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THE REPRESENTATION OF ANCIENT TRADITIONS IN *WAITING FOR GODOT*[1]

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to identify the representation of ancient traditions in *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett, which is one of the most significant works of Absurd Drama. This study will explore which ancient traditions are used in the work, and seek to determine how these traditions can potentially contribute to the interpretation of the work. Absurd Drama emerged from the traumas humanity endured after World War II, and it suggests that the meaning has been lost in the absurd universe. Humanity has started to regard the values and concepts to which they had attached great importance before. Humanity feels destitute and helpless. Martin Esslin, who coined the term 'The Theater of the Absurd' and was a prominent critic in this field, stated that absurd drama employs some ancient traditions. Based on the ideas of Esslin, this study aims to reveal the relationship between the use of ancient traditions in the work and the ways in which the use of ancient traditions contributes to the philosophy of absurd drama.

Keywords: *Waiting for Godot*, Absurd Drama, Ancient Traditions, Samuel Beckett, Martin Esslin

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Godot'u Beklerken Adlı Eserde Kadim Geleneklerin Temsili

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı Samuel Beckett'in absürt tiyatronun en önemli eserlerinden biri olan *Godot'u Beklerken* adlı eserinde kadim geleneklerin kullanımını saptamaktır. Bu çalışma eserde hangi kadim geleneklerin kullanıldığını ve kullanılan geleneklerin eserin yorumlanmasına nasıl katkıda bulunabileceğini inceleyecektir. Absürt tiyatro insanlığın 2. Dünya Savaşı sonrası yaşadığı travmalar sonrası ortaya çıkmış olup absürt evren olarak adlandırılan uzamda anlamın yitirildiğini savunmaktadır. İnsanlık var olduğu bu uzamda daha önce çok önem verdiği değer ve kavramlara şüpheyle yaklaşmaya başlamıştır. İnsanlık kendini yalnız ve çaresiz hissetmektedir. Absürt tiyatro kavramını ortaya koyan ve bu alanda en önemli eleştirmenlerden biri olan Martin Esslin absürt tiyatroda kadim geleneklerin bulunduğunu ifade eder. Bu çalışma, Esslin'in düşüncesinden yola çıkarak, eserde kadim geleneklerin kullanımı ile bu kullanımın absürt drama felsefesine ne yönde katkıda bulunduğunu ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Godot'u Beklerken*, Absürt Tiyatro, Kadim Gelenekler, Samuel Beckett, Martin Esslin

INTRODUCTION

Absurd Drama seeks to demonstrate humanity's bizarre state in the world, and to make the spectators conscious of their wretched circumstance. While making the spectators aware of their pathetic situation, absurd drama -like any other drama- uses various techniques to achieve this goal. As Martin Esslin put it, some ancient traditions are represented in the works of Absurd Drama (Esslin, 1965, p. 6). This study aims to identify the representation of ancient traditions in *Waiting for Godot*. The study will explore if the representations of ancient techniques contributed to the purpose of absurd drama, which is to "*shock (the spectator) out of an existence that has become trite, mechanical, complacent, and deprived of the dignity that comes from awareness*" (Esslin, 1961, p. 291). The techniques used by the playwright must have contributed to this objective and enriched its style. The purpose of this article is therefore to find the ancient traditions used in *Waiting For Godot* and to consider the possible explanations why that practice was used and how it contributes to absurd drama. In doing so, the study will focus on the ancient traditions of Commedia dell'Arte, Nonsense Poetry, Circus, Pantomime and music hall in *Waiting for Godot.*

Esslin suggests absurd drama employs ancient traditions and some new and unique techniques simultaneously (1965, p.6). Since absurd drama reveals the meaningless cycle of life, it can be inferred that this is the purpose of the use of ancient tradition in this context. As Esslin states:

> *The ancient traditions combined in a new form in the Theatre of the Absurd are: the tradition of miming and clowning ..., the Commedia dell' Arte of Renaissance Italy, and such popular forms of theatre as the pantomime or the music-hall in Britain'' also ''nonsense poetry; the tradition of dream and nightmare literature...; allegorical and symbolic drama, such as we find it in medieval morality plays, or in the Spanish auto sacramental; the ancient tradition of fools and mad scenes in drama, of which Shakespeare provides a multitude of examples; and the even more ancient tradition of ritual drama.* (Esslin, 1965, p.6).

