THE IDEAS OF MODERNISM AS PROJECTED THROUGH
THE CHARACTER OF VLADIMIR IN SAMUEL BECKETT'S
WAITING FOR GODOT

UNDERGRADUATE THESIS

Presented as Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Sarjana Sastra
in English Letters

By

EILEEN SHANNON

Student Number: 094214025

ENGLISH LETTERS STUDY PROGRAM
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LETTERS
FACULTY OF LETTERS
SANATA DHARMA UNIVERSITY
YOGYAKARTA
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A Sarjana Sastra Undergraduate Thesis

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Defended before the Board of Examiners
on April 25, 2016
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I certify that this undergraduate thesis contains no material which has been previously submitted for the award of any other degree at any university, and that, to the best of my knowledge, this undergraduate thesis contains no material previously written by any other person except where due reference is made in the text of the undergraduate thesis.

Yogyakarta, August 25, 2016

Eileen Shannon
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Pada tanggal 25 Agustus, 2016

Yang menyatakan,

Eileen Shannon
Listen. Smile. Agree.
And then do whatever you were gonna do anyway.

- Robert Downey Jr. -

Your time is limited,
so don’t waste it living someone else’s life.

- Steve Jobs -

Have no fear of perfection. You’ll never reach it.

- Salvador Dali -

I’d rather be hated for who I am
than loved for who I’m not.

- Kurt Cobain -

Stay strong. Make them wonder how you’re still smiling.

- Emma Watson -

In three words I can sum up everything about life:
it goes on.

- Robert Frost -

If you can’t find somethin’ to live for,
you best find somethin’ to die for.

- Tupac Shakur -

When you feel like giving up,
remember why you held on for so long in the first place.

- Unknown -

Everything will be okay in the end.
If it’s not okay, then it’s not the end.

- Unknown -

You miss 100% of the shots you don’t take.

- Wayne Gretzky -

Cats are only rats -or rabbits- in disguise.

- Daddy -

Pray.

- Mammy -
I dedicate this undergraduate thesis to my family, friends and lecturers who have believed in me in times when no one else did.

The people who lifted me up when I fell down, pushed me forward when I got left behind, pulled me out when I remained stuck, enlightened me when I was confused, were there when I needed them the most, made me special when I felt unworthy, and encouraged me when I was afraid to take the terribly hardest steps in life.

And also to the ones who stopped believing in me or never did; I dedicate this as a proof that I always find a way to pursue my dreams. This is for you too.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, my highest praises be to Almighty God, the source of all things, who never abandons me through joy and sadness. The One who is always there although not seen, guiding me all the way and in every way. It is because of Him, this undergraduate thesis has become possible.

My next gratitude definitely goes to the two people whom God has given His divine trust to provide me with affection and materials in achieving my dreams, who are no other than my beloved parents, Anna and Jimmy Shannon, and not forgetting to mention my third parent and caretaker Paulus Souhuwat for helping me in any way he can. I thank my big sister Catherine Shannon who have been supporting me and checking on me now and then to make sure everything is okay. My thanks also go to my daughter Sally Angelina whose existence has taught me the true meaning of love and patience.

I give my thanks to all the staff of English Letters Department of Sanata Dharma University who cannot be mentioned one by one, especially my HMPS and thesis advisor, Hirmawan Wijanarka, M.Hum. for his patience and kindness in guiding me and helping me make this undergraduate thesis real. I also thank my academic and thesis co-advisor Elisa Dwi Wardani S.S., M.Hum for her willingness to review my undergraduate thesis and give suggestions in order to improve my writing. I also thank Tatang Iskarna, S.S., M.Hum. for his guidance throughout the early years in university as my academic advisor. I thank
him for giving me a chance to prove myself to be the better person I promised to be.

I would like to give my thanks at the top of my lungs to my long best friends who have been supporting me from afar: Maria Ajeng, Nathaniel Suryadinata and Gerarda Agriveta. I thank them for their comfort and unconditional love through the good, bad and random times. My special thanks also go to my university buddies whom I know I can count on: Tan Michael, Patrick Antonio, Christiana Megastra and Stephanus Edy.

The last but not least, I would like to express my love and thanks to Aditya Kurniawan for making me whole and being there by my side at times when I needed him the most.

May God bless everyone who has helped me complete my studies and undergraduate thesis. They all have a special place in my heart.

Eileen Shannon
TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE .......................................................................................................................... ii
APPROVAL PAGE .................................................................................................................. iii
ACCEPTANCE PAGE .............................................................................................................. iv
STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY .......................................................................................... v
LEMBAR PERNYATAAN PERSETUJUAN PUBLIKASI KARYA ILMIAH ...................................................... vi
MOTTO PAGE ...................................................................................................................... vii
DEDICATION PAGE .............................................................................................................. viii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ....................................................................................................... ix
TABLE OF CONTENTS ......................................................................................................... xi
ABSTRACT ............................................................................................................................ xii
ABSTRAK ............................................................................................................................. xiv

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................... 1
  A. Background of the Study ................................................................................................. 1
  B. Problem Formulation ...................................................................................................... 4
  C. Objectives of the Study ................................................................................................... 5
  D. Definition of Terms ......................................................................................................... 6

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE ........................................................................... 7
  A. Review of Related Studies ............................................................................................... 7
  B. Review of Related Theories ............................................................................................ 11
    1. Theories of Character .................................................................................................. 11
    2. Theories of Characterization ......................................................................................... 12
    3. Theories of Modernism ................................................................................................. 13
    4. Theories of Postmodernism ......................................................................................... 14
  C. Theoretical Framework .................................................................................................. 15

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY ......................................................................................... 17
  A. Object of the Study ......................................................................................................... 17
  B. Approach of the Study .................................................................................................... 18
  C. Method of the Study ....................................................................................................... 19

CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS .................................................................................................... 21
  A. The Description of the Characters in Waiting for Godot ............................................ 21
    1. Vladimir (Didi) ........................................................................................................... 22
    2. Estragon (Gogo) ......................................................................................................... 27
    3. Pozzo ......................................................................................................................... 32
    4. Lucky ......................................................................................................................... 35
5. The Boy ................................................................................................................. 37
B. The Ideas of Modernism as Projected through Vladimir among other Characters in Waiting for Godot ................................................................. 40

1. The Act of Anticipating ....................................................................................... 41
2. The Act of Reasoning ......................................................................................... 44
3. The Act of Relevant Discoursing ........................................................................ 46

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION .................................................................................. 49
BIBLIOGRAPHY ..................................................................................................... 52
APPENDIX .............................................................................................................. 53
ABSTRACT


This undergraduate thesis discusses Samuel Beckett’s Waiting for Godot, a play which was published in 1948, not long after the break of World War II. The play happens to be a product of postmodern literature that displays absurdity through its theme, plot, setting and characters. Despite the postmodern label on the literary work itself, this research assumes that there are ideas of modernism contained within it, projected through the character of Vladimir.

There are two study objectives that become the basis of this research. The first objective is to find out the description of each significant character in the play in order to identify the traits and values that they have. The second objective is to find the ideas of modernism in the character Vladimir among other characters in the play who are postmodern.

The method that is used in the writing of this undergraduate thesis is library research, referring to documents, essays and books that are closely related to the topic of the research. This research uses the play script Waiting for Godot (1965) written by Samuel Beckett as the primary source then elaborates it with the Postmodernism approach. This approach is best used for the research in order to discover the postmodernist characteristics, giving the capacity to relate them to the ideas of modernism, which is the opposite of postmodernism.

There are six characters analyzed in this research. They are Vladimir, Estragon, Pozzo, Lucky, and the Boy. The analysis shows that among the other four characters, Vladimir tends to be more of a modernist rather than a postmodernist. This is mainly shown in his act of waiting for Godot while the others do not really concern about the relevance of Godot in determining the outcome of their fates. Vladimir rests his faith and hope in Godot, persuading his fellow tramp Estragon to accompany him during his wait. Vladimir’s critical thinking and quest for answers give a clear place to stand for the other characters who don’t present the importance of logical thinking. Vladimir stands out as a character with modernist values such as anticipating, reasoning, and relevant discoursing.
ABSTRAK


Ada dua tujuan yang menjadi dasar dari penelitian ini. Tujuan yang pertama adalah untuk mencari tahu penggambaran dari masing-masing tokoh yang signifikan di dalam drama ini guna mengidentifikasi watak dan nilai-nilai yang mereka miliki. Tujuan yang kedua yaitu mencari tahu gagasan-gagasan modernism pada tokoh Vladimir diantara tokoh-tokoh lainnya di dalam drama ini yang posmodern.

Metode yang digunakan dalam penulisan tesis ini adalah studi pustaka, dengan mangacu pada dokumen, esai, dan buku yang berkaitan erat dengan topik dari penelitian ini. Penelitian ini menggunakan naskah drama Waiting for Godot (1965) yang ditulis oleh Samuel Beckett sebagai sumber primer kemudian mengelaborasikannya dengan pendekatan posmodernisme. Pendekatan ini paling tepat digunakan dalam penelitian ini dalam rangka menemukan karakteristik-karakteristik postmodern, yang kemudian memberikan wewenang untuk mengaitkannya dengan paham modernism, yaitu kebalikan dari posmodernisme.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Samuel Beckett (1906–1989) was an Irish playwright, poet and novelist who was strongly influenced by his fellow Irish writer, James Joyce, which resulted in Beckett being considered as the last of the modernists. However, he is also considered as one of the fathers of the postmodernist movement in literature. Waiting for Godot happens to be Beckett’s first play which was originally written in French (which he then translated into English by himself), published back in 1948 and known for the absurdity of its content. The tragicomedy in two acts was first staged on 19 November 1957 before an audience that consisted of fourteen hundred convicts at the San Quentin Penitentiary (Esslin, 1968: 19)

Considering its publishing period and other features such as existential crisis, identity crisis and absurdity, it can be clearly seen that the play tends to be one of the postmodern literature. Moreover, Waiting for Godot is also a leading play in The Theatre of the Absurd, written by Martin Esslin in 1961, a theatrical outcome of postmodernism, which was inspired by Existential philosophy and its view that human condition is basically meaningless (Camus, 1942: 18).

