

SAMUEL BECKETT'S PLAYS: A PSYCHOANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The most important aim of this research is to show psychoanalytic problem in Beckett's plays. This will be done by describing Beckett's characters, as well as Beckett himself, ideas about *identity* and *existence* in three of his major plays: *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame*, and *Happy Days*.

Beckett's father died when he was in his mid-twenties. So, when he lost his father due to personal loss his mental and his physical health. He had night sweats, fear and anxiety. He couldn't sleep on his bed alone. During the therapy sessions, Bion has suggested that he should write in order to release the pain and the inner struggle. Consequently, in a way, writing became a therapeutic tool for Samuel. So, Beckett's writing helped him to treat himself. That is why there are signs of psychoanalysis on Beckett's plays and Beckett's characters.

Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, in this article the aim is analyzing the two characters of Vladimir and Estragon in order to investigate their identity. These two characters put their whole existence into waiting. They are waiting for Godot all times. They believe that Godot will have all the answers of their questions. Beckett shows the unconscious mind of his characters, so we analyzed the play with psychoanalytic lens.

Another play is *Endgame* by Beckett, in this research two characters of Hamm and Clov for their identity were studied. Hamm and Clov often discuss Clov leaving, but Clov never does and Hamm is ambiguous in his feelings about Clov leaving. *Endgame* never shows us a clear ending, so we consider this play and character's play by psychoanalytic. Another play is *Happy Days*, *Happy Days* offers only two characters: Winnie, a woman has fifty years, and Willie, a man has sixty years that Samuel Beckett searches for the meaning of existence in the play.

KEYWORDS: Psychoanalytic, Id, Ego, Super Ego, Sigmund Freud, Beckett's Play

INTRODUCTION

Samuel Barclay Beckett was born on 13 April 1906. He was an Irish avant-garde novelist, playwright, theatre director and poet, who lived in Paris for most of his adult life and wrote in both English and French. He is considered one of the last modernists. As an inspiration to many later writers, he is also some time considered one of the first post modernists. He is one of the key writers in what Martin Esslin called the "Theatre of the Absurd". Beckett was awarded the 1969 Nobel Prize in literature for his writing which in new forms for the novel and drama in the destitution of modern man acquires its elevation.

My purpose of writing the article is to consider theme of *Waiting for Godot* (1952), *Endgame* (1958), *Happy Days* (1961) plays. Because there are many similarities on theme of these plays. So, we have investigated psychoanalytic issues on the mentioned three plays of Samuel Beckett.

Waiting for Godot is one of an important works of Beckett. He has written Waiting for Godot in 1952. Endgame was Samuel Beckett's first full-length play after his famous Waiting for Godot. Happy Days play written in two acts by Samuel Beckett.

The Aims and Objectives of Writing the Article Are

- To find out the psychoanalytic issues in Beckett's plays, waiting for Godot, Endgame and Happy Days.
- To know whether psychoanalytic problems have direct effect to Beckett's plays.
- To search identity in some Beckett's plays.
- To find out the reason that makes the psychoanalytic problems in Beckett's plays.
- To consider Existence in Beckett's works and world.
- To consider relationship between psychoanalysis and history of Beckett's life.

Psychoanalytic on Beckett's Plays

Before we can understand Freud's theory of personality, we must first understand his view of how the mind is organized. According to Freud, the mind can be divided into two main parts:

1-The conscious mind includes everything that we are aware of. This is the aspect of our mental processing that we can think and talk about rationally.

2-The unconscious mind is a source of feelings, thoughts, urges, and memories that is outside of our conscious awareness.

Freud believed the human mind as an interaction of id, ego, and super-ego. The ego, and to some extent the super-ego, is conscious or on the surface. The id remains unconscious. They make up the personality together.

Most of the contents of the unconscious are unacceptable or unpleasant, such as the feelings of pain, anxiety, or conflict. According to Freud, the unconscious influences our behavior and experience, even though we are unaware of these underlying influences.

