play from various perspectives. For the ludicrous characters of the play, it may go many different ways, and meaning can be assigned to it according to one's own interpretation. Noor Bakhsh Hooti (2011) has explored *Waiting for Godot* from postmodernist point of view. He is of the opinion that *Waiting for Godot* contains elements of both modernism and postmodernism. This play's historical events of ambiguity, absurdity, and binary opposition lean toward postmodernism. Modernism, on the other hand, places a premium on logic, realism, and scientific principles. Apart from that, postmodernists' scepticism and distrust of metanarratives make it evident that *Waiting for Godot* is a postmodern drama, since it displays all of postmodernism's traits.

*Waiting for Godot* and the concept of humanism are central to Parisa Shams' (2013) work. People's minds were concentrated on the subject of humanism, according to Parisa Shams, Vladimir and Estragon's pains and efforts separate them from their true selves. This study found that humanism is linked to three essential realities of existence. The first is human nature, which is all about independence and the ability to exist without limitations or bounds. *Waiting for Godot* presents a contrary perspective, since Vladimir and Estragon do not want to wait, but they have no choice. The second is human sorrows, which are proof of human existence, but Beckett's drama ignores this truth. Sufferings are supposed to end, yet Vladimir and Estragon's linger during the play in the form of waiting, hurting boots, sore feet, unpleasant memories, and Pozzo's tyrannical behaviour. The third category is human interactions, which are difficult to define and express in a world of absurdity and meaninglessness. In this drama, individuality is less essential than relationships and couples. Pairs are found in the drama, such as the boots, characters, and so on. Vladimir and Estragon were on the verge of committing suicide, but their bond as pair save them.

Similarly, Jeffery Nealon's work is centred on the theories of Jean-François Lyotard's "Metanarratives" and Ludwig Wittgenstein's "Language Game Theory." According to him, both hypotheses had an influence on Samuel Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot*. Godot has been dubbed a metanarrative since he embodies all of the metanarrative's features. He, like metanarratives, isn't fulfilling Vladimir and Estragon's wishes and needs; they're just waiting for him. He informs them to wait for him and refuses to let them depart. According to this study, *Waiting for Godot* is also a language game rather than a game of doubt. To pass the time, Vladimir and Estragon engage in a verbal game during the play. People play games for entertainment, and Estragon and Vladimir are playing a verbal game for passing the time. On the other hand, Lucky's speech is absurd and does not follow the rules of the

verbal game, which troubles the characters and they force him to stop. Hence, various studies have been conducted on *Waiting for Godot* from various angles. The play has also been examined from the perspectives of linguistics and postmodernism. The purpose of this paper by focussing on the play's symbols from a postmodern perspective, is to add something new to the current literature and research done on *Waiting for Godot*.

### **Research Methodology**

The focus of this paper is on the symbols used in *Waiting for Godot*, as well as the exploration of those symbols from a postmodernist perspective. This qualitative research explains the effects of postmodernism on people in the twentieth century. For textual analysis *Waiting for Godot* has been used as primary data. Secondary information is gathered from a variety of sources, including books, journals, research papers, and websites. The symbols chosen from the text *Waiting for Godot* in a postmodern framework are the focus of this research. Keeping in view aims and research questions of this paper the data has been collected with care. The information gathered is analyzed via the lens of postmodernism. The analysis procedure clarified each component of the acquired data as well as the study's goal and concept.