Beckett mentions the words music hall and pantomime in the work; however, there are no references to Commedia dell'Arte. Thus, providing details about this genre would be useful in deciding how this literary genre relates to the work.

1) The Use of Commedia dell'Arte in *Waiting for Godot*

Oscar G. Brocket introduces Commedia dell'Arte as a term used to distinguish the plays performed by professional groups from amateur plays (Brocket, 1987, pp.180-181). It is unclear when Commedia dell'Arte was established. The genre presumably dates back to the mimes in the Middle Ages, and "*the principal evidence for this view is the similarity of stock characters in two forms*" (Brocket, 1987, pp. 180-181). It is also possibly related to the sixteenth-century Italian farce. It is certain, however, that Commedia dell'Arte became popular in 1600, and continued to be popular until 1750. In Commedia dell'Arte the characters were stock characters and the characters had the same characteristics and costumes (Brocket, 1987, pp. 183-185). The fact that both Commedia dell'Arte and *Waiting for Godot* employed characters who had the same characteristics and costumes is a common feature between the genre and the play. Since this study aims to reveal the relationship between the use of ancient traditions in the work and the ways in which the use of ancient traditions contributes to the philosophy of absurd drama, this study will explore whether the similarity between the play and the ancient traditions contribute to the interpretation of the work in an absurdist view.

Another common characteristic of Commedia dell'Arte and *Waiting for Godot* is that each actor played the same character recurrently in Commedia dell'Arte. Similar to the repetitive structure of the plot in *Waiting for Godot*, Commedia dell'Arte involved a sheer repetition. Just as Vladimir and Estragon experience the same events every day, Commedia dell'Arte performances involve repetitive structures. In Commedia dell'Arte, actors play within a certain plot but they do not have certain texts while the actors create their speeches

spontaneously. In *Waiting for Godot*, the sentences of the characters sound -- although they are not in reality-- spontaneous, made up and even nonsense. The absurdity of the sentences is one of the similarities between *Waiting for Godot* and Commedia dell'Arte in terms of style. This technique is called improvisation; there is a certain plot but the actors speak spontaneously within that frame. Although *Waiting for Godot* is based on a written text, the seeming spontaneity of the language resembles Commedia dell'Arte. Also, in Commedia dell'Arte, "*the character roles can be divided into master and servants*" (Brocket, 1987, p. 183). This attribute is also common in Commedia dell'Arte and *Waiting for Godot*. The relationship between Lucky and Pozzo is typically a master-servant relationship. The dependency of the characters on each other is a representation of the absurd routine of daily life. The resemblance of Commedia dell'Arte and Absurd Drama serves the purpose of highlighting this dependency in this context.

Commedia dell'Arte consisted of stock characters like Pantalone and Dottore (Henke, 2002). The characters did not have surnames and they are identified with their status, which is also a common feature between Commedia dell'Arte and *Waiting for Godot*, too. Vladimir, Estragon, Lucky, Pozzo, and the messenger do not have surnames. The only thing the reader knows about the characters' identities is that Vladimir and Estragon are tramps. How can one certainly infer that Vladimir and Estragon are tramps?

> ***VLADIMIR:*** *(hurt, coldly). May one inquire where His Highness spent the night?*
>
> ***ESTRAGON:*** *In a ditch.*
>
> ***VLADIMIR:*** *(admiringly). A ditch! Where?*
>
> ***ESTRAGON:*** *(without gesture). Over there.*
>
> ***VLADIMIR:*** *And they didn't beat you?*
>
> ***ESTRAGON:*** *Beat me? Certainly they beat me.*
>
> ***VLADIMIR:*** *The same lot as usual?*
>
> ***ESTRAGON:*** *The same? I don't know.* (Beckett, 1954, p.2)

The above quote illustrates that the characters are homeless, unprotected, and poor, and spend the night in a ditch. That is why they can be considered tramps. The fact that the quote identifies the action as "the same lot as usual" (Beckett, 1954, p.2) illustrates that the characters have been doing this for a long time. The word "lot" has two different connotations in this context. It can either mean a vacant lot or destiny. In both cases, the action stands for an undesirable event. The pessimistic portrayal of human condition is evident in the above quote.

