

NOTES

- (1) James Eliopoulos, *Samuel Beckett's Dramatic Language* (Paris: Mouton & Co. N.V., 1975), p. 116.
- (2) Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (London: Faber & Faber, 1988), p. 9.
- (3) *Ibid.*, p. 61.
- (4) *Ibid.*, p. 15.
- (5) Roland Hayman, *Samuel Beckett* (London: Heinemann, 1970), p. 19.
- (6) James Eliopoulos, p. 70.
- (7) *Waiting for Godot*, p. 18.
- (8) *Ibid.*, p. 68.
- (9) A. Alvarez, *Beckett* (Fontana: Collins, 1975), p. 89.
- (10) *Waiting for Godot*, p. 17.
- (11) Richard Coe, *Beckett* (New York: Grove Press, 1964), p. 94.
- (12) *Waiting for Godot*, p. 9.
- (13) *Ibid.*, p. 58.
- (14) *Ibid.*, p. 59.
- (15) *Ibid.*, p. 9.
- (16) *Ibid.*, p. 12.
- (17) *Ibid.*, p. 67.
- (18) James Eliopoulos, p. 67.
- (19) *Waiting for Godot*, p. 21.
- (20) Roland Hayman, p. 5.
- (21) *Waiting for Godot*, p. 54.
- (22) *Ibid.*, p. 94.

the first words of *Waiting for Godot*, and the same phrase is reiterated twice by his friend Vladimir a few moments later.

- Vladimir : Nothing you can do about it.
Estragon : No use struggling.
Vladimir : One is what one is.
Estragon : No use struggling.
Vladimir : The essential doesn't change.
Estragon : Nothing to be done (19).

This phrase functions as a refrain to emphasize the idea that these two characters are enslaved by the process of waiting, "there is nothing left to do except wait for Godot." (20)

Other phrases show that the language in such an absurd world no longer functions as a means of communication. For instance, both acts end with the same dialogue. The end of act one is:

- Estragon : Well, shall we go?
Vladimir : Yes, let's go.
They do not move. (21)

The words lose their dynamic power to communicate, the power of achievement and action. The ending of act two is identical with that of act one:

- Vladimir : Well, Shall we go?
Estragon : Yes, let's go.
They do not move. (22)

We obviously notice the disparity between what the characters are saying and what they are resolving to do.

Generally speaking, Samuel Beckett relies on these types of repetition to achieve a sense of boredom and monotony in the spectators. Therefore, the repetitive device seems to be a very suitable means to reach this dramatic purpose. Repeating a statement or an idea many times, it becomes meaningless and absurd and then it may reflect the routine and the interminable futility of the world.

Throughout the action of the play other mundane subjects like Estragon's difficulty with his feet and boots, Vladimir's difficulties with urination and the comic interplay involving carrots, turnips and radishes are all repeated to the extent that they work as motifs in the play. The first lines of the stage directions tell us that "Estragon, sitting on a low mound, is trying to take off his boot, He pulls at it with both hands, panting. he gives up, exhausted, rests, tries again," (15) and a little later:

Vladimir : You should have been a poet.

Estragon : I was (Gestures towards his rags) Isn't that obvious?

Silence

Vladimir : Where was I... How's your foot?

Estragon : Swelling visibly. (16)

In act two the dialogue is interrupted so as to discuss the same subject of Estragon's feet and boots:

Vladimir : Where are your boots?

Estragon : I must have thrown them away.

Vladimir : When?

Estragon : I don't know.

Vladimir : Why?

Estragon : I don't know why I don't know!

Vladimir : No, I mean why did you throw them away?

Estragon : (exasperated) Because they are hurting me. 17

The repetition of this concern in such a way reflects the spiritual vacuum and nakedness of the soul and the unawareness of the character of his serious tragedy in life. The repetitive device here functions as a bell ringing throughout the action reminding of this triviality and this endless void.