The play tells a story about two major characters named Vladimir and Estragon. The play starts with a country road, a tree and an evening where they wait for a person named Godot who never comes. Throughout the play, both of these
characters get into arguments with one another on whether or not they should leave the place and even attempt committing suicide repeatedly by hanging themselves off a tree bough, but fail. In the end, they do not go anywhere and just stick to their plan on waiting for Godot.

Prior to the main discussion of this research, it is considered wise to know some background information related to the play by looking back on the events that took place during the first half of the twentieth century in the scope of literature. The early twentieth century witnessed two world wars. In literature, it produced two recognizable literary styles: modernism and postmodernism, and these made way for the theatrical tradition which was the absurd drama, as mentioned earlier, that it is an outcome of postmodernism. The plot, characterization and setting is rather confusing since it does not follow the common style in literature. The basic ingredient of any work of art appears to be lacking, so that communication itself is almost wilfully clouded (Currie, 1978: 7). Samuel Beckett introduced the concept of absurdity, nothingness and meaninglessness of life through his play *Waiting for Godot*.

Speaking of absurdity, in common usage, it may simply mean ‘ridiculous’, but this is not the sense in which Camus uses the word, or when we speak of the Theatre of the Absurd. ‘Absurd’ originally means ‘out of harmony with reason or propriety; incongruous, unreasonable, illogical’ (Esslin, 1968: 23). Camus states that

A world that can be explained by reasoning, however faulty, is a familiar world. But in a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile, because he is deprived of memories of a lost homeland as much as he lacks the hope of a promised land
to come. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity (1942: 18).

Though in this undergraduate thesis the writer will not focus on discussing what postmodern literature is, it would be wise for the readers to know some basic features of postmodernism which may help in analyzing the text perfectly, especially because *Waiting for Godot* has already been conventionally agreed to be included in the list of postmodern plays. Postmodernism is the term used to suggest a reaction or response to modernism in the late twentieth century. “Modernism began in the 1890s and lasted until about 1945, while postmodernism began after the second world war, especially after 1968” (Abrams, 1993: 118-120). This implies that postmodernism took place after modernism, making it seem like a form of continuity from modernism. In fact, postmodernism does not continue modernism; it is rather a counter-effect of it.

Modernism is based on using rational, logical means to gain knowledge while postmodernism denied the application of logical thinking. Rather, the thinking during the postmodern era was based on unscientific, irrational thought process, as a reaction to modernism (Abrams, 1993: 120). A hierarchical, organized and determinate nature of knowledge is known as the characteristics of modernism. Postmodernism lacked the analytical nature and thoughts were rhetorical and completely based on belief. The fundamental difference between modernism and postmodernism is that modernist thinking is about the search of an abstract truth of life while postmodernist thinkers believe that there is no universal truth, abstract or otherwise. "In a word, the
modernist laments fragmentation while the postmodernist celebrates it" (Barry, 2002: 84).

Postmodernism argues that there is no absolute truth in the universe. Rules of classical literary works are not valid in this case. There is no unity of time, place and action in literary works of postmodernism. Unlike classical literary works, there is no hero. *Waiting for Godot* was written in the second half of the twentieth century and arose similarities between postmodernism and the play.

Aware of the fact that *Waiting for Godot* is admitted worldwide as a literary product of postmodernism, the writer finds some aspects of modernism reserved in the play itself. The focus of the analysis lies on the character Vladimir in the play. The writer finds that this character shows characteristics of a modernist, which brings up a contrast towards the rest of the characters in the play itself that are postmodernists.

**B. Problem Formulation**

To limit the scope of the study, the problems are formulated as follows

1. How are Vladimir, Estragon, Pozzo, Lucky and the Boy described in Samuel Beckett’s play *Waiting for Godot*?

2. How does Vladimir project the ideas of modernism among other characters in Samuel Beckett’s play *Waiting for Godot*?
C. Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to prove that in the play *Waiting for Godot* which is categorized as a postmodern play, there are also modern ideas reserved in it. In order to find the evidence of modernism in this play, problems have to be formulated.

Firstly, it is very important to understand the characteristics of each character in the play, because this way the characters’ ideas and values can be revealed through characterization. Mostly, the analyses focuses on the dialogues between the characters. The writer analyses the characters one by one to identify the characteristics shown throughout the play.

Secondly, to reach a conclusion, the second problem formulation needs resolving, that is discovering the role of Vladimir in projecting the ideas of modernism in the play, showing a contrast towards other characters. By this, the main goal of the study can be achieved.

D. Definition of Terms

To give a clearer perception to the readers about the terms used in the title of this undergraduate thesis, that is, "The Idea of Modernism as Projected through the Characters in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*", it is necessary to give a short explanation about the definition of the terms used, to anticipate misinterpretation or misunderstanding.
1. Modernism

In general, Madan Sarup states that

The basic features of modernism can be summarized as: an aesthetic self-consciousness and reflexiveness; a rejection of narrative structure in favour of simultaneity and montage; an exploration of the paradoxical, ambiguous and uncertain, open-ended nature of reality (1993: 131).

In other words, modernism does not give way for multiple conclusions to take place as conclusions to problems or questions; there is only one absolute truth that eventually must be found and that is the aim.

2. Character

According to *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, characters are

the persons represented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the reader as being endowed with particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities by inferences from what the persons say and their distinctive ways of saying it—the dialogue—and from what they do—the action (1993: 32-33).

Characters can be defined as the entities who play certain roles in a story, having their own distinctive traits and characteristics seen through their speeches and actions.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A. Review of Related Studies

In *Beginning Theory, an Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* it is mentioned that the characters in *Waiting for Godot*, Vladimir and Estragon, are, throughout the play, on the verge of a 'deconstructive breakthrough'. At times they seem to be on the verge of making a transition to a postmodern attitude, in which fragmentation becomes a condition welcomed and enjoyed, but in the end they fail to do this (Barry, 2002: 93).

Peter Barry’s analysis assumes there is a touch of modernism in the absurd play *Waiting for Godot*, projected through the act of waiting by the two main characters Vladimir and Estragon. Barry also stated that “Vladimir and Estragon prove themselves in the end to have a modernist attitude to the fragmentation of truths and values which we have seen in the twentieth century” (2002: 93), meaning to say that apart from the act of waiting, the modernist attitude can also be seen through what they have to say about truth and values.

Reflecting on Barry’s analysis, the writer takes credit only on his idea about the modernist attitude shown by the main characters in the play. What gives a difference between the writer’s and Barry’s analysis is that in this research the focus falls heavily on Vladimir only, instead of the two main characters. The reason why the writer chooses to analyze Vladimir only is because of the writer’s belief that it is
only Vladimir who has the strongest modernist attitude throughout the play, while the rest of the characters are very likely to be postmodern. The writer is also aware that sometimes the characters (including Vladimir) show both modernist or postmodernist attitudes. This is what Barry calls a ’dichotomy’ of modernist/postmodernist (2002: 93).

In the English Letters Department of Sanata Dharma University, the studies on Samuel Beckett’s works had been conducted before. One of them is an undergraduate thesis by Theresia Nawaningrum with the title “The Contribution of Minor Characters toward the Main Characters’ Motivation in the Act of Waiting in Samuel Beckett’s Waiting for Godot”. This thesis is aimed at discovering out the description of characters, the relationship between characters, and the motivations of the main characters in their act of waiting. The thesis analyzes and evaluates the act of waiting in Samuel Beckett’s play Waiting for Godot and the relationship among characters in the play (Nawaningrum, 2002: 2-3).

…this thesis wants to analyze the motivations that motivate the main characters in Waiting for Godot. It has been said before that nobody comes nor goes, the main characters keep on waiting until Godot comes, and they also do not leave the place. There is a certain cause that influence or motivate the main characters (Nawaningrum, 2002: 3).

Nawaningrum’s research helps the writer in analyzing the characters and characterizations in the play Waiting for Godot. The analysis made by Nawaningrum on minor and major characters gives contribution to this research in studying the ideas and qualities which the characters show throughout the play. In this research, the writer focuses on the ‘Act of Waiting’ (as discussed in Nawaningrum’s thesis)
and also the characterization (the words spoken by the characters). What makes this thesis distinctive from Nawaningrum’s is the focus that lies on Vladimir and the purpose of finding the modernist values in him.

Another thesis which the writer has chosen as a related study is a research conducted by Louciana Hapsari entitled “The Idea of Modernism as Revealed through Character and Plot in Luigi Pirandello’s *Six Characters in Search of an Author*”. The writer refers to Hapsari’s thesis since both of their studies share similar objectives regarding the topic; which is the idea of modernism shown through characters of the literary work, and approach; which is New Criticism.

The analysis of main characters and plot shows that character and plot has several points that can be said as the reflection of the idea of modernism. In general, modernism questions the existence of God. The goal of modernism is to find the truth behind the surface appearance. Moreover, previously Barry explains some characteristics of literary modernism such as a new emphasis on impressionism and subjectivity, a movement away (in novels) from the apparent objectivity, a blurring of the distinction between genres, a new liking for fragmented forms, discontinuous narrative, and random-seeming collages of disparate material, and the tendency towards ‘reflexivity’. So, the spirit of modernism is a power of reason. Thus, the analysis of modernism is done based on the theories above (Hapsari, 2014: 52).