Absurd drama adopts some characteristics from morality plays too. Morality plays used allegory to show the life of a "*representative figure*" called "*everyman*" or "*mankind"* (Norton Anthology, Vol. I, p.445). They aimed to represent to the whole of mankind utilizing one allegorical character. The characters are generalized, allegorical, and represented the whole of humanity. As the characters are allegorical, they do not belong to any social class. Their function is to represent all humankind and this generalization is also evident in *Waiting for Godot*. The characters are recognized with their state of poverty and that is the only clue as to their social status. Their alienation and misery represent the human beings who have lost their sense of belonging in the universe. They lack any kind of protection. In some parts of the play, the characters are unable to distinguish their location. The characters' imprecise ways of telling the direction are ambiguous when they say "*over there*" (Beckett, 1954, p.2) instead of right, left, east, or west. They are unaware of their position in the world, which symbolically displays human beings' sense of being lost in the absurd universe. They can be beaten or anything can happen to them, because in this absurd universe, human beings are out of shelter. It can be inferred that Beckett gave this attribute to his characters and presented them as stock characters. The presence of stock characters is a common feature both in *Waiting for Godot,* morality plays and Commedia dell'Arte.

The characters in *Waiting for Godot* have repetitive and non-progressive experiences. They cannot make any progress since they are waiting for Godot. The waiting experience hinders them and makes them unable to make a meaningful progress. They wait desperately for the advent of a non-existent figure. The significance of this meaningless act of waiting is to reveal the absurd existence of humanity. Lack of progress in life and the repetitive structure of the plot are evident in both Commedia dell'Arte and *Waiting for Godot.* In this context, the representation of the ancient tradition of Commedia dell'Arte serves the purpose of revealing human condition.

> ***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,1954, p. 6)

The sense of being confined and limited is evident in the above quotation which illustrates the absurd condition of human beings. The act of waiting limits the characters and hinders their possible forward steps. Waiting becomes an illusion for them. Master and servant relationship, which is also a common attribute of Commedia dell'Arte and the play, is seen accurately in the relationship of Lucky and Pozzo. Lucky has a rope around his neck held by Pozzo. Pozzo commands him to walk, stop, and go back. Pozzo commands Lucky just as a master pulls the strings of a marionette.

> *Coat! (Lucky puts down the bag, advances, gives the coat, goes back to his place, takes up the bag.) Hold that! (Pozzo holds out the whip. Lucky advances and, both his hands being occupied, takes the whip in his mouth, then goes back to his place. Pozzo begins to put on his coat, stops.) Coat! (Lucky puts down the bag, basket, and stool, helps Pozzo on with his coat, goes back to his place and takes up bag, basket, and stool).* (Beckett, 1954, p. 18)

Estragon also begs Vladimir not to leave him (Beckett, 1954, p. 78). He is dependent on Vladimir. People have a mutual dependency on each other in the absurd setting of the play. Although the characters quarrel on a regular basis, they are unable to leave each other because "*only some human companionship can assuage the pain of existence*" (Sternlicht, 2005, p. 56) in this context. In Act II, Pozzo and Lucky arrive again, and later, it becomes evident that Lucky has become dumb and Pozzo has become blind. Pozzo needs Lucky to show him the way. In a way, they change roles as do the characters in Commedia dell'Arte. In Commedia dell'Arte, the players are in pairs and this condition is also evident in *Waiting for Godot*. The characters Dottore and Pantalone are a pair and they are quite different. Pantalone is also identified as Dottore's alter ego (Henke, 2002, p. 20), while at the same time, they are quite different characters. Dottore is a learned academic but he follows the temptations of Pantalone. In a way, Dottore and Pantalone complete each other as one of them is a learned gentleman and the other is uneducated, cunning, and wicked. Also, though not specifically alter egos, Vladimir, and Estragon are counterparts. Estragon has a problem with his feet. He cannot take off his boots. This symbolizes that he has bodily defects. Vladimir continually "*takes off his hat, peers inside it... feels about inside it, turns it upside down, shakes it... feels inside it again*" (Beckett, 1954, p. 6). That is to say, Vladimir represents the intellectual problems of humankind as the head is associated with intelligence.