### **Analysis**

The impact of World War II and postmodernism on *Waiting for Godot* is indisputable. The influence can be seen in symbols as well as language and characters. The symbols in this drama are strongly associated with humanity, existentialism, religion, and human moral principles. Samuel Beckett appears to have employed symbols with great care and intention, and with deep underlying meanings. Samuel Beckett refused to assign his play a single meaning, preferring instead to let the text speak for itself. Symbols, rather than words and deeds, were accorded primary meanings by Samuel Beckett. Some

of the play's symbols allude to the truths of life and mankind, while others allude to people's daily problems. The effects of postmodernism on Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* are discussed in this part of the research. By the use of symbols in this play Beckett transmits ideas about the human condition in the twentieth century. He uses symbols to represent absurdity, existence, identity problems, and scepticism about religion. Important symbols are analysed as following:

### ***Waiting for Godot***

The title of the play *Waiting for Godot* hints that there will be little action in this play, and that the characters will only wait for Godot, a mysterious figure. The futility of waiting is obvious to the readers or audience. The two tramps are expecting someone who never appears in the entire play. 'Waiting' and 'Time-passing' inform us not only about the status and condition of these two characters, but also about all those who were affected by World War II's in the shape of mental and physical losses. Livingston in his article in *The Washington Post* notes; "[w]e — the entire human race — have become Vladimir and Estragon, the happy-sad/anxious-silly/hopeful-bleak duo of Samuel Beckett's 1953 stage masterpiece "Waiting for Godot," (Livingston. S.2020).

Godot is merely a pretext for them to wait and pass the time in the hope he will help them. The fundamental theme of this play is waiting, and it tells us about the impact of World War II and postmodernism on people's brains. Waiting is a forlorn and pessimistic activity in and of itself. When a person has lost hope and sees no reason to move forward, he chooses to wait. People believe they are living a dismal and silly life without a destination as a result of World War II's destruction. What the two tramps do in the play is something that all humans used to do, but everyone's Godot is different from one another. Vladimir and Estragon wait simply to discover the true cause of

their existence, but all they find is the need to wait, and they are well aware that waiting will provide no results but only pass the time.

Vladimir: It'll pass the time. (Pause) Two thieves, crucified at the same time as our Saviour \_

Estragon: Our What?

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 (Beckett, 1952, p.56)

In *Waiting for Godot*, religion is revealed to be incompatible with reason. When the characters try to make sense of it, they end up in the dark. Every phrase in this drama is not superfluous; it has some sort of human meaning. Their discussion of a unique incident in the Bible demonstrates their lack of interest in religion and its relevance in human existence, yet it is still insufficient to satisfy them or lead them to certainty. Estragon is entirely opposed to the Saviour (Jesus) saving one thief from hell, for the simple reason that he himself was engulfed in a fire of absurdity, futility, uncertainty, identity crisis, and this world appeared to him to be nothing less than a hell. He believes that if no one can save him from this misery, religion cannot save anyone and he needs an exit:

Estragon: Charming spot. (He turns, advances to front, halts facing auditorium. (Inspiring prospects. (He turns to Vladimir.) Let's go.

Vladimir: We can't.

Estragon: why not?

Vladimir: We're waiting for Godot. (Beckett, 1952, p.58)

Whatever they do to pass the time, they eventually arrive at the same conclusion about what their existence means, why they are here, why they can't move, and what they are waiting for. The two characters cannot exist in a single structure, or to put it another way, they do not exist in any structure at all. For the simple reason that he has made an acquaintance with a creature similar to him, Estragon always wants to leave and be free of waiting for Godot, but suddenly changes his mind and chooses not to leave so soon. Estragon's curiosity is piqued by Pozzo and Lucky's company, and he refuses to leave that location.

Vladimir: Let's go

Estragon: So soon? (Beckett, 1952, p.78)

Vladimir represents the thoughts of people in the twentieth century, while Estragon represents their bodies. The mind requires serenity, while the body requires companionship and nourishment. This time, Vladimir wants to go since Pozzo's tyrannical behaviour with Lucky is bothering him, but Estragon receives food and company from them, which is sufficient for him. They can't seem to get away from waiting no matter what they do.

Estragon: So long as one knows.

Vladimir: One can bide one's time.

Estragon: One knows what to expect.

Vladimir: No further need to worry.

Estragon: Simply wait.

Vladimir: We're used to it. (Beckett, 1952, p.88)

Waiting is their fate, not only theirs, but also the fate of all mankind, which they must embrace gladly or unwillingly. They acknowledge that they are used to it and that they have no choice but to wait; they are not sure when



Godot will arrive, but they still wait. They can't dispute that waiting is their reason for living.