By referring to Hapsari’s thesis, the writer understands more about revealing modernist characteristics of Vladimir in Beckett’s play *Waiting for Godot*, keeping in mind of the goals of modernism and the signs of whenever a character displays a modernist attitude. What makes this research distinctive from Hapsari’s is obviously the object of the study and the type of literary work; while Hapsari uses a modern play, this research uses a postmodern one.
The next study is taken from one of the *Brodie's Notes* which W.T. Currie has given contribution in analyzing Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot". In this edition of *Brodie’s Notes*, Currie makes notes on most of the intrinsic elements starting from the philosophy, meaning, plot, themes, structure, style and of course the characters of the play. In this research, Currie’s analysis helps the writer in the scope of understanding more about the characters in the play and their characterizations. Currie mentions that

…Beckett has at least taught us not to look for narrative in our theatre. From this play on, the idea of drama as action and story no longer applied. The writer had a new dimension to work in. Silence too was rediscovered as a positive quality, and we do not need to look far in *Godot* to see how Beckett exploits this in the attitudes of Vladimir and Estragon. In their moments of total silence these two scarecrows on the verge of humanity do rouse in us feelings of compassion, […] (1978: 8).

Currie’s writing shows that one of the ways to understand the (postmodern) play is not to look for the narratives, pointing at one of Beckett’s works, *Waiting for Godot*. This includes understanding the characters of the play. Later in this research, the writer refers to Currie’s analyses on the intrinsic elements in order to discover more about how the characters are exposed to the audience (readers) and therefore determine their modernist traits.

Though Currie analyses the play almost entirely (most of the intrinsic elements are discussed), this research does not conduct the same discussion upon the object of study. The writer will only use partial information from Currie’s writing to understand more about the play and to support the writer’s hypothesis of ‘modern
characters in a postmodern play’ (while Currie doesn’t state anything in his research regarding this).

B. Review of Related Theories

1. Theories of Character

According to Abrams, characters are persons presented in the dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the reader as being endowed with moral, dispositional, and emotional qualities and that are expressed in what they say – the dialog, and by what they do – the action (1993: 23).

In order to understand about character and its development we must first concern on the character’s consistency as Abrams stated.

Character may remain essentially ‘stable’, or unchanged in his outlook and his dispositions, from beginning to end of a work, or he may undergo a radical change, either through a gradual development or as a result of an extreme crisis (1993: 23).

Abrams tries to convey that a character has a possibility of undergoing a change throughout the story, either gradually or radically. He also states that “characters are the persons presented in a dramatic or narrative work who are later on interpreted by the readers from their sayings and actions. What they say and do shows their ‘moral, dispositional and emotionless qualities’” (1933: 23).

According to Reaske, character can also present the fictitious creation of persons in dramatic or narrative work that can be interpreted through the combination of their dialogue and action expressed (1966: 40).
2. Theories of Characterization

On the characterization, Roger B. Henkle has made a scheme of the characters’ position in novels in order to define a characterization. He said that characterization is central to the fictional experiences and the principal objective of the creation of the characters in the novels is to enable us to understand and to experience the people (1977: 86).

What Henkle meant by ‘experience the people’ is likely about how readers are made able by the author to experience an insight from within the story and get to know the characteristics of the characters either implicitly or explicitly through a so-called ‘fictional experience’.

Another way of presenting information about the character, defined by Edgar V. Roberts and Henry E. Jacob, describing the four ways of characterization:

a.) What the characters themselves say (and think if the author expresses their thoughts)

b.) What the characters do

c.) What other characters say about them

d.) What the author says about them, speaking as a storyteller or an observer (1989: 147).

If we are already familiar with the expression ‘show and tell’ or ‘show but not tell’, the ways described above includes showing and telling. Learning the characters’ characteristics through ‘show and tell’ obviously gives the readers an explicit understanding, while ‘show but not tell’ requires more effort from the readers in understanding them implicitly.
According to Murphy, there are six ways that can be used to analyze characters. Those are through personal description, characters seen by the author, speech, past life, conversation of others and reaction (1972: 161-173).

3. Theories of Modernism

Starting with the most general definition of Modernism, the term is widely used to identify new and distinctive features in the subjects, forms, concepts, and styles of literature and the other arts in the early decades of the present (twentieth) century, but especially after World War I (1914-1918) (Abrams, 1993: 118-119). This term is also likely to be related to ‘Enlightenment’, another term defining an era where human beings held on to a rational way of thinking in search for a universal truth.

In terms of literature, Abrams stated that Modernism could be defined as a movement due to World War I. The term Modernism is widely used to identify new and distinctive features in the subjects, forms, concepts, and styles of literature and the other arts in the early decades of the present (20th) century, but especially after World War I (1914-1918) (1993: 118-119).

In general, according to Winquist, modernism is the name given to the literary, historic, and philosophical period from roughly 1890-1950, which was marked by the belief in the unity of experience, the predominance of universals, and a determinate sense of referentiality (2001: 251).

Both Abrams and Winquist imply that the idea of modernism was commonly brought out during the first half of the twentieth century. Their theories also mention the term ‘universals’ or ‘universal truth’, meaning to convey that the purpose of
modernism (in this case, literature) is to create only one truth instead of versions of truth, believing that human experience can somehow be unified in literature.

Madan Sarup states that

The basic features of modernism can be summarized as: an aesthetic self-consciousness and reflexiveness; a rejection of narrative structure in favour of simultaneity and montage; an exploration of the paradoxical, ambiguous and uncertain, open-ended nature of reality… (1993: 131)

When speaking of pure modernism, Sarup’s statement here emphasizes that it is about experimentation and the aim of finding an inner truth behind surface appearance, which is an abstract truth.

4. Theories of Postmodernism

While modernist thinking is about the search of an abstract truth of life, postmodernist thinkers believe that there is no universal truth, abstract or otherwise. Postmodernism argues that there is no absolute truth in the universe. Rules of classical literary works are not valid in these literary works. There is no unity of time, place and action in literary works in postmodernism.

Still about postmodernism in general, as stated by Terry Barett in Abrams’, postmodernism does not merely chronologically follow modernism, it reacts against modernism, and might better be called antimodernism. The term postmodernism is sometimes applied to the literature and art after World War II (1939-1945) (1993: 120).

Following Barett’s statement in Abrams’, postmodernism happens to be a breakthrough or to be more exact, a counter towards modernism, in a way that these
terms have their own traits and characteristics. The term postmodernism originated among artists and critics in New York in the 1960s and was taken up by European theorists in the 1970s (Sarup, 1993: 131). Sarup in An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism wrote that

One of them (the artists), Jean-Francois Lyotard, in a famous book entitled *The Postmodern Condition*, attacked the legitimating myths of the modern age, the progressive liberation of humanity through science, and the idea that philosophy can restore unity to learning and develop universally valid knowledge for humanity. Postmodern theory became identified with the critique of universal knowledge and foundationalism (1993: 132).

This signifies the deletion of boundaries such as boundaries between art and everyday life, elite and popular culture, stylistic eclecticism and code mixing. So postmodernists assume that there is no reason (universal truth), only reasons (many versions of truth). Lyotard in Sarup also said that in postmodernism there is:

A shift of emphasis from content to form or style; a transformation of reality into images; the fragmentation of time into a series of perpetual presents. There are continual references to eclecticism, reflexivity, self-referentiality, quotation, artifice, randomness, anarchy, fragmentation, pastiche and allegory (1993:132).

In the context of literature, this implies that the concept of postmodernism has a style of referring to a larger context (the meta-data) outside of its own, repeating things, forming series of scenes which do not define the time nor place and most of the time breaking the conventional rules made up by society (the act of anarchy).

C. Theoretical Framework

The theories stated in this chapter are used to analyze the play *Waiting for Godot*. The theories of Character and Characterization are used to help analyze the
characters in the play, as well as describing the characteristics (the qualities) that each character owns. By revealing each one’s characteristics, it would be easier for the writer to identify the traits, ideas, and orientation of the characters in the play, whether they carry out the idea of modernism or not.

As Abrams stated in his *Glossary of Literary Terms*, in analyzing a character we should be concerned about their consistency. The characterization theory by Edgar V. Robert and Henry E. Jacob is a guide in characterizing the characters in the play through the characters’ speech and actions and the description of characters by other characters and the author (as an observer). These theories are used to solve the first problem formulation.

In an absurd play such as *Waiting for Godot*, the characters tend to be as absurd as the play itself. In applying the theories of characters and characterization to this play, the writer focuses mostly on the ideas expressed through each of the characters’ dialogues. In an absurd play, there is barely any use in analyzing the characters’ identities and background since they all remain unclear and fragmented.

Moving on to the second problem formulation, the writer applies the theories of modernism to the character Vladimir in order to analyze how this character brings out the qualities of a modernist. Theories of postmodernism are used for emphasizing the postmodern attitudes in the other characters of the play, aiming to cause a contrast towards the ideas of modernism in Vladimir.
CHAPTER III

 METHODOLOGY

A. Object of the Study

Waiting for Godot is a play written by Samuel Beckett, an Irish writer and playwright. Published in 1949, the play tells a story about two characters waiting for someone who never comes. It can be said that Waiting for Godot is an absurdist play that explores themes of existentialist philosophy. Beckett originally wrote the play in French, with the title En Attendant Godot. The work itself was let absurd, lacking a conventional plot, clarity of characters, place and time. The play was revolutionary and became a cornerstone of the Theatre of the Absurd.