PHRASAL REPETITION

The technique of phrasal repetition is another distinguished trait of Beckett's style. Obviously, the use of sterile words is but one manifestation of the theater of the absurd to show the sterility in society. For instance, certain phrases in the text become as refrains which hold implications subject to thematic interpretation. (18) The most frequently repeated phrase in the play is, "Nothing to be done," which is said by Estragon in

Estragon : What about hanging ourselves?...
 Let's hang ourselves immediately!
 Vladimir : From a bough? (They go towards the tree)
 I would not trust it.
 Estragon : We can always try.
 Vladimir : Go ahead.
 Estragon : After you.
 Vladimir : No, no, you first.
 Estragon : Why me?
 Vladimir : You are lighter than I am. (10)

They resolve not to hang themselves since the bough might break and it is safer to do nothing. The same absurd idea is repeated near the end of the play:

Estragon : Why don't we hang ourselves?
 Vladimir : With what?
 Estragon : You haven't got a bit of rope?
 Vladimir : No.
 Estragon : Then we can't.
 Silence
 Vladimir : Let's go.
 Estragon : Wait, there's my belt.
 Vladimir : It's too short...
 Estragon : You say we have to come back tomorrow.
 Vladimir : Yes.
 Estragon : Then we can bring a good bit of rope.

They devote themselves once more to the act of waiting. Therefore, what is emphasized by the repetition of the incident of hanging is that the two characters rely not on themselves to change their situation, but on some objective power which will change it for them. Beckett himself does not believe in any power outside reason to free man (11)

Both acts begin with the same situation. Vladimir enters, noticing Estragon who is struggling to take off his boot, he says, "So there you are again." (12). For stressing the dominant boredom and dullness of behaviour, the same situation is repeated in the beginning of act two. Vladimir exclaims, "You again!," (13) and a little later, "There you are again." (14)

In short, the tree, which is the essential part of the whole setting, and the theme are inseparable. Any critical attempt deals with any of them in isolation will inevitably lead to a great misunderstanding.

Time in both acts is the evening. Although the time of act two is supposed to be the next day, but we do not observe any dramatic change in the direction of action or in the characters' development. This simply refers to the stability of life and to reinforce the impression of circularity throughout the action of the play. There is no difference between today of act two and yesterday of act one. Neither of the main two characters knows which day of the week it is, so it may not be the right day of waiting for Godot. Time, therefore, lacks both its quality and quantity.

Vladimir: (Looking round) You recognize the place?

Estragon: I did not say that.

Vladimir: Well?

Estragon: That makes no difference.

Vladimir: All the same ...that tree (turning towards the auditorium) ... that bog.

Estragon: You're sure it was this evening?

Vladimir: What?

Estragon: That we are to wait.

Vladimir: He said Saturday. (Pause.) I think.

Estragon: But what Saturday? And is it Saturday? Is it not rather Sunday? (Pause.) Or Monday?
(Pause.) Or Friday?(4)

According to the previous analysis of Beckett's method of repetition of the setting and its connection with the theme, one may venture to say that since man lacks his physical and social locations in life, it is natural then to create dramatically such a setting which is divested of any specific location and any touch of active life. It is a " world in which time and space do not have their normal significance."(5) To enhance this sense of monotony and boredom, the same setting is repeated in act two. The setting reflects the same idea of action that man spends all his life waiting aimlessly for Godot to come, but Godot shall not come and man himself remains running and running within the same circle with his doomed hope to reach an end.

coming. This hope is embodied in the apparent fertility of the tree in act two. This paradox needs an explanation since in the world of absurdity there is no room for such a word: hope. Observing the whole action of the play, one may feel easily the dominant pessimistic atmosphere in which the personal freedom seems as a nightmare; dual characters run through a gamut of moods and attitudes toward their individual predicaments; the dichotomy between their own minds and bodies find an analogy in the outside world in the dichotomy between people and objects. Everything seems then silly, naive and useless since man cannot find any logical explanation for his existence. Amidst such a mess of situations and thoughts, any hope becomes sterile and it loses its energetic power in attracting and motivating man toward more optimistic attitudes. Hope simply seems to be here as a flower planted in mud in appearance, and it seems as giving an aspirin to a dying man, in function.

