

The image of woman in Beckett's waiting for Godot

Kadhim Dhahawi Abbass

Directorate General of Education in the Holy Kerbela

kadhim..dh2020@gmail.com

Abstract:

Man faced many difficulties throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, which led to dramatic changes in all aspects of existence. The confusion, chaos, and absurdity humanity encountered during those terrible times led to the creation of the Theatre of the Absurd. Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) the playwrights of the 20th century captured the absurdity and challenges of the modern world in an unique manner. In his dramatic treatments, he made a sincere effort to convey the predicament of destroyed figures that are unable to perceive their own existence. He experiences exhaustion and frustration as a result of the world's denial of their humanity, especially their gender.

Thus, we encounter just reflected versions of the most glaring issues of the current era in the all-male plays of Beckett. In other words, we come across sexless characters or, perhaps more accurately, neutral emblems of the challenges man faced in such a mess. This study explores how woman is absent from Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot.

Key words: (women, gender, Samuel Beckett, waiting for Godot).

صورة المرأة في مسرحية بيكيت تنتظر جودو

م.كاظم ضحوي عباس

مديرة تربية كربلاء المقدسة

kadhim..dh2020@gmail.com

الملخص:

واجه الإنسان صعوبات كثيرة طوال النصف الثاني من القرن التاسع عشر والنصف الأول من القرن العشرين، مما أدى إلى تغيرات جذرية في جميع جوانب الوجود. أدى الارتباك والفوضى والعبثية التي واجهتها البشرية خلال تلك الأوقات الرهيبة إلى إنشاء مسرح العبث. صموئيل بيكيت (١٩٠٦-١٩٨٩) الكتاب المسرحيون في القرن العشرين صوروا عبثية وتحديات العالم الحديث بطريقة فريدة. وقد بذل في معالجاته الدرامية جهداً مخلصاً لنقل محنة الشخصيات المدمرة التي لا تستطيع إدراك وجودها. ويعاني من الإرهاق والإحباط نتيجة إنكار العالم لإنسانيتهم، وخاصة جنسهم.

وهكذا، فإننا نواجه نسجاً منعكسة فقط من أكثر القضايا الصارخة في العصر الحالي في مسرحيات بيكيت التي يتناولها الذكور فقط. بمعنى آخر، نصادف شخصيات لا جنس لها، أو ربما بشكل أكثر دقة، رموز محايدة للتحديات التي يواجهها الإنسان في مثل هذه الفوضى. تستكشف هذه الدراسة كيف غابت المرأة عن رواية صامويل بيكيت في انتظار جودو.

الكلمات المفتاحية: (المرأة، الجنس، صامويل بيكيت، انتظار جودو).

Introduction:

Before the 19th century, women's rights in west culture were severely restricted to those of men. For example, daughters could only inherit if there were no sons, and wives were completely obedient to their husbands. Women also had to deal with the harshness of the law, which prohibited them from testifying in court, denied them access to education, punished them for speaking in public, and occasionally, in the country's early history, elderly women were hanged for witchcraft.

In general, American society viewed women as humble, devout, and submissive, whereas men were assertive, active, and materialistic. Consequently, an ideal of American women emerged, dubbed a "cult of true womanhood" by historian Barbara Welter. The four fundamental qualities of a female character that this cult promoted were piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. These qualities required women to voluntarily and submissively accept their places in society.²³

It was no longer viable to use these old art forms and standards that had stopped being convincing and lost their validity in the meaningless and faithless age that followed the Second World War, therefore the creation of a new sort of theater was required under such circumstances. In addition to bringing about materialistic riches and wealth for man, these cultural advancements also contributed negatively and indirectly to the escalation of his social and spiritual issues. It was a weapon with two edges. Being surrounded by a large void in many ways made man feel incredibly frustrated and alienated (Ford 39).