Vladimir and Estragon, much like Pantalone and Dottore in Commedia dell'Arte, complete each other in a way, which can be seen as another application

of the use of ancient traditions in *Waiting for Godot*. Particular attention must be paid to the fact that the completion of one another by Vladimir and Estragon does not represent a meaningful unity, and the idea of meaningful unity contradicts the concept of absurd drama. It is also known that characters in Commedia dell'Arte are sometimes involved in harsh arguments, the disagreement between Dottore and Pantalone often end in a verbal taunt. They agree with each other on monetary issues if they gain equally. Dottore is a "*verbal virtuoso*" (Henke, 2002, p. 26), so he defeats Pantalone with his words. Tension also arises between the characters Pedrolino and Arlecchino (Henke, 2002, pp. 26-27). The violence of the characters against each other is also seen in *Waiting for Godot*. Pozzo perpetrates a lot of violence against Lucky. When they first appear in the play, the reader can understand from the stage directions that Pozzo has tied Lucky with a rope to himself. Pozzo continually whips Lucky as seen in the scene between Pozzo and Lucky; "*Crack of whip. Pozzo appears. They cross the stage. Lucky passes before Vladimir and Estragon and exit. Pozzo at the sight of Vladimir and Estragon stops short. The rope tautens. Pozzo jerks at it violently*" (Beckett, 1954, p. 16). Estragon also perpetrates violence against Lucky in the form of learned behavior which he took from Pozzo: "*he shoulders Lucky out of his way, kicks over the stool, comes and goes agitatedly*"(Beckett, 1954, p.28).

Commedia dell'Arte includes the element of "*verbal virtuoso*" (Henke, 2002, p. 26); however, although Commedia dell'Arte and *Waiting for Godot* have striking similarities, at this point they differ from each other. Words and language are not regarded as important and valuable in Absurd Drama, as language falls short in expressing the self. As meaning has been lost after the situation which brought about Absurd Drama and Absurd Literature, like many other aspects in life, language has also lost its value. The virtuosity of language is slightly seen in some scenes in the play but Beckett employs verbal virtuosity in a sarcastic manner.

> ***POZZO:*** *How did you find me? (Vladimir and Estragon look at him blankly.) Good? Fair? Middling? Poor? Positively bad?*
>
> ***VLADIMIR:*** *(first to understand). Oh very good, very very good.*
>
> ***POZZO:*** *(to Estragon). And you, Sir?*
>
> ***ESTRAGON:*** *Oh tray bong, tray tray tray bong.*
>
> ***POZZO:*** *(fervently). Bless you, gentlemen, bless you! (Pause) I have such need of encouragement! (Pause) I weakened a little towards the end, you didn't notice?* (Beckett, 1954, p. 30)

When Pozzo asks about how Vladimir and Estragon found his performance, they say nonsensical words. Estragon says "*tray bong"* (Beckett, 1954, p. 30), which is meaningless. It does not matter what he says because it is apparent that Pozzo is doing it to feel good and Estragon's words are worthless. This clearly shows the inadequacy of language. Language functions only as a weak tool to avoid silence. Clichés are mocked in absurd drama as they are unable to convey any meaning at all. Small talks function as a means to carry out social interaction and to avoid loneliness. One can even go further and claim that the real meaning of "How are you?" is "I want you to talk to me", that is to say, there is a gap between the real and the superficial aim of speech. This indicates a fragmentation. As seen in the quotation below, the purpose of language is to avoid silence. The desire to avoid silence becomes evident when Estragon says: "*in the meantime let's try and converse calmly, since we're incapable of keeping silent*" (Beckett, 1954, p. 53). The sedatephobic state of the characters is a sign of their fear to face the reality. The characters continually intend to carry out meaningful conversations but these conversations are always interrupted. *Waiting for Gadot* reveals the psychology of the traumatized individual of the post-war era who is "*disintegrated, deconstructed, shadowed, fragmented, submerged, unstable, and scarcely able to tell a coherent story*" (Simon, 1991, p. 157). The characteristics of the post-war individual are reflected in the dialogues. In *Waiting for Godot*, "*language does not follow a logical order because the inner world is reflected with the language*" (Görmez, 2011, p. 12) and since the inner worlds of the characters are fragmented, the language also presents a fragmented structure. Birlik calls the characters in the play "*linguistically paralyzed"*as their language helps them no more to formulate a unified sense of reality and self (Birlik, 2011, p. 22). That is why meaningless overwhelms meaning and sound prevails the semantic value of words.