The play is a tragicomedy in two acts, displaying its two major characters, Vladimir and Estragon, and three other characters namely Lucky, Pozzo and a Boy. The play starts with a country road and a tree on an evening when Vladimir and Estragon wait for a person named Godot who never comes. Both of these characters then get into arguments throughout the play. Repeatedly they argue on whether or not they should leave the place and even attempt numerous suicides by hanging themselves off a tree bough, but fail.

Through the display of the characters, Beckett implies that basically there is nothingness in our beings. Vladimir and Estragon face existential crisis as life seems nothing to them. This frustration is expressed through the repetition of the sentence, "Nothing to be done" by Estragon. Life appears to them as an absurd thing
full with purposelessness, nothingness and meaninglessness. In *Waiting for Godot* there is no absolute truth, all things are relative. The characteristics such as ‘nothingness’ and ‘meaninglessness’ which are previously mentioned without a doubt represent the idea of postmodernism.

**B. Approach of the Study**

In analyzing literary works, it is necessary for critics to apply the appropriate ways and approaches. In this research, the writer applies the postmodernism approach, applying it to the characters of the play. This approach explores each of the characters’ speeches and actions to accommodate the solving of the first problem formulation which is the description of the characters in the play. The postmodernism approach is used to highlight the disunity of the characters in the fragmented play, showing contrasts between the characters (discussed in the solving of the second problem formulation, which is the identification of modernist attitude in Vladimir).

The second focus is to show the modernist attitude (in this case, displayed through the characters). To solve the second problem in this research, the writer refers to the characteristics of the characters, identifying the modern and postmodern traits. Being aware that postmodernism has a very strong relation with modernism, in terms of contrasted characteristics, the ideas of modernism can be found by first showing the ideas of postmodernism. The assumption is, what is not postmodernism, can be concluded as modernism. Barry states that

> for the postmodernist, by contrast, fragmentation is and exhilarating, liberating phenomenon, symptomatic of our escape from the claustrophobic
embrace of fixed systems of belief. In a word, the modernist laments fragmentation while the postmodernist celebrates it (2002: 84).

From the statement above, Barry assumes that postmodernism and modernism are two very oppositional ideas yet so relatable. In other words, postmodernism and modernism are inseparable like light and dark. When there is no light, then it is dark-the same as when it is not postmodern, then it is modern.

Regarding some of the objectives of postmodernism, Barry states that they (postmodernists) discover postmodernist themes, tendencies, and attitudes within literary works of the twentieth century and explore their implications (2002: 91), meaning that the postmodernism approach can be used for finding postmodernist ideas in a literary work, in this case, Beckett’s postmodern play *Waiting for Godot*. So by referring to Barry’s assumption regarding the term used in defining the object (of the criticism), the writer considers postmodernism as an acceptable and appropriate approach in this research.

C. Method of the Study

In order to complete the analysis of this thesis, there were some steps that were applied. This study was conducted through library or desk research. Library research is the most relevant method to be used in this thesis because the data gathering is based on sources and references from documents, essays and books that are closely related to the topic chosen.

There were several steps taken in completing the research. Firstly, the writer chose Samuel Beckett’s play entitled *Waiting for Godot* as the primary source of the
study. Two problems to the object of study were then formulated, narrowing down the topic of the study and becoming the objectives of this research.

Secondly, the writer browsed for other sources for the study in forms of literary studies; Currie’s *Brodie’s Notes* on “Waiting for Godot”, Barry’s *Beginning Theory, an Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, and then theories; Abram’s *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, Sarup’s *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism*, and other sources with related topics such as previously conducted theses and researches.

Thirdly, prior to answering the questions of this research, a critical approach was applied to the study. Postmodernism was chosen as an approach to employ the data gathered in the previous steps in order to analyze and evaluate the object of the study.

Fourthly, all theories and related studies obtained from research were applied to and elaborated in this study in order to complete the analysis. By this, the analysis would be more reasonable and defensible, being provided by supportive sources and references.

Finally, the last step was drawing a conclusion based on the problem formulations already answered in the analysis to give the readers a clear understanding of what has been accomplished of the research.
A. The Description of the Characters in *Waiting for Godot*

*Waiting for Godot* is a postmodern play, featuring existential crisis, identity crisis and absurdity of the characters. The rules that are often applied in classical literary works are not always valid in these literary works. It is almost impossible to determine the unity of time, place and action in postmodern literary works. So analyzing the play through its characters would be the best way in reaching the goal of this thesis, which is to find the ideas of modernism in the character Vladimir. In this thesis, the characters are analyzed mainly through their conversations, actions and even gestures.

There are five characters analyzed in order to solve the first problem formulation, in hopes of the writer to point out the modernist ideas in Vladimir as a contrast to the other characters (to be discussed later in the second part of this chapter). The two major characters are Vladimir and Estragon, while Pozzo, Lucky, and the Boy are considered to be the minor characters. The fact that the two tramps are major characters and the rest are minor, effects the portions of the dialogues and actions analyzed, where major characters go with the larger portions. According to Murphy, there are six ways that can be used to analyze characters. Those are through personal description, characters seen by the author, speech, past life, conversation of others and reaction (1972: 161-173).
1. Vladimir (Didi)

As the dominating one, Vladimir seriously takes responsibility over his partner, Estragon. Most of the time, Estragon appears to be dependent on Vladimir. Vladimir even once said to Estragon that “It’s too much for one man” (Beckett, 1972: 10). This shows Vladimir’s personality as a dominating person.

Vladimir also worries that if they do eventually part and go their own ways, Estragon would not be able to make it. Vladimir has a scant hope for Estragon’s survival since Estragon had been so much relying on him.

ESTRAGON. (coldly). There are times when I wonder if it wouldn’t be better for us to part.
VLADIMIR: You wouldn’t go far.
(Beckett, 1972: 16)

Vladimir’s response towards Estragon’s intention of parting, actually resembles his idea of Estragon’s dependency on him. He knows that Estragon is weak because all this time it is Vladimir who has been taking care of him; he feeds and nurtures him, even comforts him when he wakes up from his nightmares.

From the two, Vladimir is the more religious one, the truth seeker, while Estragon is ignorant about it and shows more interest in looking at pictures of colorful maps in the Bible instead of the sermons in it.

VLADIMIR. Did you ever read the Bible?
ESTRAGON. The Bible…(He reflects). I must have taken a look at it.
VLADIMIR. Do you remember the Gospels?
ESTRAGON. I remember the maps of the Holy Land. Coloured they were. Very pretty. The Dead Sea was pale blue. The very look of it made me thirsty. That’s where we’ll go, I used to say, that’s where we’ll go for our honeymoon. We’ll swim. We’ll be happy.
(Beckett, 1972: 12)
Vladimir in fact reads the Bible and is critical about it. He is critical towards the fact that only one of the gospels admits that one of the thieves crucified next to Christ was saved, while other gospels tell none of the thieves were saved (Beckett, 1972: 13). Estragon, on the other hand, did not really care much about why people choose to believe that one gospel instead of the other three.

In their first encounter with Pozzo and Lucky, it is Vladimir who dares to confront Pozzo, making himself appear to be man of the action. He shows compassion towards Lucky’s condition.

VLADIMIR. (exploding). It’s a scandal!

POZZO. (to Vladimir). Are you alluding to anything in particular?
VLADIMIR. (stutteringly resolute). To treat a man... (gesture towards Lucky)... like that... I think that... no... a human being... no... it’s a scandal!
(Beckett, 1972: 27)

He could not stand the sight of Lucky being enslaved by Pozzo for it was inhumane, sickening and scandalous. Vladimir’s humanist sense doesn’t allow him to bear any suffering that happens around him. He hates to see this, and even interrogates himself “was I sleeping while the others suffered?” (Beckett, 1972: 90). He carries a feeling of guilt, assuming that he has done little or perhaps nothing to improve the miseries of others. He even refuses to listen to stories of Estragon’s nightmares.

ESTRAGON. I had a dream.
VLADIMIR. Don’t tell me!
ESTRAGON. I dreamt that-
VLADIMIR. DON’T TELL ME!

ESTRAGON. (gesture towards the universe). This one is enough for you? (Silence). It’s not nice of you, Didi. Who am I to tell my private nightmares to if I can’t tell them to you?

(Beckett, 1972: 15-16)

Vladimir is always the one who is strong-willed in waiting for Godot. Everytime Estragon suggests to leave, Vladimir always restrains him with the same reason: because they have to wait for Godot. This happens about seven times throughout the play, showing his commitment in the act of waiting for Godot who might never come.

By the end of Act 1, Vladimir shows his optimism by assuring Estragon that “Tomorrow everything will be better”. He is determined that something good is about to happen soon, like the attendance of Godot.

VLADIMIR. We’ve nothing more to do here.
ESTRAGON. Nor anywhere else.
VLADIMIR. Ah Gogo, don’t go on like that. Tomorrow everything will be better.
ESTRAGON. How do you make that out?
VLADIMIR. Did you not hear what the child said?
ESTRAGON. No.
VLADIMIR. He said that Godot was sure to come tomorrow.
(Beckett, 1972: 52-53)

In Act 2, when that ‘tomorrow’ comes, Vladimir recalls the events that happened on the previous day about Pozzo and Lucky, the tree and pretty much what they had been doing. Vladimir appears to be the one with the strongest memory of all characters. While others fails to recall past events properly, Vladimir is certain about his own memories. He always ends up reminding Estragon -and Pozzo- whenever
they forget things. Once, he said to Estragon “you forget everything” (Beckett, 1972: 48).