As a result, contemporary man's new task has been to find a fresh and appropriate approach to dealing with a world that has robbed him of every sense of fulfillment and optimism. In the end, this led to a general perception of the absurdity of life and all of its ideals. Of course, these feelings of dread, dreadfulness, and perplexity found expression in art and artists, such as painters, poets, playwrights, and intellectuals. These personalities were fast to react to these changes and sought the best ways to depict such paradigm shifts and their impacts as well as examine man's place in his new universe (Ford. 40).

Each author thus has a distinctive style of expressing the absurdity of contemporary life. To put it another way, they were all consumed with meditating on the most glaring issues with human existence, such as death, physical misery, alienation, threat, and lack of communication. Man lives in a dreadful mess that makes him feel overwhelmingly lost. Over time, the decline in moral and religious convictions along with the growth of moral and social collapse left man feeling unhappy and uncertain about the purpose, order, or

meaning of his life or his previous moral principles. When faced with a problem, man has always turned to religion to find solutions and explanations for everything. However, Nietzsche (1844–1900) noted in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1842) that "the number of people for whom God is dead has greatly increased" since his time. Thus, nothing stayed the same, and contemporary man abandoned the outdated notions that "shrouded" him in order to go on a brand-new, never-ending quest for meaning (Esslin 290).

Appropriate method to deal with a reality that denied him any sense of fulfillment or optimism. In the end, this led to a widespread realization of the ridiculousness of life and all of its ideals. Of course, artists of all kinds—painters, poets, playwrights, and philosophers—found expressions for these feelings of unease, confusion, and worry in their work. In response to these changes, these individuals moved quickly to examine man's place in his new universe and to convey these pivotal moments and their consequences in the best possible way. However, these new ways of living and thinking required new ways of expressing themselves (Esslin 290).

“Rising, streetcar, four hours of work, meal, sleep, and Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday and Saturday according to the same rhythm – this path is easily followed most of the time. But one day the “why” arises and everything begins in the weariness with amazement.”

Albert Camus (*The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, 10)

This is how Albert Camus put it when he talked about how aimless man's place in the world is; he thought that man's fate was quite ridiculous because it leads nowhere. But only in such rare instances is it tragic: "Today's worker goes through life performing the same tasks every day, and his destiny is no less ridiculous." However, only in those few

instances when it becomes conscious is it tragic” (Camus, 90). Put another way, absurdity originates from the instants at which all of life's mechanical deeds come to an end and consciousness begins to awaken and function. This indicates that the only unfathomable feeling that has been emerging is that "beginning to think is beginning to be undermined," or that there is no longer a sense of living”(lane.11).

That is to say, a character in a ridiculous play can represent the most glaring issues facing society. That is accurate for the majority of ludicrous plays, particularly Beckett's all-male plays, where there isn't a single female actor. However, the male character in these plays also represents humanity, so what's really missing is gender, not just male or female. In these kinds of plays, identity and gender are lost. As Martin Esslin put it,

In the Theatre of the Absurd, the audience is confronted with characters where motives and actions remain largely incomprehensible. With such characters it is almost impossible to identify; the more mysterious their action and their nature (qtd.in Esslin 290).

Furthermore, everything in the play turns out to be pointless, and there is an overall feeling of sterility. Additionally, Beckett gives us a crystal-clear illustration of sterility and stagnation in *Waiting for Godot*, which mirrors the state of modern man. Therefore, there isn't a single woman on stage because Beckett clearly intends for this play to have a sterile atmosphere, whereas the presence of both sexes on stage always symbolizes excitement and fertility.

Beckett portrays a dying civilization and a barren, degraded world devoid of any spiritual significance in his early poetry. The woman shown here is of the same debased type, shallow, frustrated, dead in existence, and a part of what Beckett refers to as a waste place. She is the real representation of a chaotic world that is about to come to an end.

Here, Beckett demonstrates how powerless man is to establish his existence, sex, identity, and self. It represents the ultimate incapacity of man to be anything other than a figure of sterility, absurdity, dullness, and uncertainty in a highly complex era. It represents the broken self of the modern man, of whom nothing remains but a bare skeleton in a barren landscape. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to examine the characters in these plays as symbols of something other than gender or even just a suggestion of it. It's a picture of the contemporary Everyman. It is about universal issues that affect all people, regardless of gender.