As Henke explains the "*non-logicality: the play of language*" in Commedia dell'Arte, he states that "*the frequent emphasis of sound over sense in various types of wordplay; the absence of backward scanning, the privileging of paratactic and additive connectives point to another characteristic modal feature of orality: its non-logicality*" (Henke, 2002, p. 35). Henke adds that in the oral performances in Commedia dell'Arte, "*the language itself becomes a material to be played with*" (Henke, 2002, p. 35). Playing with the language is seen in the form of a riddle. In some ways, the Commedia dell'Arte characters "*test the limits of sense"* (Henke, 2002, p. 36). This situation perfectly describes the understanding of absurd drama and the play of language is also frequently found in Beckett's work. The above quotation explains how the characters are unable to remain silent. The function of language is to avoid silence in this context. The

sound is more powerful than the meaning which is conveyed. Therefore, the semantic value of languge is under question and "*the frequent emphasis of sound over sense"* (Henke, 2002, p. 35) is also evident in *Waiting for Godot.* The use of this ancient tradition serves the purpose of revealing the insignificance of language and the fact that the sound is more powerful than the semantic structure.

ESTRAGON: *Then adieu.*

POZZO: *Adieu.*

VLADIMIR: *Adieu.*

POZZO: *Adieu.*

Silence. No one moves.

VLADIMIR: *Adieu.*

POZZO: *Adieu.*

ESTRAGON: *Adieu.*

Silence.

POZZO: *And thank you.*

VLADIMIR: *Thank you.*

POZZO: *Not at all.*

ESTRAGON: *Yes yes.*

POZZO: *No no.* (Beckett, 1954, pp. 38-39)

William Shakespeare (1564- 1616) is widely considered one of the most successful dramatists of the world. He was not only an expert of the English Language; he was also the founder of some words in English. Beckett uses some Shakespearean expressions in *Waiting for Godot*. However, the use of these words does not make the context more meaningful. Such Shakespearean expressions as adieu and make haste are used but even these Shakespearean words do not even make sense in this context. This example demonstrates the meaninglessness of language. The only function of language is to avoid silence. When there is silence, the characters feel obliged to speak, and speaking does not function as a social interaction; it is a shelter to abstain from silence. Esslin states that "*the certitudes and unshakable basic assumptions of former ages have been swept away, that have been tested and found wanting, that they have been discredited as cheap and somewhat childish illusions*" (Esslin, 1961, p.18). That is to say, people have become estranged in the universe. The feeling of being left

alone in the universe is such a terrifying fact that the characters abstain from confronting it by keeping themselves busy by speaking.

The traditional element of playing with language, which is also found in Commedia dell'Arte, was used by Beckett in the play and the significance of this usage is that language can only be an item played with by the playwright in absurd drama; it does not fulfill an effective communicative function. The idea behind this is the meaninglessness and ineffectiveness of language. The language is fragmented as seen in the examples above and this fragmented language indicates that the characters do not aim to engage in constructive communication. Esslin defended that "*our knowledge*" is "*separated from life*" and there is disintegration between our culture and our selves as language has dominated our thought patterns through ruling people into "*social context into which we are not integrated*" (Esslin, 1961, p. 299). To regain the integration of culture, life, and knowledge, language needs to be questioned and reestablished (Esslin, 1961, p. 299). That is presumably the reason why the use of language in *Waiting for Godot* is fragmentary. Esslin stated that "*language appears more and more as being in contradiction to reality*" (Esslin, 1961, p. 297). Considering that in many parts of the play Vladimir and Estragon use language to avoid silence, and the reason why they avoid silence is that they do not want to face the absurd reality of existence, it is clear that language is even "*in contradiction to reality*" (Esslin, 1961, p. 297) as Esslin stated.

The reality in the absurdist view is that people live in a hostile world that is chaotic and lacks an order. In this chaotic and absurd faith of human beings, language even deludes the human being instead of conveying meaning. Language functions as a means to escape from reality in Beckett's work. Language is a way of distraction, escapism, and hiding (from) the truth. Esslin argued that language has lost its proper function of expressing the "*authentic content*" and it has become a device for concealing it (Esslin, 1961, p. 299). In a certain sense, language itself becomes an illusion. In what way does language become an illusion? It is a futile search for conveying meaning in a world where meaning does not exist. Illusions are "*obviously out of tune with reality*" (Esslin, 1961, p. 304). According to the absurdist view, veiling the truth with an illusion is a dangerous deed.