### **Boots and Hat**

Throughout the play *Waiting for Godot*, struggle, suffering, and misery are observed. With precision and oddity, Samuel Beckett related these traits of twentieth-century World War II victims to the characters in his play. Estragon's boots and Vladimir's and Lucky's hats are also utilized to depict the characters' struggles and sufferings. The painful boots of Estragon depict Estragon's sufferings, and the cap represents Vladimir and Lucky's sufferings as well, but the ultimate goal of its use is to represent the state of humanity in the aftermath of World War II and the Holocaust movement. The play begins with two individuals who are both striving in different ways.

Scene: A country road. A tree. Evening.

Estragon, sitting on a low mound, is trying to take off his boot. He pulls at it with both hands, panting. He gives up, exhausted, rests, tries again. As before.

Estragon: (giving up again) Nothing to be done.

Vladimir: (advancing with short, stiff strides, legs wide apart) I'm beginning to come round to that opinion. All my life I've tried to put it from me, saying, Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven't yet tried everything. And I resumed the struggle. (He broods, musing on the struggle. Turning to Estragon.) So, there you are again. (Beckett, 1952, p.51)

The above lines from the text are oozing with hardship and disappointment. These sentences convey the play's absurdity and uncertainty to the reader and audience. The physical and mental miseries of World War II are reflected in Estragon's struggle with his boots and Vladimir's depressing statements. The fact that Estragon is sitting on the road and removing his boots

is a terrible sign for the readers. Vladimir's rumination on the term "struggle" also reveals his function in the play.

Estragon: Ah stop blathering and help me off with this bloody thing.

Estragon is simply rejecting any kind of encouragement given by Vladimir. Vladimir without paying attention to Estragon struggling with his boot, is busy in reminding those good days of their past, on the same time cursing themselves for their condition.

Vladimir: No one ever suffers but you. I don't count. I'd like to hear what you'd say if you had what I have.

Estragon: It hurts? Hurts! He wants to know if it hurts! (Beckett, 1952, p.53)

The mental torments of Vladimir depict the psychological state of World War II survivors, while the torments of Estragon mirror their physical sufferings. Samuel Beckett divides the human body into two tramps to reflect the effect on each individual's mind and body. Vladimir's tribulations are shown as more tragic than Estragon's. This highlights the idea that the nature of mental suffering is more critical and incurable than physical pain, which may be treated and tolerated. While Vladimir struggles with terrible memories, flashbacks, religious notions, and how to spend the time, Estragon's anguish and struggle are limited to his aching feet and boots. Estragon is waiting for Vladimir's assistance, whilst Vladimir is not yet ready to knuckle in to uncertainty and absurdity.

Estragon: Why don't you help me?

Vladimir: Sometimes I feel it coming all the same. Then I go all queer. (He takes off his hat, peers inside it, feels about inside it, shakes it puts it on again.)

How shall I say? Relieved and at the same time. I (he searches for the word) appalled (With emphasis). AP-PALLED. (He takes off his hat again, peers

inside it.) Funny. (He knocks on the crown as though ... Peers into it again, puts it on again.) Nothing to be done. (Estragon with a supreme effort succeeds in pulling off his boot.....) Well?

Estragon: Nothing. (Beckett, 1952, p.54)

Vladimir's four lines of uncertainty and absurdity work as a kind of connection with Estragon. The moment he delivers these words, Estragon succeeds in removing his shoes. Beckett shows that both tramps are now ready for their main job, which is the wait for Godot. They no longer have any ties to their past, and have lost connection with certainty or existence. *Waiting for Godot* is full of pairings, underlining the concept that nothing can be accomplished alone, and that a partner is required. The companion is an idea, a set of principles, a goal, or a conviction.