Samuel Beckett:

The majority of well-known figures in English literary history were born in Ireland. A significant figure in twentieth-century literature, Samuel Barclay Beckett, was born in Ireland in April 1906. He was a writer with "his own stamp, assured and stylized." He is a dramatist and novelist whose plays have been performed all over the world and whose writings have been translated into numerous languages. The British publisher of Beckett was John Calder. states that:

Not only is Beckett one of the greatest seminal figures in the arts of the twentieth-century, but he is probably the greatest writer of his time with a message of humanity and decency that is much needed in this selfish age.(qtd.in Coe. 79).

The human beings that make up Beckett's "disobjectification" drama serve just as "stage bodies" as opposed to traditional, cohesive, and self-present "characters." Seeing them as stage bodies answers to Beckett's emphasis on the function of the bodies, free of the language imposed by specific cultural discourses, rather than diminishing their humanity. Recognizing them as stage bodies considers Beckett's inclination to identify his dramatis personae solely by gender, particularly in his later stage pieces (Beckett.p.8).

Beckett illuminated the essential components of human existence and nature in order to deal with the human self in a brilliant and impartial manner. He conceptualized the contemporary society in terms of symbols, wherein he represented the moral and spiritual decay of the time economically. Stated differently, Beckett was able to employ innovative dramatic forms to effectively convey the prevalent issues and challenges of his time. He approached these issues in a very original way, using the characters in all of his plays—regardless of gender—as representations and symbols of contemporary issues like being bored, suffering, losing one's identity, life's meaninglessness, and the absence of fertility and love (Selden 131).

Thus, the characters in Beckett's plays "are mere receptacles for thought and emotion rather than individual 'personalities.'" Put another way, Beckett strips his characters of their gender, age, and even physical characteristics. It may be said, therefore, that Beckett gave them "the emblematic role of suffering humanity." He intended them to be symbols or mirrors of the era's overall emptiness, disorder, and silliness. He displayed a picture of the "shared fear, of death and darkness." (Selden 131).

Beckett attempted to portray a neutral emblem of the human species as a whole in his plays. He therefore transcended the idea of gender. Put another way, both his male and female characters symbolize humanity and the playwright's ideology virtually equally. Furthermore, there is no "I," "he," or "she" with Beckett. He made an effort to portray the true picture of contemporary life and, of course, the state of modern man. His plays all portray the world as "The real desert where everything seems to be drying up, especially the sexual life," which makes this clear (Brater. 128).

That is particularly true given the nearly total physical absence of the female form, which is symbolic of both the sterility of life and the absence of feelings and love. "Imprised in a meaningless universe and impotent to escape from it, incapable of dying, futility, eked out with the dimensions of the eternal," is how man describes himself in such a harsh age.

Therefore, in such a harsh environment, love in all its forms has no place. Man needs desperately to be freed from this sense of ridiculousness. Because sex is another symbol of identity, Beckett presented plays in which gender is not necessary to be specified. To put it another way, man loses his identity, certainty, and even humanity in such harshness (Coe. 99).

In order to emphasize the lack of gender, Beckett created numerous plays in which there is a complete absence of female characters. This is because, in essence, a man cannot express his gender in the absence of a female figure. Thus, Beckett portrayed masculine characters who were sketchy in his play *Waiting for Godot*, and *A Piece of Monologue*. In other words, except from their appearance, these characters have lost all feeling of humanity. In other words, they are symbols rather than actual representatives of a particular sex. Here, Beckett demonstrates how powerless man is to establish his existence, sex, identity, and self. It represents the ultimate incapacity of man to be anything other than a symbol of folly, sterility, monotony, and uncertainty in a highly complex era (Reid .17).