The Harlequin (Arlecchino) character of Commedia dell'Arte has great significance for Beckett's work. As Katrizky explains in his book *The Art of Commedia*, "*Harlequin is perhaps the most popular, universally recognized and thoroughly researched of all Commedia dell'Arte servants*" (Katrizky, 2006, p. 102). Many actors of the time tried to create a character, which was meant to be

remarkable and therefore created several characters. Most of these characters were not much different from the others notwithstanding some variations in costumes. Some servant roles in Commedia dell'Arte became distinguished among the characters and became more successful. The most remarkable one was Harlequin (Katrizky, 2006, p. 226). The costume of the Harlequin character evolved in time. The final form of the Harlequin costume is in striking resemblance with what is called clown in drama today. The costume was "*multi-colored"*, and it included a "*regularly lozenge-patched suit*" and it was patched (Katrizky, 2006, pp. 227-229). There is a resemblance of Vladimir and Estragon in the figure to that of a clown's in a couple of scenes in *Waiting for Godot.* In the opening scene, Vladimir has clown-like gestures and the two characters try to embrace each other which they fail to do, which is a repetitive comic element in a clown show. Therefore, parallelism can be drawn between the harlequin character and the characters in the play and it can be inferred that Beckett used this traditional element in his play. Why the clown figure is attached such importance in terms of displaying the human beings' condition in the world is significant. A clown is a figure which can truly represent the human condition in the universe. The make-up of a clown represents a contradiction; a happy smiling face with teardrops. This explains the condition of human beings in the world. People are superficially happy but they are simultaneously discontented. According to an absurdist view, it is impossible to have ease in such a world "*where the decline of religious faith*" and belief in any other thought systems "*deprived man of certainties*" (Esslin, 1961, p. 292). People can only pretend to be happy and at ease but inside, the feeling of anxiety is predominant as human beings are unable to find absolute answers to their questions. Thus, the Harlequin-like actions of Vladimir and Estragon are referential to the clown-like existence of human beings in the world. As a result, it can be inferred that Beckett must have used this traditional element to display the absurdity of the human condition in the world.

2) The Use of Other Traditions in *Waiting for Godot*

Absurd drama uses the traditional element of nonsense poetry (Esslin, 1965, p.6). In the play, there is an example of nonsense poetry in act II. It is a song sung by Vladimir and it is written in the form of poetry.

A dog came in–

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 (48-49)

The poetry of the song is not a meaningful one. Resembling the repetitive structure of the lives of human beings in the universe, the poem uses repetition. Ironically, the poem has rhyme in some lines. For example, the first stanza is in "a-b-c-b" from. The fact that there is rhyme does not make it meaningful; therefore, it is an example of nonsense poetry. The structure of the poem represents the circular plot of the play and gives the reader the sense that the same poem could go on in that circular structure. The "a-b-c-b" form of the first stanza and the repetition of "*and dug the dog a tomb*" (49) gives the sense of getting back to the start, a non-progressive action, just like the circular plot of the play that starts and ends the same way and gives the reader the feeling that nothing has happened.

There is a direct reference in *Waiting for Godot* to the music hall, pantomime, and circus.

ESTRAGON: *It's awful.*

VLADIMIR: *Worse than the pantomime.*

ESTRAGON: *The circus.*

VLADIMIR: *The music-hall.*

ESTRAGON: *The circus. (27)*

What is the importance of the reference to pantomime, circus and the music hall in this context? Denard states that pantomime "*deliberately sustained aesthetic distance from reality* [...] *the performer danced expressively but did not speak*" (Denard, 2007, p. 156). In a circus or music hall, language is not of primary importance. There is a distinction between speech and action; that is to say, language has a minor position. Speech and action do not match; language is not regarded as a meaningful tool. Thus, it can be inferred that Beckett used traditional elements to enrich his style and be able to display the absurd condition of humankind. Pantomime effectively demonstrates that language is not a necessary means of communication. Actions are more reliable than words. Resemblances can be seen between Beckett's work and Dadaism. Dadaists suggest remaining skeptical without believing in the presence and truth of anything. They defend that reason is worthless. They mock the literary genres preceding them. Dadaists are not interested in language, style, rhyme, or content (Arıkan, 2006, p. 94). *Waiting for Godot* has a structure that is similar to Dadaism. In *Waiting for Godot*, language is not a powerful item and Beckett does