Similarly, Estragon's removal of his shoes while sitting on the road, symbolically indicates his lack of interest in his destination. Vladimir's perspective on his situation, on the other hand, has radically changed. Vladimir claims that the issue is with his own feet and boots, not with his path. Beckett here targeting the twentieth century men, illustrates that desire for power; an inexpedient path is the cause for their predicament. Though they struggle hard but gain nothing and lose everything. Furthermore, they are seeking certainty, logic, and existence after losing everything. The problem is not with the way, but with their own bad intentions and judgments. Vladimir peers into Estragon's footwear the same way he peeps into his hat, but his encounter with Estragon's boot is unpleasant; it smells foul.

Vladimir: Pah!

He spits.... (Beckett, 1952, p.58)

The unpleasant odour and spitting reveal his reaction to Estragon's pains, realising that his comrades' sufferings are far more agonising and

terrible than his. As a result, every time he peeks inside the hat, he finds a new topic to pass the time. However, peeking into the boot is not a good task; all he finds; are Estragon's anxieties and pains. On the other hand, Estragon also feels irritated by Vladimir's silence, which indicates his complete dependence on him.

Estragon: (gently). You wanted to speak to me? .... You had something to say to me? .... Didi?

Vladimir: (Without turning). I have nothing to say to you. (Beckett, 1952, p.62)

Vladimir's disrespect for Estragon, as well as Estragon's reliance on him, demonstrates that Vladimir can no longer bear the loneliness and uncertainty. Beckett here reflecting on the faults, depict the twentieth-century men, who, in the meantime, are busy sprinting toward abstract concepts, and now, when they are left with nothing, are begging for the help of mind. Mind, on the other hand, has nothing to offer them that would satisfy and keep them from becoming engulfed in a world of uncertainty and identity crisis. Vladimir's hat has a significant role in the play, and whenever he looks into it, he finds a new issue to occupy his attention. However, it is important to note that Beckett confers dignity on the significant role of the pair, so that he might assist his peer. Likewise, Pozzo and Lucky are similar to Estragon and Vladimir. Lucky is given the honour of the hat and he is dominant for bringing Pozzo to his destination. Pozzo is completely dependent on Lucky in both acts.

Among all the symbols, Beckett chooses the symbol of the hat for a very specific purpose. With this symbol, he presents the previous harsh recollections, flashbacks, finding themes to pass the time, and many other things. Lucky's hat, on the other hand, has to do a task that is much more important than Vladimir's hat. Beckett endeavours to reveal mankind's true intents and predict what happens as a result of chaotic pursuit of an unknown

reason and purpose. He assigns these tasks to Lucky's hat, when Pozzo orders him to think and put on his hat on his head. The hat works like a button and Lucky begins his speech.

Through the character of Estragon, Beckett is portraying all of humanity. Beckett's experience of World War II terror, and as author of 'Theatre of the Absurd' shows his understanding of absurdity, identity crisis and existentialism. He experienced all these, and his portrayal is so natural that it transports the readers to the twentieth century and makes them feel the dread that the humanity felt at the time.

### **Tree**

The setting of *Waiting for Godot* reflects the post WWII period and the beginning of postmodernism. The characters are left with nothing but a country road to wait for Godot. Evening time reflects the darkness of their lives and a tree is there which could be a symbol of hope for them. This symbol also indicates religion which appears to be the sole means of their survival. The two tramps are urged to wait by the tree, which symbolises their connection with God. Godot's instruction to wait beside the tree does not imply that Godot represents God. Godot, on the other hand, may be the third party who keeps them connected to God through religion. They are not eager to wait for him, but they are compelled to do so. The tree's sticky force binds them to one spot. It functions like a shadow, shielding the two destitute tramps from the harsh world. When Estragon pulls off his shoes and realises, he is free to leave for the first time, Vladimir reminds him, they can't leave as they are meant to wait for Godot by the tree.

Estragon: Charming spot.... Inspiring prospects.... Let's go.

Vladimir: We can't

Estragon: Why not?

Vladimir: We're waiting for Godot.