Theatergoers are familiar with the methods used by Beckett (1906–1989) to overcome discursive and temporal obstacles in order to achieve a transtemporal, transverbal consciousness, even though they may find it difficult to describe these absurdist methods' effects afterwards. Character development, story progression, and traditional psychology are all discarded. Beckett illustrates how consciousness transitions from a historically mediated experience to a condition that transcends linguistic and cultural barriers. Beckett illustrates what it is like to be aware in a single moment rather than slipping into a discursive slipstream of culturally controlled thought patterns by making the most of the body's role (Bloom.79).

As a result, Beckett's writing output was most productive during the 1950s. Thus, he received the Nobel Prize in Literature sixteen years after the play *Waiting for Godot* premiered. Beckett stated in 1985 that he composed *Godot* "to come into the light." I found

a livable spot on the stage, which was what I needed. Alec Reid provided us with an ideal depiction of Beckett the individual and the creator, stating that:

Shy, friendly, modest, lucid, generous, compassionate, these are the words which people who know Beckett and have worked with him use again and again. Thus encouraged, we may approach Beckett's plays with less fear. They will look strange, utterly unlike anything we have seen before, but provided we can keep ourselves receptive, we may find them moving and positive.(qtd.in Reid. 17)

In a loss like this, where man is stripped of all moral purity and beauty, nothing is worthy. Put another way, he begins to doubt the existence of concepts like love, compassion, and understanding, which leads him to become less interested in gender issues given the widespread prevalence of violence, which, in Pinter's words, "everyone encounters violence in some way or another." In actuality, the original meaning of concepts like gender, marriage, and family has been erased. The three characters, Davies in particular, aptly embody all of this (Baker&Tabachnich.p.12).

Beckett, who lived in a time of spiritual bankruptcy, dedicates his early verse to a falling world, where the image of a woman would exist alongside a collapsing and decaying civilization. The lady shown here is petty, unfaithful, lusty, infertile, and hysterical—all characteristics of her barren existence. The most exquisite of human emotions, love, is reduced in Beckett's early dramas to a physical act carried out by people who have abandoned the choice between two moral attitudes—for Good or for Evil(Maxwell.68). The portrayal of women in Beckett's play is a component of the ludicrous and ostentatious intellectual culture prevalent in New modern.

Following a thorough examination of humanity's moral predicament in his early drama, Beckett believes that the way to salvation is to live a spiritual life, discern between good and evil, and possess the willpower to choose goodness despite the suffering and hope that this decision may entail. Therefore, the themes of Beckett's later plays include spiritual

purification, suffering perseverance, ultimate submission to God's will, and hope for salvation.

He conceptualized the contemporary society in terms of symbols, wherein he represented the moral and spiritual decay of the time economically. Stated differently, Beckett was able to employ innovative dramatic forms to effectively convey the prevalent issues and challenges of his time. He approached these issues in a very original way, using the characters in all of his plays—regardless of gender—as representations and symbols of contemporary issues like being bored, suffering, losing one's identity, life's meaninglessness, and the absence of fertility and love (Selden.131).

Waiting for Godot (1953)

Written in 1949, it was released in English in 1954. On January 4, 1953, the two-act tragicomedy debuted at the Theatre de Babylon. Following its debut, it elicited conflicting reactions. Jacques Audiberties, writing in Arts on January 16, 1953, was one among the many commentators on the play, calling it "a perfect work which deserves a triumph"(Fletcher.38).Beckett therefore desires his characters to be sexually neutral in order to represent the actual state of sterility in the life of a modern man. Thus, Waiting for Godot by Beckett is "about humanity more than masculinity... in which gender was not essential to the characters," despite all of its abstract overtones (Marrin.2).