Beckett shows the unconscious mind of his characters as well. Beckett's play shows us the conscious part of the mind which can be seen in waiting for Godot. In the other words waiting is a conscious state of mind and Vladimir and Estragon are attending at a place at a certain time; so there has to be a meaning for them to be there. Actually, reason or meaning of being there is unconscious state of the mind. Although characters are waiting for Godot to arrive and save or help them, there should be other hidden mental causes from psychoanalytic point of view. Beckett never shows Vladimir's or Estragon's unconscious feelings and don't let them to discuss their dreams. They never put their dreams in words, in the other word, their unconscious behaviors are not verbalized and this is why their mental health cannot be restored. The interesting point about the fears of two characters is that they have quite dissimilar fears. While Vladimir's repressed fear is that Godot might never come, Estragon's repressed fear is that they might never leave. This opposite consciousness may appear in other aspects of their waiting life.

Vladimir strongly believes in his career and stays focused on his task of waiting while Estragon is very absent-minded and stays focused on leaving because he has no idea about Godot and he continually forgets about him. He

even forgets or maybe doubts about his name.

We pass the time, Beckett tells us, waiting for a meaning that will save us from the pain, ugliness, emptiness of existence. The concept of existence and identity is one of the main themes of modern literature and Beckett's characters. The function of the superego or moral standards remains for Godot.

Pozzo, Lucky, the boy and Godot should be studied from psychoanalytic point of view to approach determining the theme of identity. It seems that Vladimir and Estragon are two independent characters in their own identity and individuality, but Beckett never creates an individual character that has an independent self and identity with no connection and dependency to others.

Didi and Gogo have the most active and positive relationship of any of Beckett's characters. Vladimir represents the mind and the mental; Estragon represents the body and physical concerns. Estragon's steady concerns for food, sleep, and even his boots can be the best proof, while Vladimir remembers the events of the past, and is the "thinker". Estragon has a short memory, and lacks a mind. Estragon cannot remember things very well. By doing so he loses his identity, which is somewhat refreshed every time Vladimir reminds him of past events. Estragon cannot even remember why they are waiting for Godot, until Vladimir reminds him.

Both the contradictions evident in Vladimir and Estragon staying together and Pozzo and Lucky's seeming balance are apparent in the dialogue of *Endgame*.

Hamm and Clov often discuss Clov leaving, but Clov never does and Hamm, like Pozzo, is ambiguous in his feelings about Clov leaving. Contradiction between external and internal is another contradiction in *Endgame*. Hamm knows Clov should go and his protest confesses his disability to be alone. But he also fears for Clov in the outside world and fears for himself in his intern alone.

In *Happy Days*, Samuel Beckett pursues his relentless search for the meaning of existence, probing the tenuous relationships that bind one person to another, and each to the universe, top time past and time present. Samuel Beckett's humorously dark and ambiguous play, *Happy Days*, takes the idea of optimism to an extreme level. In the wake of impending death, the main character Winnie still believes that happy days are still ahead for her. The play is primarily a one-woman show. Since Willie barely has any lines, we never get a sense of his personality. He's like a pawn in the background and Winnie relies heavily on his presence, constantly looking for assurance that he is listening to her as she talks incessantly. Winnie escapes her loneliness by adhering strictly to her everyday routines and by taking great care of the inanimate objects she uses - a comb, toothbrush, lipstick, a nail file, and a revolver which she kisses. By treating these items almost like pets, she relieves her anxiety that she is alone.

CONCLUSIONS

Beckett's characters do not understand that they exist and often, they are only too painfully aware that they do exist or equally upset because they don't. Human identity is the struggle to be separate but together, is the struggle both to bridge the gap between subject and object, me and not me. Thus without the objects there is no silence. Without forays into the external world, there is no identity.

Another point that studied in this famous play of Beckett is the meaning of Identity lies behind the names. Beckett gives some hints to names of the characters and shows their reactions to names and their referential meanings.

Beckett tells us, waiting for a meaning that will save us from the pain, ugliness, emptiness of existence. The concept of existence and identity is one of the main themes of modern literature and Beckett's characters. That is why, in the waiting for Godot, Pozzo, Lucky, the boy and Godot should be studied from psychoanalytic point of view to approach determining the theme of identity.

In endgame, Hamm knows Clov should go and his protest confesses his disability to be alone. But he also fears for Clov in the outside world and fears for himself in his intern alone.

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Wilfred Bion has concluded that the root of Beckett's problems was during his fetal. When he lost his father and Beckett's problems was due to this period. He helped Beckett to use the process of artistic creation as a possibility to restore his mental. In a way, writing became a therapeutic tool. So, Beckett's writing helped him to treat himself.

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