Being the more religious and committed one, Vladimir holds on to his belief in salvation. He is certain that salvation is to come, and their savior is Godot himself. At the end of Act 2, Vladimir states this belief of his about Godot when Estragon persuades him to hang themselves.

VLADIMIR. We’ll hang ourselves tomorrow. (Pause). Unless Godot comes.
ESTRAGON. And if he comes?
VLADIMIR. We’ll be saved.
(Beckett, 1972: 94)

Another time, Vladimir expresses his happiness and joy in thinking that Godot has finally arrived. Both Vladimir and Estragon were just passing the time, doing nothing meaningful when suddenly they heard voices of people approaching. Triumphantly, Vladimir cries “It’s Godot! At last! Gogo! It’s Godot! We’re saved! Let’s go and meet him!” (Beckett, 1972: 73)

In the second act, Vladimir tries to convince Estragon to do something. To him, they have wasted plenty of their time just on waiting and arguing and just doing some ‘idle discourse’. Vladimir’s action is shown in the scene where Pozzo cries for help for someone to help him get up.

VLADIMIR. Let’s not waste our time in idle discourse!
(Pause. Vehemently). Let us do something, while we have the chance! It is not every day that we are needed. Not indeed that we personally are needed. […] Let us make the most of it, before it’s too late! Let us represent worthily for once the foul brood to which a cruel fate consigned us! What do you say?
(Beckett, 1972: 79)
Vladimir realizes that they are wasting their time, and he finally gets bored in just waiting. He considers their act of waiting as ‘nothingness’ which does not give any meaning to him, unless he makes something useful of his time.

VLADIMIR. We wait. We are bored. *(He throws up his hand).* No, don’t protest, we are bored to death, there’s no denying it. Good. A diversion comes along and what do we do? We let it go to waste. Come, let’s get to work! *(He advances towards the heap, stops in his stride).* In an instant all will vanish and we’ll be alone once more, in the midst of nothingness! *(He broods.)* *(Beckett, 1972: 81).*

Vladimir relies more on his ability to think, making it crucial for him to use his intelligence and critical thinking in almost all his (or Estragon’s) actions. At times, he even does the thinking for Estragon. In the scene where Lucky is demanded to entertain the others, Vladimir prefers the intellectual diversion in wanting to listen to what Lucky thinks instead.

POZZO. Who! You know how to think, you two? VLADIMIR. He thinks? POZZO. Certainly. Aloud. […] Well, would you like him to think something for us? ESTRAGON. I’d rather he’d dance, it’d be more fun? POZZO. Not necessarily. ESTRAGON. Wouldn’t it, Didi, be more fun? VLADIMIR. I’d like well to hear him think. *(Beckett, 1972: 39)*

In conclusion, Vladimir is a type of person who has a stronger sense of moral judgment than the other characters, but is still bestowed with a sense of indecisiveness. His constant peering into the hat and his walking back and forth are indications of his restless spirit and a longing for stability. At one point he becomes
so frustrated with his lack of action that he nearly despair. Vladimir is the most committed, the most constant. He reminds Estragon that they must wait for Godot. Perhaps this is simply because his memory is sharper; he remembers many things that Estragon seems to have forgotten.

2. Estragon (Gogo)

Estragon somehow seems to be the one who is doomed to suffer, physically. Gogo is very dependent on his fellow tramp, Didi. He is also aware of this and at most times his actions lead him into a hostile condition, causing him to suffer. “Beat me, certainly they beat me” was Estragon’s response when Vladimir asked him if he got beaten or not (Beckett, 1972: 9). Estragon is also a tramp, just like Vladimir, and it seems as if there is no end to his suffering, therefore he seeks for escape in his sleep.

VLADIMIR. [...] Gogo!...Gogo!...GOGO!
Estragon wakes with a start.
ESTRAGON. (restored to the horror of his situation). I was asleep!
(Despairingly). Why will you never let me sleep?
(Beckett, 1972: 15)

Throughout the play, Estragon portrays physical pain. In Act 1, he complains about his sore foot from trying to take his boot off. Even Vladimir thinks that Estragon is exaggerating his pain. It seems like pain has already become a part of Estragon that can’t be separated.

ESTRAGON. Ah stop blathering and help me off with this bloody thing.
VLADIMIR. [...] (Estragon tears his boot). What are you doing?
ESTRAGON. Taking off my boot. Did that never happen to you?
VLADIMIR. Boots must be taken off every day, I’m tired telling you that. Why don’t you listen to me?

ESTRAGON. (feeble). Help me!

VLADIMIR. It hurts?

ESTRAGON. Hurts! He wants to know if it hurts!

VLADIMIR. (angrily). 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.

(Beckett, 1972: 10)

Another time when Estragon attempts to wipe Lucky’s tears, his shin gets kicked in return. Estragon exaggerates the pain he feels by saying that he would never walk again (Beckett, 1972: 32). Even in Act 2 when Estragon attempts his revenge at Lucky, he ends up hurting himself from kicking him.

Apart from the physical pain he suffers, Estragon also portrays physical need. At least twice he asked for food from Vladimir. First, he asks for carrots from Vladimir, then the second time he is given turnips. Not to mention that he also asks for the left-over chicken bones from Pozzo, despite his timidness (Beckett, 1972: 26-27).

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.

(Beckett, 1972: 20)

Apart from the need of food, Estragon also shows his intentions for money. Pozzo offers if there is anything he could do to return the favor that Vladimir and Estragon have given him. Given this opportunity, Estragon asks for money.

POZZO. […] So that I ask myself is there anything I can do in my turn for these honest fellows who are having such a dull, dull time.

ESTRAGON. Even ten francs would be welcome.
VLADIMIR. We are not beggars!

[...]

ESTRAGON. Even five.

VLADIMIR. *(to Estragon, indignantly).* That’s enough!

ESTRAGON. I couldn’t accept less.

(Beckett, 1972: 39)

In another circumstance, when Pozzo is crying for help from the two tramps, he offers to pay them just to help him get up. Estragon takes the chance to bargain Pozzo’s offer.

POZZO. Help! I’ll pay you!

ESTRAGON. How much?

POZZO. One hundred francs!

ESTRAGON. It’s not enough.

VLADIMIR. I wouldn’t go as far as that.

ESTRAGON. You think it’s enough?

[...]

POZZO. Two hundred!

(Beckett, 1972: 80-81)

Estragon is the dreamer of the two. Apart from his sleep, he tends to drift away into his imagination, and think of escaping from where they are. He recalls the good old days when they were young and happy, like that one particular sunny day when they were grape-harvesting (Beckett, 1972: 53). He also likes to express his thoughts and feelings, although it annoys Vladimir.

ESTRAGON. I had a dream.

VLADIMIR. Don’t tell me.

ESTRAGON. I dreamt that—

VLADIMIR. DON’T TELL ME!

ESTRAGON. *(gesture towards the universe).* This one is enough for you? *(Silence).* It’s not nice of you, Didi. Who am I to tell my private nightmares to if I can’t tell them to you?

VLADIMIR. Let them remain private. You know I can’t bear that.
ESTRAGON. (coldly). There are times when I wonder if it wouldn’t be better for us to part. (Beckett, 1972: 15-16)

At the end of the conversation above, Estragon speaks of his thought of leaving. Most of the time, it is Estragon who has the initiative to leave and give up on waiting for Godot. He says “I’m going” but eventually he does not move nor leave (Beckett, 1972: 12). This happens again and again throughout the play.

ESTRAGON. Let’s go.
VLADIMIR. We can’t.
ESTRAGON. Why not?
VLADIMIR. We’re waiting for Godot.
ESTRAGON. (despairingly) Ah!
Pause.
(Beckett, 1972: 48)

Estragon shows his dislike about the idea of waiting for Godot. About seven times the conversation above takes place in the play, where Estragon is left with no choice but to stick with Vladimir’s plan to keep on waiting.

VLADIMIR. Listen!
They listen. Grotesquely rigid.
ESTRAGON. I hear nothing.
VLADIMIR. Hssst! […] Nor I.
Sighs of relief. They relax and separate.
ESTRAGON. You gave me a fright.
VLADIMIR. I thought it was he.
ESTRAGON. Who?
VLADIMIR. Godot.
ESTRAGON. Pah! The wind in the reeds.
(Beckett, 1972: 19)

Another time, when Estragon and Vladimir are conversing with Pozzo, he denies having anything to do with Godot when being asked a question regarding the person Vladimir says they are waiting for.
POZZO. You took me for Godot.
ESTRAGON. Oh no, sir, not for an instant, sir.
POZZO. Who is he?
VLADIMIR. Oh, he’s a… he’s a kind of acquaintance.
ESTRAGON. Nothing of the kind, we hardly know him.
VLADIMIR. True… we don’t know him very well… but all the same…
ESTRAGON. Personally I wouldn’t even know him if I saw him.
(Beckett, 1972: 23)

He even implicitly expresses to Vladimir his denial of waiting for Godot by calling him “your man” instead of Godot, giving the impression that it is Vladimir’s business and responsibility to be waiting for Godot, not his (Beckett, 1972: 21). Despite the fact that he may have forgotten the name (like he forgets everything else), he really does not want to wait for Godot.

ESTRAGON. Another day done with.
VLADIMIR. Not yet.
ESTRAGON. For me it’s over and done with, no matter what happens.
(Beckett, 1972: 59)

In the conversation above, Estragon shows no sign of waiting for anything. All he wants to do is just to get things over with and get a chance to escape, perhaps in his sleep. Vladimir disagrees with Estragon’s statement above because he knows that there is something that he is still waiting for, and that is Godot. What Estragon means by “no matter what happens” is that it doesn’t matter to him if Godot comes or not because it makes no difference.