In order to prevent any sort of sexual tension, Beckett produces a play without a female character physically present. As a result, he uses symbolic characters to symbolize the issues and general state of humanity. Because of this, Beckett removes the fundamental distinction between men and women, which gives us a broad picture of the folly, sterility, and challenges in man's existence. In general, Beckett's characters represent shattered pieces of the individual. This is evident in *Waiting for Godot*, as every character represents a different aspect of the human condition. And because no complete human is of a particular sex, this also destroys the concept of gender. Ruby Cohn says:

Didi of Act I speaks as mind, and Gogo as body. Thus, Gogo eats, sleeps, and fears beating while on stage, whereas Didi ponders spiritual salvation. ... Gogo's stage business bears on his boots, and Didi on his hat. Gogo wants Lucky to dance, but Didi desires him to think.(Cohn.131)

As a result, each completes the other, as though they were a single person. Vladimir is the one who is more dedicated to the logical aspect of human nature. In other words, he functions as the intellect that lacks gender. Estragon appears to be more animal-like, more connected to material objects, and lacking in the idea of gender. In actuality, the other pair in the play experiences the same thing. Lucky and Pozzo. A whip is used to force a master and servant who wears a rope around his neck for veils. They could also be viewed as components of a divided ego, wherein Lucky, like Vladimir, represents the cerebral half of man while Pozzo stands for the materialistic side, similar to Didi and Gogo. Therefore, gender is also absent in this instance. Put another way, each character represents a particular aspect of the individual. Gender is thus left out because it makes the characters incomplete (Reid.35).

Actually, in this tough age, people isolate themselves so much that they cut themselves off from any sense of belonging. They have shown themselves to be alone even in the past. They don't really remember anything outside of themselves—not even their partners or families. This explains Vladimir and Estragon's true state of sterility and lack of any sensation of love in a very straightforward way. To put it another way, everyone is in the same state. Thus, they are in favor of a global sterility (Marrin.2).

Furthermore, everything in the play turns out to be pointless, and there is an overall feeling of sterility. Additionally, Beckett gives us a crystal-clear illustration of sterility and stagnation in *Waiting for Godot*, which mirrors the state of modern man. Therefore, there isn't a single woman on stage because Beckett clearly intends for this play to have a sterile

atmosphere, whereas the presence of both sexes on stage always symbolizes excitement and fertility. However, this is merely a physical absence; in the play, the womb and the tomb—which encompass everything with their terrifying power—present the emblem of the "mother goddess." It is "the foster mother," life, nature, and the land.

And Pozzo's line, "They give birth a stride of grave," at the play's conclusion, alludes abruptly to the feminine form. (Act I, pp. 89) These are "given birth" women. They are the original or natural source of conception, which is not present in this situation. They are the origin of birth, which marks the start of human suffering in this ridiculous existence. With birth, man enters a life devoid of purpose and fruitfulness, leaving his safe haven—the womb—to navigate an extremely challenging emptiness. Stated differently, Beckett uses the presence of the universal emblem of humanity as a means of conveying a general feeling of the decay of all human ideals, including the concept of gender. Here, Beckett offers us a contemporary "effective version of the whole human condition" (Bamber.51).

It is meaningless to refer to *Waiting for Godot* as "non-communication" because the characters in these plays occasionally choose not to or are unable to communicate with one another. This is especially true if the term is narrowly defined and is only used to describe specific technical means that the dramatist uses to communicate with the audience. Beckett presents an image of humanity in decline in his male drama *Waiting for Godot*. The characters in Beckett's works are jumbled, aged, and disoriented. They are lone figures that are waiting for a release, but they are unsure of its location or timing. They have no location or time of their own. All they have are warped recollections of the past, which bring nothing new to their current situation other than hopelessness, sterility, and despair. Man is lost in time; this can happen at any point, whether it is before conception or after death, when he is sexually impotent like an embryo.

Here, we see lone male figures who lack a nice family life or a source of love. As a result, it appears that sterility is an enduring reality of modern life. Put another way, sorrow,

loneliness, and excruciating agony are the only things that exist between the two most significant events in a person's life—birth and death. We are therefore left with no choice but to accept eternal pain until death. Of course, a man is sexless and the concept of gender does not exist during these two crucial periods in life—birth and death (Fletcher.41).