not regard language as a valuable device. Therefore, the resemblances of Beckett's work with Dadaism, pantomime, circus and the music hall reveal the dysfunctional nature of the language. Graver calls the cyclical pattern and the repetitive structure of the play *"a self-contained routine or ritual in which our dichotomous couple blends the cross-talk and stylish pattern of the* [...] *music hall"*(Graver, 2004, p. 32). That is to say, Beckett's reference to the music hall is also a deliberate one as it highlights the monotonous routine in daily life.

CONCLUSION

This paper has sought to find the ancient traditions used in *Waiting for Godot* and to find out the possible explanations why that practice was used and how it contributes to absurd drama. As to the representations of ancient traditions, it has been found out that there are various resemblances and references to Commedia dell'Arte, Nonsense Poetry, Circus, Pantomime and the music hall in *Waiting for Godot.* Vladimir, Estragon, Lucky and Pozzo are allegorical characters as they do not represent a specific social class, they do not have nationalities, they do not have any social status, titles (apart from being tramps), or any social ranks and they are not individual characters. They represent the absurd condition of humankind in the universe. The reader is not interested in the individual character but the representation gains importance. But the distinction is that morality plays represented metaphysical elements like the Day of Judgment while Absurd Drama rejects such metaphysical aspects (Esslin, 1961, p. 293).

In *Waiting for Godot*, the main issue is neither why Godot does not show up nor whether he is ever going to arrive. The main important point is the act of waiting in vain. The act of waiting in vain for an entity which will supposedly never arrive is a metaphor for the shelter of humankind from despair. People need to keep their hopes alive since hope is an urge to live. It is evident that the characters escape from the "*desperate boredom and pain, by talking,* [and] *by not listening to the silence*" (Alvarez, 1973, pp. 86- 87).The plot does not focus on what happens to the characters; they are like a mirror to our everyday existence. Thus, parallelism can be drawn between morality plays and *Waiting for Godot* as both the genre and the play represent the condition of humankind in the universe and it can be assumed that this style serves the purpose of displaying the absurdity of life. The play involves religious references but it is not a religious play. There are attributes from Dadaism, Commedia dell'Arte but the use of these elements serves the purpose of an absurdist view. As argued throughout the essay, Beckett

combined ancient traditions in his play and, in doing so; the play successfully displays the absurd condition of humankind in the universe.

As Ilyas and Rafi state, "*Beckett's Waiting for Godot parodies the human condition as caught between circumstances of war, political upheavals and devastated social systems*" (Ilyas & Rafi, 2014, p. 82). Since World War II is "*the world's greatest man-made catastrophe*" (Lee, 1991, p. 247), the effects of the catastrophe are evident in *Waiting for Godot.* The characters in the play represent the universal characteristics and sufferings of humankind. They embody particular characteristics and sufferings, just as Didi stands for the mental sufferings and Gogo stands for the bodily sufferings of humankind. The master and the slave represent the mutual and somewhat voluntary abuse of people by one another. The relationships of both pairs who are doppelgangers are influenced by a strange state of "*mutual interdependence, wanting to leave each other*" being "*at war with each other*" and simultaneously being "*dependent on each other*" (Esslin, 1968, p. 66).

