

The Analysis of the Reliable Contract in Beckett's Endgame

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Abstract:

In this research, there is an exploring of the concept of the “reliable contract” in Samuel Beckett’s play the “Endgame”. By examining the details of the elements or interpretation of the relationships, themes, language and symbolism within the play; this paper points out to disclose how Samuel Beckett organizes and deconstruct the idea of “reliability” and the relationships between his characters. The results suggest that Samuel Beckett’s description of these ideas reflect general existential and philosophical importance that led to disclose new insights into his literary works. Beckett's Reliable Contract is a literary work that deals with the themes of existence and identity, and is considered part of the modern literary heritage. It is distinguished by its unique style that combines irony and seriousness. Beckett's Reliable Contract is considered an embodiment of existentialism, as it explores issues of identity and meaning in a world full of challenges. Beckett relies on dense dialogue and repetition, which creates a sense of loss and uncertainty. This style reflects his existential philosophy that highlights the absurdity of life. The work revolves around characters living in a state of alienation, as they struggle with feelings of loneliness and loss. Beckett uses simple and expressive language to depict the characters' internal conflicts, reflecting the depth of the human experience.

Key words :(absurd , reliable contract , dependency , perspective).

تحليل العقد الموثوق في مسرحية بيكت

(نهاية اللعبة)

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الملخص:

يهدف هذا البحث إلى استكشاف مفهوم "العقد الموثوق" في مسرحية "نهاية اللعبة" لصموئيل بيكت. من خلال فحص تفاصيل العناصر أو تقسيم العلاقات والموضوعات واللغة والرمزية داخل المسرحية؛ تشير هذه الوراق إلى الكشف عن كيفية قيام صامويل بيكت بتنظيم وفكك فكرة "الموثوقية" وال العلاقات بين شخصياته. وتشير النتائج إلى أن وصف صموئيل بيكت لهذه الأفكار يعكس أهمية وجودية وفلسفية عامة أدت إلى الكشف عن رؤى جديدة في أعماله الأدبية. العقد الموثوق لبيكت هو عمل أدبي يتناول موضوعات الوجود والهوية، ويعتبر جزءاً من التراث الأدبي الحديث. يتميز بأسلوبه الفريد الذي يجمع بين السخرية والجدية. يعتبر العقد الموثوق لبيكت تجسيداً لفلسفة الوجودية، حيث يستكشف قضايا الهوية والمعنى في عالم مليء بالتحديات. يعتمد بيكت على الحوار المكثف والتكرار، مما يخلق إحساساً بالضياع وعدم اليقين. هذا الأسلوب يعكس فلسنته الوجودية التي تسلط الضوء على عبئية الحياة. تدور أحداث العمل حول شخصيات تعيش في حالة من الاغتراب، حيث تتصارع مع مشاعر الوحدة والفقدان. يستخدم بيكت لغة بسيطة وعبرة لتصوير الصراعات الداخلية للشخصيات، مما يعكس عمق التجربة الإنسانية.

الكلمات المفتاحية : (العبث ، العقد الموثوق ، التبعية ، المنظور).

1.1. Introduction

- **Samuel Beckett:**

Beckett who was born in Dublin in 1906, is a tremendous figure in modern drama and literature. Generally speaking, his works which are partially within the “Theatre of Absurd” seems to be challenging traditional narrative and that diving into subjects of existentialism, hopelessness of human states. Beckett’s writings are marked by their simplicity, dark humor and deepest philosophical views.

Like the absurdist authors, Beckett refused to call as absurdist. He preferred to use the term ‘Anti – Theatre’ or ‘New Theatre’, and the second world war gave birth to this movement with its painful effects and the fear of the human’s annihilation which led to the emergence of Beckett’s play. (Akbudak,2010)

- **Beckett’s Endgame**

This play which first appeared in 1957, regards as one of Samuel Beckett’s most important plays. There are four characters in this play (Hamm, Clov, Nagg and Nell) who are populated in a world which was after the stark world apocalypse. Hamm, who was blind and unable to move, sits on a chair. The second character is Clov , who was physically able but psychologically incapable of leaving , was ordered to leave by Hamm . The third character and the fourth Nagg and Nell were Hamm’s parents. They were trapped in a garbage bin; and remembering the past.