It has been stated before in the analysis of the character Vladimir that Estragon is ignorant to stories from the Bible. He is rather ignorant about a lot of things while all he only cares about is his foot, his belly, and the act of leaving. Apart from just paying attention to the pictures from the Bible and not the stories, this is
another response from Estragon when Vladimir discusses his thought regarding the Bible:

VLADIMIR. But one of the four says that one of the two was saved.
ESTRAGON. Well, they don’t agree, and that’s all there is to it.
VLADIMIR. But all four were there. And only one speaks of a thief being saved. Why believe him rather than the others?
ESTRAGON. Who believes him?
VLADIMIR. Everybody. It’s the only version they know.
ESTRAGON. People are bloody ignorant apes.
(Beckett, 1972: 13)

By stating that people are bloody ignorant apes, ironically, this also points to Estragon himself. He speaks of other people’s ignorance while he himself doesn’t pay attention to these things and puts aside the aspects of life that matters to Vladimir. Speaking of ignorance, Estragon tends to go along with what they do, which is doing nothing. He tells Vladimir to not do anything for it is safer (Beckett, 1972: 18). Rather than do something meaningful to pass the time, Estragon can only think of nonsensical things such as putting on and taking off his boots and hanging themselves. Instead of finding a way to really exist, Estragon thinks only of the ‘impression’ that they exist: “we always find something, eh Didi, to give us the impression we exist?” (Beckett, 1972: 69).

3. Pozzo

Pozzo makes his first appearance on stage tagging along after Lucky, the slave he drives everywhere he goes. Pozzo carries around a whip with him which he lashes, looking almost like an animal trainer at circuses. His treatment towards Lucky is very bad that it is almost like treating an animal, and the sight of this bothers Vladimir.
Pozzo ties Lucky up with a long rope that is used for controlling him. He calls Lucky by animal terms or names, such as ‘pig, hog and dog’.

Pozzo appears to be an authoritarian figure. He is so powerful and confident. At times, he may even sound narcissistic, looking down on other people, considering himself as being in the higher position. Even in his first appearance before the presence of Vladimir and Estragon, he shows the sign of confidence, introducing himself without even being asked (Beckett, 1972: 22). Then when the two tramps still thinks that he is Godot, he then rises his voice to make clear of his name.

POZZO. (terrifying voice). I am Pozzo! (Silence). Pozzo! (Silence). Does that name mean nothing to you? (Silence). I say does that name mean nothing to you? Vladimir and Estragon look at each other questioningly. (Beckett, 1972: 22)

Pozzo takes his name too seriously, he does not like the idea of people mistaking him for someone else, especially because he does not consider himself the same level as other human beings. He admits that Vladimir and Estragon are the same species as him, but then laughs at this thought.

POZZO. (halting). You are human beings none the less. (He puts on his glasses). As far as one can see. (He takes off his glasses). Of the same species as myself. (He bursts into an enormous laugh). Of the same species as Pozzo! Made in God’s image! (Beckett, 1972: 23)

His statement above shows how he does not want to be equalized to Vladimir nor Estragon. It implies that he is a human being that is better than any other; this is shown by the enormous laugh that follows his statement, expressing disbelief and at
the same time, mocking. Pozzo even says that he is perhaps not particularly human (Beckett, 1972: 29) and he also refers Vladimir and Estragon as society of his likes, even though “the likeness is an imperfect one” (Beckett, 1972: 24). This surely shows Pozzo’s impression of other human beings as inferior to him. Even Vladimir says that he (Pozzo) thinks of nothing but himself (Beckett, 1972: 82).

Pozzo is very self-focused, and he only wants the attention from everyone else around him. He needs to be listened to and respected by others. When he tries to make a speech, he makes sure that everybody there is paying attention to him before he starts.

VLADIMIR. He’s about to speak.

_Estragon goes over beside Vladimir._

_Motionless, side by side, they wait._

POZZO. Good. Is everybody ready? Is everybody looking at me? _(He looks at Lucky, jerks the rope. Lucky raises his head)._ Will you look at me, pig! _(Lucky looks at him)._ Good. […] I am ready. Is everybody listening? Is everybody ready? _(He looks at them all in turn, jerks the rope)._ Hog! _(Lucky raises his head)._ I don’t like talking in a vacuum. Good. Let me see.

_He reflects._

(Beckett, 1972: 30)

From the scene above, it is shown how Pozzo hates to not be paid attention to when speaking. He has to be the center of attention, and everybody has to stay still because if not, it will make him nervous (Beckett, 1972: 30). He even gets angry when someone interrupts him in the middle of his speaking. This is in fact because Pozzo also has a problem with his memory. He tells Vladimir and Estragon that his memory is defective (Becket, 1972: 38). In Act 2, he does not remember meeting
Vladimir nor Estragon before. He is also certain that the day after he won’t remember having met anyone that day.

The second time Pozzo appears in the play, he mysteriously has gone blind (Beckett, 1972: 84). He comes in crying for help from anyone, just to get him up on his feet. Pozzo does not really like to be questioned about the cause of his blindness. All he can tell is that he woke up one fine day as blind as fortune (Beckett, 1972: 86). Vladimir gives the impression that he is pushing Pozzo too much regarding his blindness, and this causes Pozzo to feel agitated.

POZZO. *(suddenly furious)* Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time! It’s abominable! When! When! One day, is that not enough for you, one day like any other day, one day he went dumb, one day I went blind, one day we’ll go deaf, one day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you?
(Beckett, 1972: 89)

Pozzo’s words really reflects his fury towards Vladimir’s questions. He could not bear having have to think too much about something, or reasoning. To him (Pozzo), time is meaningless, and even more for the blind because they have no notion of time and things of time are hidden from them too (Beckett, 1972: 86). He also makes an analogy of time: “they give birth astride a grave, the lights gleams an instant, then it’s night once more” (Beckett, 1972:89). He is trying to point out how little time can be; a moment we are born then the next we are buried.

4. Lucky

Looking upon Lucky's state of existence, his name itself is in fact ironic, having being treated the way his master Pozzo treats him. He (Pozzo) assumes that
even “old dogs have more dignity” (Beckett, 1972: 32). Lucky is Pozzo’s slave, and seems to be more animal than human. He only waits for orders and does what he’s told to do. He carries around Pozzo’s things with a long rope attached to his neck, pulled around by his cruel master. He does not protest, and according to Pozzo, Lucky does this just to please him.

POZZO. He wants to impress him, so that I’ll keep him.
ESTRAGON. What?
POZZO. Perhaps I haven’t got it quite right. He wants to mollify me, so that I’ll give up the idea of parting with him. No, that’s not exactly either.
VLADIMIR. You want to get rid of him?
POZZO. He wants to cod me, but he won’t.
VLADIMIR. You want to get rid of him?
POZZO. He imagines that when I see how well he carries I’ll be tempted to keep him on in that capacity.
(Beckett 1972: 31)

Due to Pozzo’s plan of selling him at the fair, Lucky behaves well so that his master will not get rid of him, or at least that’s how Pozzo thinks by the looks of it. This signifies Lucky’s fear of being freed, because if he ever does, he may end up living a life to no significance, whereas his only purpose in life is just to please his master.

Lucky is similar to an animal at a circus. Pozzo, his master, can even put him on a show such as dancing, singing, reciting, thinking or even perhaps something else just to amuse an audience (Beckett, 1972: 39). After performing a dance that did not impress his audience at all, he was ordered to think. In this case, thinking aloud. Lucky needs his hat to be placed on his head in order to think. He then staggers and shouts out his text (Beckett, 1972: 42-45).
There was nothing much that can be understood from his speech. It only consists of random words and phrases mingled up into one very overlong utterance, without any stopping. There are many repetitions of sounds, words and even phrases. Finally, on Pozzo’s order, Vladimir’s seizes Lucky’s hat and puts an end to his thinking.

Pozzo says that Lucky has an issue with strangers. Lucky shows his dislike towards strangers at the time when the two tramps show sympathy for him when he’s crying, where Estragon approaches him to wipe away his tears. Lucky kicks Estragon in the shins in return (Beckett, 1972: 32).

Almost like Estragon, only far worse, Lucky’s life is full of misery (even Pozzo calls him by the name “misery”). He realizes that his life is tied up to Pozzo and he could never release himself. This can also be seen in the name of the dance that he made up, which is called “The Net”. Pozzo says Lucky thinks he is entangled in a net (Beckett, 1972: 40).

In Act 2, Lucky returns as a dumb person, having lost his sense of hearing. This case, the same as Pozzo, also happened mysteriously, nobody knows the reason behind it. While in the first Act Lucky is able to think aloud and take orders from his master, in the second Act Lucky remains a mute (Beckett, 1972: 89).

5. The Boy

The Boy appears twice in the play, just by the end of each Act carrying a message from Godot. He comes along only to inform that Godot cannot come. According to Vladimir, he has encountered the boy several times, just like with Pozzo
and Lucky, and the problem with the boy is the same; he does not remember seeing
Vladimir nor Estragon before.

BOY. Mr. Godot-
VLADIMIR. I’ve seen you before, haven’t I?
BOY. I don’t know, sir.
VLADIMIR. You don’t know me?
BOY. No, sir.
VLADIMIR. It wasn’t you came yesterday?
BOY. No, sir.
VLADIMIR. This is your first time?
BOY. Yes, sir.
Silence.
(Beckett, 1972: 50)

The boy’s responses towards questions given with only short answer like a
simple yes or no or even “I don’t know”, followed by “sir”. The boy is very passive
and he wouldn’t say a word unless being asked. Many times, in the description of the
characters’ actions in the play, it is written Silence, where Vladimir waits for the boy
to say something but then it is always him again keeping the conversation going.