The newly-emerging type of drama did not offer a brand-new subject matter since suffering is integral to human condition. However, it presented the universal suffering in a brand-new way; namely, with minimal decor, with absurd dialogues which sometimes become very meaningful and sometimes get ridiculous. There is no harmony in the semantic structure of the play apart from the fact that it represents the absurd condition of human beings. The play represents the absurd condition partly in philosophical dialogues and partly in nonsense statements. *Waiting for Godot* displays a unity within fragmentation. Although *Waiting for Godot* is a play in which nothing happens, all the techniques and the dialogues used in the play refer to absurd condition of human beings. It has been observed that the representation of ancient traditions contributes to the play in this direction. It is not possible to know whether Beckett used the tradition of Commedia dell'Arte deliberately or whether the flow of the play spontaneously resembles it, since it is not mentioned in the play. But there is a certain fact that this representation (coincidental or deliberate) contributes to the play's presentation of the absurd condition of humankind. The representation of ancient tradition raises awareness of the absurd condition of humankind which is "*trite, mechanical, complacent, and deprived of the dignity that comes from awareness*" (Esslin, 1961, p. 291). The awareness the playwright raises using the mentioned techniques provides the spectator with a self-awareness. That is why the representation of ancient traditions is crucial in the play. To conclude, in the post-traumatic world after World War II, language was not regarded as an effective tool which provided the individual the ability of being "*aware of the self, communicating with others, or comprehending reality*" (Haney, 2001, p. 11).

On the contrary, language was regarded as an illusion. That is probably the reason why there are representations of ancient traditions in *Waiting for Godot*, since these ancient traditions are based on presenting the condition rather than narrating ideas.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Objective: Martin Esslin, a significant critic who theorized the concept of Absurd Drama, stated that ancient traditions were used in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. Since Martin Esslin is the most important critic of Absurd Drama, his statement is highly essential and encourages a study to be done on this issue. This study stems from Esslin's idea of the use of ancient traditions in the work. In this context, the purpose of the present research is to examine the representation of ancient traditions in Beckett's work and at to examine their contributions to the work simultaneously. The goal of this research is to examine which ancient traditions are used in the work and to decide how these traditions can relate to the work's interpretation. Absurd Drama arose from the traumas experienced by humankind during World War II, and it shows that the meaning of the absurd universe has been lost. Since World War II was a great trauma for humanity, people in the post-war era began to disregard the ideals and ideas to which they had previously attached great significance. In this period, absurd drama, which was about the meaninglessness of life and brought a new perspective to drama, emerged. This study aims to reveal the connection between the use of ancient traditions in work and the ways in which the use of ancient traditions contributes to the concept of absurdity.

Method: The present study focuses on the representations of the ancient traditions of Commedia dell'Arte, Nonsense Poetry, Circus, Pantomime and music hall in *Waiting for Godot*. In order to determine the representation of the aforementioned concepts in the work, the work is analyzed by close reading technique. The Introduction introduces absurd drama and *Waiting for Godot* and outlines which traditions this study endeavors to unearth in the work. Part 2 deals with the use of Commedia dell'Arte in the work. It seeks to reveal how the representation of the ancient tradition of Commedia dell'Arte serves the purpose of revealing human condition. Part 3 deals with the representations of Nonsense Poetry, Circus, Pantomime and music hall in *Waiting for Godot.* The Conclusion deals with the findings and discussion of the research.

Findings: One of the findings of the research is that there is parallelism between *Waiting for Godot* and Commedia dell'Arte in terms of style and the absurdity of the words. The apparent spontaneity of the language in *Waiting for Godot* parallels Commedia dell'Arte, although *Waiting for Godot* is based on a written text and Commedia dell'Arte is based on improvisation. It has been examined that master and servant characters are found both in Commedia dell'Arte and *Waiting for Godot.* It has also been found that both the characters in *Waiting for Godot* and the characters in morality plays are representative and allegorical characters. In act II, there is an instance of nonsense poetry. It is a song and it is composed in the style of nonsense poetry. It has been found that there are similarities with pantomime in the work. These similarities have been found to be a good way to show that language is not an effective tool.

Conclusion and Discussion: The study has sought to discover the ancient traditions represented in *Waiting for Godot* and to explore the possible reasons for the use of this practice and how it contributes to absurd drama. Regarding the representations of ancient traditions, numerous parallels and references to Commedia dell'Arte, Nonsense Poetry, Circus, Pantomime and the music hall have been found to exist. Partly in philosophical dialogues and partly in nonsense phrases, the play illustrates the absurd condition of humanity. Although *Waiting for Godot* is a play in which no significant event happens, all the strategies and dialogues used in the game relate to human beings' absurd condition. The portrayal of ancient traditions has been noted as a contribution to the play in terms of displaying the absurd condition of humanity. Using the mentioned strategies, the consciousness the playwright raises provides the spectator with self-awareness. In the play, the representation of ancient traditions is therefore essential.