The repetition of the dialogue and the simple setting of the play highlight the nonsense and absurdity of its existence.

This research concentrates upon the idea of the “Reliable Contract” in the play “Endgame”. The main goal is to make an analysis of how the author constructs the concept through his characters interactions, themes of subordination, control, language and symbolism.

The research assumes that Beckett’s delineation of reliability and contracts aim at highlighting the existential dilemmas that face the four characters, also to disclose the instability, the meaning of their failure attempts, and the structure of their lives.

1.2. Literature Review

2.1. The Idea of the “Reliable Contract” in Literature

The concept of a “reliable contract” in literary studies points out the conventions and understandings that control interactions and dependence between characters in a work. This concept may include a group of relationships that starts from explicit agreement in social and legal contexts to the more precise and unspoken understandings that support personal interactions. In the context of the play “Endgame”, the idea of a reliable contract is regarded as a particular relevant.

The survival of characters’ existence depends on their adherence to each other with their routine and dependencies, despite their existence

uselessness. So, Hamm and Clov's relationship for example, is regarded as a contract of mutual dependency because each one of them provides something to other necessities. Therefore, this idea of a reliable contract also stretches to other characters who are Nagg and Nell whose interactions reflect a participant history and outstanding.

2.2. Characters and Their Relationship

However, the analysis characters and their relationships for (Hamm and Clov's relationship) is central to this play, marked by a complex reaction of dominance dependency, and alternative need. Hamm always, as he is blind and immobile, depends on Clov for physical help. Clov physically able and psychologically tied to Hamm, and he is unable to leave in spite of expressing a desire to do so. This relationship can be considered as a “reliable contract” of mutual dependency, as one character provides something to other character's needs, but their relationship is charged with tension and resentment. Through the play, Hamm repeatedly commons Clov , assuring his dominance and control, whereas Clov obeys with reluctance and bitterness , with this image of suffering Clov remains with Hamm, reflecting a deeper and unconscious recognition of their mutual need .

HAMM :Why do you stay with me?

CLOV: Why do you keep me?

HAMM: There's no one else.

CLOV: There's nowhere else. (Pause.)

HAMM: You're leaving me all the same.

CLOV: I'm trying. HAMM: You don't love me.

CLOV: No. HAMM: You loved me once.

CLOV: Once !

Nagg and Nell also represent another image of dependency remains of familial bonds. Thus, the interactions seem to be limited and fragmented, reflect a past filled with shared experiences and communication and reminiscence.

NAGG: Could you give me a scratch before you go?

NELL: No. (Pause.)

Where?

NAGG: In the back.

NELL: No. (Pause.)

Rub yourself against the rim.

NAGG: It's lower down. In the hollow.

NELL: What hollow?

NAGG: The hollow! (Pause.)

Could you not? (Pause.)

Yesterday you scratched me there.

NELL (elegiac): Ah yesterday.

NAGG: Could you not? (Pause.)

Would you like me to scratch you? (Pause.)

The reliable contract of the characters is based on their shared history and the patience which they find in each other's presence, even in such painful conditions and their relationship between Hamm and Clov provides a poignant contrast to the more overtly antagonistic dynamic.

In the play, the characters seem to be engaged in actions which are vain but need to find meaning or wasting time. They don't have the ability to leave but never doing so for a specific reason of each character,

2.3. Themes of Dependency and Control

The theme of dependency is widespread in the play "Endgame", where the characters are relying on each other for survival, as they are expressing a desire for freedom. For instance, Hamm practices control over Clov by using his commands and demands to maintain a semblance of order and routine. Clov's commitment despite his reluctant, indicates his dependency on Hamm for purpose and direction. So, control is more highlighted through repetitive structures and routines of the play. Thus, each day mirrors the last one, with unchanged to characters' performing

of actions and dialogues. This repetition presents a copy mechanism, a way to impose structures and predictability in a senseless chaotic existence. This control is weak and it is always threatened by the characters' latent desire for escape and change. For example, Hamm's determination on telling stories and rituals like the constant checking of the windows and the setting of the alarm, mark his attempts to have control over his environment and his fate. Clov's strict compliance to these routines, in spite of his desire to leave, assure the paradoxical nature of their reliable contract.