Conclusion:

The purpose of this paper is to follow the evolution of Beckett's conception of the woman from his early plays to his later works, keeping in mind that a comprehensive knowledge of Beckett's views on women .A person's personality is shaped by their living environment, which can either positively or negatively influence it, independent of their gender or physical characteristics. It might rob him of any distinguishing characteristics, like his sexual orientation. That is to say, a man loses his sense of gender in such environments. The modern world is ludicrous and disorganized, and man, as a part of it, ends up reflecting this disarray and absurdity in all of its forms. Therefore, the true absence in this case is not the physical absence of female figures but rather the intellectual absence of the concept of gender itself.

Beckett presents an image of humanity in decline in his drama *Waiting for Godot*.The characters in Beckett's play are jumbled, aged, and disoriented. They are lone figures that are waiting for a release, but they are unsure of its location or timing. They have no location or time of their own. All they have are warped recollections of the past, which bring nothing new to their current situation other than hopelessness, sterility, and despair. Man is lost in time; this can happen at any point, whether it is before conception or after death, when he is sexually impotent like an embryo. Here, we see lone male figures who lack a nice family life or a source of love. It is the overpowering sense of sterility that exists in man, not in life.

Regardless of their sexual orientation, one could argue that Beckett's characters are lucid representations of the challenges and issues of the contemporary world. Beckett wants their characters to be neutral, meaning they should not represent any particular sex but rather all of humanity. His characters are sexless symbols of the chaos, violence, loss of identity, uncertainty, and other issues that accompany absurdity. Therefore, Beckett's characters come from no man's land where pessimism and despair are prevalent. Beckett provides a portal that allows one to enter the common circumstances of contemporary humanity.

The lack of representation of women is central to Beckett's drama, serving as a fundamental component of its ethical framework. The role of lack of women in Beckett's play, which is one of his main topics, has not received as much attention as it should in light of his inventive technical and intellectual accomplishments. Beckett uses the image of the woman to represent redemption and rebirth, as well as a decadent culture and pointless existence. In addition, it shows that he recognizes the important role that women play in life as well as in the development and upholding of moral principles within families, society, and the wider globe.

Beckett's search for a route out of the *Waiting for Godot*, which is made more evident in his later drama that inspires hopelessness and offers the way of life, is sparked by this pessimistic and melancholy portrayal of modern life. The image of the woman is transformed into a more positive, almost idealized type here, where Beckett's vision of the world is more integrated. Integration is a central idea in Beckett's life and drama. Woman acts as an agent of love and life. Beckett's perception of women seems to have been shaped by a number of things, including the women he spent significant periods of his life with, current societal trends, and his extensive reading. These influences provided Beckett different, contrasting, and even complementing ideas about the modern woman as a strong force that may either suck everything around her down into a spiritless gulf or raise it to an exalted way of existence.

That is to say, a character in a ridiculous play can represent the most glaring issues facing society. That is accurate for the majority of ludicrous plays, particularly Beckett's play, where there isn't a single female actor. However, the male character in these plays also represents humanity, so what's really missing is gender, not just male or female. In these kinds of plays, identity and gender are lost. In order to prevent any sort of sexual tension, Beckett produces a play without a female character physically present. As a result, he uses symbolic characters to symbolize the issues and general state of humanity. Because of this, Beckett removes the fundamental distinction between men and women, which gives us a broad picture of the folly, sterility, and challenges in man's existence.

They are a true representation of modern isolation. They lack a family, relationships, goals, and even a label—better still, a sex. There is no feeling of relationships, love, or bodily sensation. In other words, much like all of their ideals in life, the bodily sense is dead. Despite the fact that they seem macho on the outside. But when we talk about their essence, we discover that the only thing that truly remains of their manliness is the shape that fits their difficult circumstances.

To put it another way, they are so elderly and powerless. Furthermore, there is no indication that they are active or productive in any way, or even that they have the right to be anything other than "a little heap of bones." (Page 9, Act I) In other words, they don't appear to have ever engaged in a sexual relationship. They serve as a reflection of life's sterility. Since production has no place in a world when everything appears to be ending, their creator is not concerned about their fertility or quality of sex.

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