Estragon: (despairingly) Ah! (Pause). You're sure it was here?

Vladimir: What?

Estragon: That we were to wait.

Vladimir: He said by the tree. (They look at the tree.) Do you see any other?  
(Beckett, 1952, p.58)

Vladimir confirming Estragon's statement, says they should wait by the tree, but they are not sure this tree or any other. The two tramps appear unsure of religion's assurance; they are even asking questions and expressing doubts that they might be waiting for him by the wrong tree. Religion is likewise treated with doubts and lack of universal truth in postmodernism. They believe that there are no metanarratives and that religion is founded on individual beliefs. In terms of religion, Beckett also adheres to postmodernist tenets. When the modernists witnessed the disastrous global war's destruction of the world structure, they transformed from modernists to postmodernists. They argue that if everything is in flux, how can religion have universal truth and certainty? They believe that the world lacked a logo-centre that could provide structure to it. The two tramps are doing the same thing, representing the postmodernist and twentieth-century humanist viewpoints. They are waiting by the tree to fulfil their promise; contrarily they are not willing to do so.

Estragon: What is it?

Vladimir: I don't know. A willow.

Estragon: where are the leaves?

Vladimir: It must be dead.

Estragon: No more weeping. (Beckett, 1952, p.58)

The absence of leaves on the tree symbolises that they no longer have faith in religion or certainty. They're supposed to wait by the tree, but they're not sure if they're supposed to wait by the tree or by the willow. They are

unsure whether the tree is a willow, a shrub or a bush. Furthermore, they are concerned whether they are waiting in the wrong location and they may miss meeting with Godot. Estragon's tears reflect the men's regret that one bad action damages everything, including the religion and ideals. The use of words like bush and shrub reflects the two tramps' perplexity about the nature of the tree, which reveals Beckett's representation of the complex religion's structure. Godot asks the tramps to wait by the tree, but he doesn't specify which tree. There are many distinct religions in the world; some are Muslim, while others are Christian, Jewish, Hindu, and so on. So, out of this confusion, the primary question is, where they are meant to wait for Godot, beneath which tree.

Estragon: Looks to me more like a bush.

Vladimir: A shrub.

Estragon: A bush.

Vladimir: A – what are you insinuating? That we've come to the wrong place?  
(Beckett, 1952, p.58)

Beckett's tangled conversation on a tree is to portray the religion's shaky structure. After World War II, when the certainty of everything was questioned, the religion's certainty was also questioned. The tramps are also dealing with Godot's religion, which states that his tree may be different from theirs and that they should wait under his tree. After a confusing, unclear and ludicrous talk, Vladimir asks Estragon what he means when he says they are waiting at the wrong place. However, the talk about trees seems to have passed their time, and they are now looking for something else to keep themselves busy. They are then portrayed playing a linguistic game to pass the time.

Estragon: Wait.

Vladimir: Yes, but while waiting.

Estragon: What about hanging ourselves?

Vladimir: Hmm. It'd give us an erection!

Estragon: (highly excited). An erection!

Vladimir: With all that follows. Where if falls mandrake grows. That's why they shriek when you pull them up. Did you not know that? (Beckett, 1952, p.63)

Estragon suggestion to hang themselves, implicitly reflect his wish to put an end to the game of waiting and be freed forever. Vladimir's response to Estragon, by starting a conversation about erections and mandrake shifts the focus. The words erections and mandrake appear to be rare and unique, yet Beckett purposefully use them to encourage his readers to consider them. Mandrake is a plant that is mentioned in the Bible and other holy books due to its distinct qualities. For a reason, Beckett references Mandrake: he wanted to relate religion to people's beliefs. Bernard Russell likewise notes:

You know, of course, the parody of that argument in Samuel Beckett's book, **Erewhon Revisited**. You will remember that in **Erewhon** there is a certain Higgs who arrives in a remote country in a balloon. Twenty years later he comes back to that country and finds a new religion, in which he is worshipped under the name of the "Sun Child", and it is said that he ascended into Heaven. (Russell, 1927, p.16)