Vladimir almost loses his patience to this.

VLADIMIR. Perhaps it was he came yesterday.
BOY. I don’t know, sir.
Silence.
VLADIMIR. (softly). Has he a beard, Mr. Godot?
BOY. I don’t know, sir.
VLADIMIR. Fair or... (he hesitates)... or black?
BOY. I think it’s white, sir.
Silence.
VLADIMIR. Christ have mercy on us!
Silence.
(Beckett, 1972: 92)

The conversations they have in the first and second act are very identical that
even Vladimir can already guess what the boy is about to say. The boy happens to
have no idea about any conversation between him and Vladimir that has occurred the
day before. Vladimir even states the information himself without even listening first
to what the boy is about to tell him.

BOY. Mister… (Vladimir turns). Mr. Albert…
VLADIMIR. Off we go again. (Pause). Do you not recognize me?
BOY. No, sir.
VLADIMIR. This is your first time.
BOY. Yes, sir.
   Silence.
VLADIMIR. You have a message from Mr. Godot.
BOY. Yes, sir.
VLADIMIR. He won’t come this evening.
BOY. No, sir.
VLADIMIR. But he’ll come tomorrow.
BOY. Yes, sir.
VLADIMIR. Without fail.
BOY. Yes, sir.
   Silence.
(Beckett, 1972: 91)

The boy is a timid character, meaning that he is afraid of the elder characters
in the play, especially of Pozzo. He expresses his fear of Pozzo and Lucky in the first
Act, making this the cause of his being late. He waits for Pozzo to depart before he
could even dare to get near Vladimir and Estragon.

ESTRAGON. What kept you so late?
   […]
VLADIMIR. You were afraid of the whip.
BOY. Yes, sir.
VLADIMIR. The roars.
BOY. Yes, sir.
VLADIMIR. The two big men.
BOY. Yes, sir.
(Beckett, 1972:49-50)
He also shows obedience and respect towards the elder characters in the play. One of the ways to show his respect is by calling Vladimir and Estragon by “sir” or “Mister”. He is obedient in a way that he obeys Godot by doing tasks such as delivering a message to Vladimir and minding the goats. He also says that Mr. Godot is good to him but not to his brother. This is perhaps because his brother isn’t as obedient as he is.

VLADIMIR. You work for Mr. Godot?
BOY. Yes, sir.
VLADIMIR. What do you do?
BOY. I mind the goats, sir.
VLADIMIR. Is he good to you?
BOY. Yes, sir.
VLADIMIR. He doesn’t beat you?
BOY. No, sir, not me.
VLADIMIR. Whom does he beat?
BOY. He beats my brother, sir.

(Beckett, 1972: 51)

B. The Ideas of Modernism as Projected through Vladimir among other Characters in Waiting for Godot

Being aware that this thesis uses the New Criticism approach in analyzing the characters and in relating their characteristics to the ideas of modernism and postmodernism, the writer limits the analysis inside the object of the study, focusing on the characters. The analysis refers to only the ideology of modernism and postmodernism as the extrinsic elements of the object of the study.

In Waiting for Godot, Vladimir appears to be the center of the play, in fact playing a role as the hero or protagonist. Though many have assumed that Vladimir
and Estragon are both the protagonists, this research shows how Vladimir controls most conversations and even Estragon’s motivation in the play.

The analysis of the characters shows how the characters have several points that can define their characteristics and ideas. Vladimir is one of the two main characters who shows dominance over the other, and most of the time does the thinking. Estragon could not really rely on himself to think because he has a problem with his memory (just like the other characters in the play). This implies that Vladimir is the only character who has a good memory.

Previously in this thesis, it has been explained that modernism thinking is based on using rational and logical means to gain knowledge while postmodernism denies the application of logical thinking. Rather, the thinking during the postmodern era was based on unscientific, irrational thought process, as a reaction to modernism (Abrams, 1993: 120). In this section, the thesis discusses the ideas of modernism in Vladimir and also the ideas of postmodernism in the other characters. An overview of the other characters in the play is conducted in order to give a contrast to the character of Vladimir.

1. The Act of Anticipating

The first aspect from Vladimir’s modernist ideas to be analyzed is his act of anticipating. From the very beginning of the play, Vladimir shows his determination in waiting for this person or entity named Godot who never shows up, believing that he will eventually come. He has never met this Godot before, and it is strange enough for someone to just be waiting on a person to come without knowing exactly what
their purpose of waiting is. Estragon could not tell why he waits for Godot because he only relies on Vladimir to provide him the reason why. All Vladimir knows is that he waits because he seeks for salvation. Salvation from Godot.

ESTRAGON. And if he comes?
VLADIMIR. We’ll be saved.
(Beckett, 1978: 94)

Vladimir waits dearly for Godot, his savior, and always restrains Estragon from giving up on the wait. He in fact needs someone to accompany him during his wait, because he knows that he will feel lonely. He even manipulates Estragon to stay with him, telling him that he (Estragon) will never make it alone. Estragon seems quite certain of his intentions of leaving Vladimir, but he remains stuck with him.

Although it seems as if both Vladimir and Estragon are waiting for Godot, the writer finds it differently. The only reason why Estragon still sticks around is because of his dependency on Vladimir, not his pure intentions in waiting the endless wait for Godot. Vladimir takes care of Estragon who frequently suffers from physical pain, and both of them take advantage of this condition; Vladimir has a friend to accompany him during his wait while Estragon has someone to rely on to feed him and think for him.

ESTRAGON. You see, you feel worse when I’m with you. I feel better alone, too.
VLADIMIR. (vexed). Then why do you always come crawling back?
ESTRAGON. I don’t know.
VLADIMIR. No, but I do. It’s because you don’t know how to defend yourself. I wouldn’t have let them beat you.
(Beckett, 1978: 59)
The conversation above is a very strong piece from the play that can prove how Vladimir is the only one waiting for Godot. Although Vladimir at times seems irritated by the presence of Estragon (even Estragon senses this), he couldn’t stand the feeling of being alone. Even when Estragon falls asleep, he wakes him up just because he feels lonely. He uses Estragon’s dependency to manipulate him to stay with him.

ESTRAGON. And if we dropped him? (Pause). If we dropped him?
VLADIMIR. He’d punish us.
(Beckett, 1978: 93)

Estragon really shows his intentions of giving up the wait. He does not really care much about Godot and even assumes that the responsibility to wait for Godot rests on Vladimir. At the end of each Acts, it is Vladimir whom the Boy approaches and delivers Godot’s message to. This makes it even clearer that Vladimir has the role of waiting for Godot. Estragon even mentions Godot as “your man” to Vladimir, giving the impression of being satirical and leaving it all up to Vladimir to take actions (Beckett, 1978: 21).

Modernism emphasizes experimentation and the aim of finding an inner truth behind surface appearance (Sarup, 1993: 131). Vladimir has the need to prove that Godot will eventually show up and offer him the salvation he has been waiting for. Although Godot remains unseen, Vladimir wishes to see him in person one day and finally unveil Godot, who is an abstract truth.
2. The Act of Reasoning

The next modernist aspect of Vladimir is his act of reasoning, or, in other words, thinking. Vladimir shows interest in thinking, and makes it a good habit of his. He often contemplates conditions or circumstances, wanting to find out the reasons why these things occur. Thinking, is an activity which keeps Vladimir sober and conscious most of the time, and he needs to maintain this to put life into his actions.

Modernist people concern more about how they see rather than what they see (Barry, 2002: 82). So the main question is “how” or “why” instead of just “what”. The characters in the play, except for Vladimir, show their disinterest in thinking. Apart from the difficulty they go through in recalling past events, they tend to just give up on thinking or not try hard enough to even do it. Lucky does not think for himself because it is Pozzo who gives him orders, telling him what to do. Once he thinks, only nonsensical words come out (while Pozzo calls this “thinking”). Pozzo even stopped Lucky’s action of thinking by removing the hat from Lucky’s head exclaiming “there’s an end to his thinking!” (Beckett, 1978: 45).

Pozzo does not go far in thinking because he has a short span of focus, forgetting his purposes due to any smallest distraction. He tends to ignore having to do reasoning for his actions, intentions or his conditions. He sometimes asks questions but does not really mind if they are answered or not. Here, Pozzo shows characteristics of being postmodern, lacking the analytical nature and having rhetorical thoughts (open ended questions). There is a time when Vladimir is trying to find out the reason for Pozzo’s blindness, repeatedly asking Pozzo why.
bursts into fury, expressing his feeling of being tormented by questions. He doesn’t care why he has gone blind or why Lucky is dumb, because for him, to ponder these things is just a waste of time (Beckett, 1978: 89).

The moment when Pozzo offers to put Lucky on a show to entertain the tramps, Vladimir chooses to hear him think while Estragon is interested in seeing him dance (Beckett, 1978: 39). This adds to Vladimir’s act of reasoning, wanting to know how others think.

Vladimir takes thinking seriously. He tries to explain to Estragon that there is nothing wrong in thinking. What is wrong is to “have thought”, in other words, only guessing and relying on mere belief.

VLADIMIR. When you seek you hear.
ESTRAGON. You do.
VLADIMIR. That prevents you from finding.
ESTRAGON. It does.
VLADIMIR. That prevents you from thinking.
ESTRAGON. You think all the same.

[…] 
VLADIMIR. We’re in no danger of ever thinking anymore.
ESTRAGON. Then what are we complaining about?
VLADIMIR. Thinking is not the worst.