In fact, a similar impression is given in the play: whether there are leaves or not, the suffering of man remains as it is. In other words, whether there is the idea of the Saviour or not man is repeatedly subjected to torture. According to the previous thematic discussion, the dramatic function of repetition of the setting shows itself here as an essential and an integral part of the play. It is to focus on the monotony of life regardless of any apparant things which give a deceptive touch of a hopeful and a fertile action. Undoubtedly, the appearance of the green leaves is supposed to be manifestation of Spring, but depression and loss are the only things that man can feel in such environment. Therefore, the leaves have no mystical importance. In act two, Estragon describes the entire surroundings as a "muckheap" :

Recognize! What is there to recognize?
All my lousy life I've crawled about
in the mud! And you talk to me about
scenery! (Looking widely about him)
Look at this muckheap! I have never
stirred from it.(3)

The tree is no longer a manifestation of Spring or hope, rather it simply denotes the sterility of religious idea of the Saviour. Man should not wait endlessly for an external power to help him in achieving his freedom and existence. On the contrary, man must depend on his personal capabilities and his own experience to reach this purpose.

world in which he lives are equally absurd and lead to nothingness. Sisyphus is the perfect typefigure here. He is forever rolling a stone up a mountain, forever he is aware that it will never reach the top. All his efforts are useless and absurd.

REPETITION OF THE SETTING

In *Waiting for Godot*, Samuel Beckett has striven to build up the setting according to the point discussed above which entirely depends on the sense of detachment of man in an sterile life. Thus, the setting here no longer suggests only time and place of the action, rather it becomes an integral part of the whole movement of the play. The stage directions of the two acts tell us that both acts take place in the same setting: a country road, which is not given a specific location, with a single tree. Again, this symbolic setting of isolation suits the absurd theme, it stresses the alienated life of the characters. However, what is intended here is the repetition of the same setting of act one in act two with little change. The tree in act one is leafless while in act two it has leaves. The symbolic significance of the tree demands an interpretation so as to comprehend the dramatic function of this repetition of the setting.

The theme of the play simply deals with the predicament of two tramps waiting nowhere in particular for someone who will never come. The dialogue gives an impression of the emptiness and nothingness of the universe :

Estragon: Nothing to be done.

Vladimir: I'm beginning to come round to that opinion. (2)

The setting fits this theme. The stage is bare except for a tree and the light subdued because it is evening. There is no sense of life. The tree is black and bare, too. These details of the setting are understandable so long as they go with the absurd theme of the play. But a paradox is gradually produced and becomes inevitable in act two when the tree has leaves. Evidently, the tree in the Christian literature represents the Cross on which Jesus the Christ was crucified. Thus, the tree is not a symbol of despair or frustration, rather it is a symbol of the triumph over the dark forces of the world. It simply represents the resurrection and the hope for the saviour's

THE TECHNIQUE OF REPETITION

IN WAITING FOR GODOT

By

Azher S Saleh

Department Of English

College Of Arts

University Of Mosul

1991

Samuel Beckett seems to be possessed by the idea of repetition to the extent that it becomes one of the principal traits which distinguish his works. Repetition here should not be confined to the abstract dictionary meaning. The term simply suggests that there are similar dramatic settings, situations, and phrases which may be found in more than one place in the same play and in their relation to the theme of the playwright they take on a deeper, suggestive significance, larger than the singular situation when it is presented once. The dramatic function of repetition is to achieve certain dramatic purposes that to provide us with a useful key in attempting an interpretation of the play and to make us see clearly the meaning and the relevance of the dramatist's philosophy. This claim can be substantiated by discussing and examining the ideas of Beckett and how repetition becomes of great significance in presenting the setting, action and dialogue in a symbolic way in *Waiting for Godot*.

Undoubtedly, *Waiting for Godot* is regarded as a typical play of the absurd drama. The word absurd literally means 'out of harmony.' This disharmony springs from the awareness of man of his purposeless plight in an existence out of harmony with its surroundings in which modern man "cries out in the frustration of his humanity."⁽¹⁾ Modern man, according to the theater of the absurd, lacks his space. Space has two important aspects: social location which involves a vocation, social relationship and a meaningful milieu of values – and also a physical location which involves the body itself and the place where the body is located. Whenever man lacks space, there is non-being and consequently he has no freedom. All attempts of such a man to impose rational forms upon the