Similarly, Vladimir compares himself to Jesus Christ, suggesting that their crucifixion would be seen as holy and a new religion, similar to Christianity, would emerge. People's religion, on the other hand, is founded on feelings rather than beliefs. Samuel Beckett mocks the structure of religion and human's ideas, claiming that all they require is internal contentment, religious regulations and religious comfort to pass the time. Vladimir does not want this plant to flourish, so it will become a waiting area for anyone who is



similar to him in the future, and that person will be in the same situation as they are. The four or five leaves in the trees in Act II represent Beckett's tactics of deceiving the readers and characters to expect Godot's entrance in this Act but make them wait till the end of the play.

### **Turnips and Carrot**

*Waiting for Godot* is full of deceptions, futility, and pranks. When logic and reason are no longer present in one's life, one must rely on such skills to pass the time, and no one knows how to employ such approaches better than the WWII evacuees. The play represents postmodernist thoughts; there is nothing but absurdity, uncertainty, disillusionment, and the characters are paying for their mistakes. Vladimir performing the role of mind, is portrayed gratifying and comforting Estragon. But he is unable to respond to certain questions that Estragon poses to him. Affected by WWII's fear, all he can do is to pass the time but unable to answer Estragon's questions. As a result, Vladimir frequently employs strategies to divert Estragon's attention by changing the subject to distract his friend. Beckett uses turnips and carrots to accomplish this. When Estragon asks the question, are they tied to Godot? Instead of responding to this question, he pretends to have heard Godot's voice, but it is nothing more than a deception.

Estragon: (feebly) we're not tied? (Pause) We're not –

Vladimir: Listen!

Estragon: I hear nothing.

Vladimir: Hasst! (.....) Nor I. Sights of relief. They relax and separated.

Vladimir: I thought it was he.

Vladimir: I could have sworn I heard shouts. (Beckett, 1952, p.66)

Now there is a yell, but no one can be seen. This is nothing more than Vladimir's game with Estragon, and it's working for the time being because he

forgets about the question and talks of his hunger. Vladimir offers him a carrot and a turnip, which he gratefully accepts. The carrot and turnip are used to highlight the relationship between the two tramps, in addition, are employed as a linguistic game. Estragon's hunger reflects his physical attributes, whereas Vladimir's provision of food indicates his mental characteristics and dominance. Vladimir comes up with a new topic to occupy Estragon's attention and take it away from the real question, which he knows he is not able to answer.

Estragon: (Violently) I'm Hungry.

Vladimir: Do you want a carrot?

Estragon: Is that all there is?

Vladimir: I might have some turnips.

Estragon: Give me a carrot. (Vladimir rummages in his pockets, takes out a turnip and gives it to Estragon who takes a bite of it. Angrily.) It's a turnip!

Vladimir: oh pardon! I could have sworn it was a carrot. (Beckett, 1952, p.66)

Such schemes by Vladimir reflect the deceptions that life plays on humans. Life never gives you what you expect of it; instead, it teaches you how to strive and overcome adversity before yearning for a desirable reward. Beckett's objective in using carrot and turnip appear not simply to please the readers, but implies a secret message. Estragon is a man who is more concerned with eating than with anxieties and philosophical musings. However, Vladimir's deception did not last long, and Estragon asks the same vexing question once again.

Estragon: (chewing) I asked you a question.

Vladimir: Ah.

Estragon: Did you reply?

Vladimir: How's the carrot.

Estragon: It's a carrot.

Vladimir: So much the better, so much the better. (Pause) what was it you wanted to know? (Beckett, 1952, p.67)

Estragon returns to his earlier question, which Vladimir refuses to answer. He does want to answer him, but he doesn't know what to say. Vladimir attempts a second time to busy him in the carrot conversation, but this time he is unsuccessful. Vladimir applauds Estragon's reply, but has nothing to say in response to his inquiry but can distract him by interrupting and occupy him in other matters.