[…] 
VLADIMIR. What is terrible is to have thought.
(Beckett, 1978: 64)

The Boy does not show much effort in thinking or reasoning. When being asked, most of the time he only gives short answers, simply by saying “yes, sir”, “no, sir”, or even “I don’t know, sir”. Vladimir gets frustrated when conversing with the Boy because he (the Boy) doesn’t seem to have initiative in thinking of anything else.
to say apart from answering questions. Every time Vladimir stops asking questions, the Boy only remains silent.

3. The Act of Relevant Discoursing

The third modernist idea to be analyzed is Vladimir’s act of relevant discoursing. While the previous discussion concerns about the act of reasoning or thinking, this part discusses the type or manner of conversations that are developed from Vladimir’s reasoning. So in order to express ideas and thoughts, a discourse or conversation can be one of the ways to do it.

Throughout the play, from the beginning until the end, Vladimir and Estragon pass the time by conversing with each other, sometimes getting into a debate or argument, then talk about random things and so on. They seem to always find something to talk about, whether it makes sense (relevant) or not. For Vladimir, it is crucial to find something worthy enough to talk about so that they don’t pass the time in doing *nothing* useful.

Reasoning is a must for Vladimir, but only doing it without considering the discourse to be relevant is not good enough. His words and actions have to be meaningful and purposeful, otherwise he will only think of himself as useless, worthless and idle. That moment when he hears Pozzo’s cry for help, he becomes enlightened and right away figures out something to make out of it.

VLADIMIR. Let us not waste our time in idle discourse! Let us do something, while we have the chance! It is not every day that we are needed. Not indeed that personally we are needed.

[…]

PLAGIAT MERUPAKAN TINDAKAN TIDAK TERPUJI
Let us make the most out of it, before it is too late! Let us represent worthily for once the foul brood to which a cruel fate consigned us! What do you say?
(Beckett, 1978: 79)

Vladimir supposes that he has been wasting his time doing idle discourse with his partner Estragon, blathering about irrelevant things that do not improve their current state of being. These things they talk about such as the story of two thieves or a man who went to a brothel house, memories of good old times and even plans of committing suicide. They even play roles as Pozzo and Lucky, take a boot on and off, peer into hats and sing or sleep. Both Vladimir and Estragon labor themselves in these idle discourses and activities, but eventually, Vladimir gets fed up doing this and realizes that he should be doing something else more important.

VLADIMIR. Well? What do we do?
ESTRAGON. Don’t let’s do anything. It’s safer.
(Beckett, 1978: 18)

VLADIMIR. You’d rather be stuck here doing nothing?
ESTRAGON. Yes.
VLADIMIR. Please yourself.
(Beckett, 1978: 71)

At the point when Vladimir comes to realize their being idle, he then tries to think of something to do. On the other hand, Estragon seems to put aside the need to make something useful and meaningful out of their time, instead, when he (Estragon) feels bored or hopeless, all he thinks of is just to fall asleep, leave or just commit suicide. He’s only bored waiting and runs out of things (anything) to do.

Pozzo and Lucky only happens to pass by from nowhere to nowhere and not really do anything distinctive from what Vladimir and Estragon have been doing,
which is the act of pointless blathering. Pozzo and Lucky talk about things but do not make up their minds of what to do, only to just be going “on” and Vladimir and Estragon to just be “waiting for Godot”. They all just go back to the start; Pozzo not sure where to go and the tramps not sure what to do.

VLADIMIR. We wait. We are bored. (He throws up his hand).

No, don’t protest, we are bored to death, there’s no denying it. Good. A diversion comes along and what do we do? We let it go to waste. Come, let’s get to work!

(He advances towards the heap, stops in his stride).

In an instant all will vanish and we’ll be alone once more, in the midst of nothingness!

He broods.

(Beckett, 1978: 81)

Vladimir feels that they should not waste a good chance to finally do something useful, a purposeful action to save them from their deadly boredom and state of nothingness. Vladimir needs to prove himself worthy for once and not get carried away in idle discourse during the wait.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The thesis analyzes Samuel Beckett’s play *Waiting for Godot*. There are two objectives of the research, first is to find the description of each character in the play. There are five characters that are analyzed, those are Vladimir, Estragon, Pozzo, Lucky and the Boy. Vladimir is the protagonist in the play, posing himself with his critical way of thinking and determination in waiting for Godot. Vladimir often does the thinking for Estragon and also has the best memorizing ability among the others. Most of the time he is curious and seeks for answers and also something to do to ease his mind because he couldn’t stand doing nothing. He also puts his faith in Godot, believing that one day he would finally come.

Estragon is still tied up to his physical needs and pain. He suffers from physical pain throughout the play and often exaggerates it. He depends on Vladimir to feed him and take care of him, including decision making. He is the dreamer of the two, irritating Vladimir with his stories and imagination and mundane behavior. Different from Vladimir, Estragon thinks that it is safer to not do anything and just let the time pass. Rather than do anything useful, he suggests dozing off to sleep or even committing suicide. He tends to think of escaping from reality and just give up on waiting for Godot but fails to do this because he is tied to Vladimir.

Pozzo, Lucky and the Boy are the minor characters of the play, functioning as complementary for the two major characters. Pozzo and Lucky does pretty much the
same as what Vladimir and Estragon does, which is nothing. Nothing in a way that they are not really doing useful or meaningful. Lucky only does what he is told and doesn’t have much to say that makes sense, while Pozzo can’t even tell exactly where he is heading and even forget things he is just about to say for he finds difficulty in trying to focus on something. Later in the play Pozzo turns blind and Lucky dumb without even a care to know the reason why. The Boy is a timid person who seems to be the only character in the play who has actually met Godot in person. He is very obedient and he respects the elders, taking orders as a messenger apart from minding the goats. Neither of these three characters signify remembering anything from previous events such as meeting the tramps.

The second objective is to reveal the ideas of modernism in Vladimir. As said previously in this thesis, Vladimir seems to be the only sane person among the other characters. Though perhaps Estragon could also be counted as being sane, Vladimir is one step ahead of him due to Estragon’s defective memory. He has shown signs of being the odd one, having different a different behavior and point of view. He is the only one determined to wait for Godot because he believes in salvation and that Godot is his savior. He gets frustrated when he comes to think of nothing meaningful to do. Vladimir contemplates the Bible while Estragon only admires it from the interesting looking pictures in it. When nobody remembers anything that happened on the previous day, he is the only one who can recall his memories and feel confident to rely on them. He also questions the reality at them time he becomes frustrated; he wonders if he is sober or asleep.
From the result of the analysis, the ideas of modernism in the play can be seen through the character of Vladimir marked by his acts of anticipating, reasoning, and relevant discoursing. Through Vladimir, the postmodern play itself is able to convey its ideas of modernism by creating a contrast between the two ideologies; between Vladimir and the rest of the characters.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX

Summary of the Samuel Beckett’s Waiting for Godot

In the first act, the play starts with a country road, a tree, an evening. Two tramps named Vladimir and Estragon are waiting there under the leafless tree. Nothing happens, nothing is certain, and there isn’t really anything for them to do besides wait. Vladimir and Estragon, who then call each other Didi and Gogo, are waiting for a man -or entity- called Godot. They can’t really be sure if they have met Godot before or not, how he looks like, when and where exactly they should be waiting him and they can’t really tell if Godot would even come or not.

While waiting, Didi and Gogo pass their time by doing day-to-day routine such as taking a boot on and off, having arguments over unnecessary things, even getting into serious conversations such as reflecting the Bible. They also talk about committing suicide by hanging themselves off a tree bough with a rope, but they do not have any. Several times Gogo suggests that they should go but then Didi reminds him (again) that they can’t because they have to wait for Godot.

When it reaches half of the first act, two men enter the stage, where one of them holds and a long rope that pulls the other one around by the neck. Pozzo, the master, carries a whip with him while Lucky, the slave, carries his master’s belongings. Pozzo is an overconfident man who boasts a lot, while Lucky doesn’t really have anything to say that makes sense. When asked about their destination, Pozzo doesn’t seem to give a clear answer of where he and Lucky are heading to.
They don’t even seem to be doing *anything*, just like the two tramps, except for Didi who is hopefully waiting for Godot to come.

The departure of Pozzo and Lucky is then followed by the arrival of a Boy, who acts out as Godot’s messenger. He informs Vladimir that Godot isn’t coming that day, and will certainly come the next day. Vladimir supposes that he has met the boy before, but the boy denies having met any of the tramps in any occasion. In the end of the first act, Didi finally confirms Gogo’s stimulus to leave, but they remain unmoved, staying right where they are.

The second act starts on the next day, same time and same place. The two tramps are still there waiting by the very same tree, only it has leaves on it. They are still idle as before, nothing much to do. Soon enters Pozzo and Lucky again but this time, Pozzo has gone blind and Lucky dumb. Nobody knows why this has happened; Pozzo says that he has no sense of time while Lucky doesn’t say anything this time because he’s already a mute.

Vladimir reaches the top of his confusion, reflecting over the circumstances around him, wondering if he is actually asleep or wide awake and not realizing the things that are happening. Estragon dozes off, as usual, just to pass the time, or perhaps escape from reality. Not long after the departure of Pozzo and Lucky, the Boy enters the stage, approaching Vladimir only to inform that Godot isn’t coming that day and will certainly tomorrow.

Just like the previous day, nobody except for Didi remembers the events that have occurred in the past, or at least the day before. The Boy and Pozzo
denies having met Vladimir nor Gogo, and so does Gogo in return. The two tramps then contemplate again about hanging themselves with a rope, but still they have no rope. In the end, the two tramps resolve to leave that place but nothing happens, they remain where they are just like before.