### **Leaves and Sand**

Leaves and sand are the two basic testimony of the universe's existence, but a tree without leaves imply certainty without existence, religion without belief, and body without soul. Sand, on the other hand, is a part of certainty, but it is unfit for human habitation; all sandy locations, like deserts and the globe after WWII, are lifeless and insignificant. Keeping these features of sand and leaves in mind, Beckett shows that there is no longer distinction between the certainty of leaves and the uncertainty of sand; falling leaves become part of the sand. The whispering and lamentation recount the stories of those who were exterminated during WWII, and terror of the survivors. The comparison of the corpse's voices to leaves, sand, and feathers exemplifies the impact of WWII and postmodernism on everything. In postmodernism contrary to modernism, the dead voices criticise them for their bad deeds.

Estragon: In the meantime, let us try and converse calmly, since we are incapable of keeping silent.

Vladimir: we have that excuse.

Estragon: It's so we won't hear.

Vladimir: We have our reason.

Estragon: All the dead voice.

Vladimir: They make a noise like wings.

Estragon: Like leaves.

Vladimir: Like sand.

Estragon: Like leaves. (Beckett, 1952, p.119)

Vladimir is convincing himself and his comrades that they exist for a reason, but instead deceives himself and his comrades; there is no difference between them and those who died in the war; the only difference is that they are suffering on the ground with the tittle of life, while the corpses are sleeping peacefully beneath the ground. The dead appear considerably superior to them, at least they know why they died, unlike the two tramps, who have no idea why they are waiting. Their argument is merely an excuse, as Vladimir indicates, they are attempting to escape silence in order to avoid hearing their beloved's agonising voices. When the wind blows, the rustling sound of leaves is similar to the sound of cuckoo for those who are sitting and enjoying it with their families, while the same is similar to a scream for those who have lost loved ones and have no reason to live. Beckett parallels the sound of leaves and sand to those who died in World War II, which also underlines the uncertainty and the survivors' grief for the deaths of their beloveds. Sand is not only the luck of two tramps, but Pozzo and Lucky also come back with nothing but a bag full of sand when they attempt to reach their destination.

Vladimir: What is there in the bag?

Pozzo: Sand. (He jerks the rope.) On! (Beckett, 1952, p.154)

If the sound of sand describes Vladimir and Estragon's situation, the same sand portrays Pozzo's pride, his journey to an insignificant destination, and delineates that there is no distinction between Pozzo and the two tramps.

Sand and leaves are used as witnesses to events in the twentieth century, and their noises convey the idea of total destruction of a terrible conflict.

## Conclusion

The play *waiting for Godot* is a great contribution to the 'Theatre of the Absurd', along with it has traits of postmodernism such as surrealism, existentialism, uncertainty, identity crisis, and absurdity. The researcher's key finding is that postmodernism influenced the play's symbolism. Despite these results and textual allusions, the aim and meaning of the symbols is to give physical expression to the character's emotions and sentiments. Samuel Beckett wanted the readers to visualize, the struggle and sorrows of twentieth-century creatures through these symbols. Writer's work from 1940 to 1945 represented postmodernism. Hutchinson in the article "During World War II, Literature Reigns Supreme," notes, "[b]ooks cannot be killed by fire. People die, but books never die. No man or no force can put thoughts in a concentration camp forever. No man and no force can take from the world the books that embody man's eternal fight against tyranny. In this war, we know, books are weapons." (Hutchinson. 2018). Similarly, Beckett used symbols to represent his postmodern concepts in indirect manner. This research strives to represent the characteristics of postmodernism and the devastation of war on each symbol of the play *waiting for Godot*. Because of these symbols, Beckett is able to condense the destruction of war and the impact of postmodernism on the people of the twentieth-century. Furthermore, according to this study, these symbols allow readers to express themselves, making the play an open-ended play, where each individual can assign their own meaning based on thoughts and understanding. The research is an attempt to analyze and realize the potential postmodern symbols in the play *waiting for Godot*.

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