2.4. Language and Communication

The language in the play “Endgame” is used to show us a tool and a barrier, so it is obvious to see that the characters use fragmented speech to communicate with other often nonsensical dialogues which reflect their inner disturbance and the breakdown of communication. Hamm's dialogues that are filled with pause disclose his attempts to confirm control and also to oblige meaning. While Clov's responses are brief and mechanical, that point out his detachment and resignation. Therefore, their unreliable nature of their communication assures to the instability of their reliable contract because of the failure their words to convey true understanding or communications. This breakdown of the language mirrors the wider existential crisis that faced the characters, and struggling to discover meaning in a world as communication itself has become unreliable.

2.5. Symbolism and Stage Directions

Using of symbolism and the careful stage directions by Beckett emphasize the themes of trap and ruin.

- So, the place with an empty room of two windows, one chair and two, denote the characters' imprisonment and alienation.
- The scattered environment mirrors the characters' inner emptiness and the hardness of their existence.
- The ashbins which have Nagg and Nell inside them, denote the remains of the past and the deterioration of human relationships. Their presence refers to the theme of decay and the inevitable deterioration of both physical and emotional connections.

The using of these symbolic elements by Beckett confirms the unstable nature of the characters' reliability on each other and their environment.

2.6. Existential and Absurdist Context

The play “Endgame” is a deep explanation of existential themes within the context of absurdist theatre. The characters' actions and dialogues that are repeated through the play, their dependency to each other and decay reflect key existential fears. The structure of the play reflects the meaningless and the chaotic nature of existence as some existential philosophers like Albert Camus and Paul Sarter. The characters' attempts to assure control and dependency, with their

attempts to find meaning in their dark reality show the human conflicts against absurdity. So, Hamm's speech and Clov's commitment to routine are efforts to force arrangement in the chaotic world. However, their actions assert their failure attempts which emphasize the notion that describes life as inherently meaningless and any way for getting meaning as destined.

2.7. Power Dynamics and Dependency

The Relationship between Hamm and Clov that is described as the master-slave relationship, is regarded as the central to the play's exploration of power dependency and dynamics. Therefore, Hamm's power and Clove's subordination clarify the difficulties of human relationships, where dependency and control are interrelated. So, the dynamic is not just dominance and subservience, but mirrors a deeper existential bounding. Because of Hamm's blindness and his immobility make him depends on Clov for getting physical help, whereas Clov psychologically depends on Hamm that makes him unable to get leaving. Thus, the interdependence between Hamm and Clov creates a contradictory relationship where each one of them is tied to the other in spite of their desire to leave and have his independence and the inherent power conflicts within it through that relationship.

2.8. Impact of Beckett's Philosophy

The play “Endgame” supplies good perspectives into Beckett’s philosophical discoveries of existentialism and the absurd. The “Endgame” portrayal of the characters restricts in a senseless existence, their conflicts for control and the collapse of communication reflect wider existential themes. The use of repetition and simplicity by Beckett challenge the traditional narrative structure and he emphasizes the uselessness of human research for meaning. Through reading and understanding the play, the main theme that we discover is the “dependency and control”, we understand that Beckett criticizes the societal structure and the complex of human relationships. The clarification of the play for existential desperate and searching of meaning in an indifferent world presents a deep commentary on the human circumstances and explain the fragility and complexity of human existence.

2.9. The Offering Criticism on Endgame

In his creative work “The Theatre of the Absurd”, Martin Esslin determines that the play “Endgame” as a mainly example of absurdist theatre, which calls for rejection of traditional narrative and focuses on the human condition. Esslin describes the play as a “dramatization of the final reduction of human experience”, where the characters’ presence is deprived into its minimum elements.

Martin Esslin adds that the “The Theatre of Absurd” is a constitution text that puts the “Beckett’s Work” within the wider context of absurdist theatre. He believes that the play is just like other of Beckett’s plays, mirrors the existential philosophy of some writers such as Albert Camus and Jean Paul Sarter.

Esslin regards that the structure of the play marked by circularity and repetition, reflects the absurdity and futility of human existence. He thinks that the play is like an acting for the human circumstances reduced to its most basic elements, where traditional narrative logical progression is abandoned for highlighting the deeply rooted meaninglessness of life.

Ruby Cohn studies the play’s themes of stalemate and futility, pointing out that how Beckett’s scattered dialogues and setting confirm the characters’ trap.

Cohn emphasizes that the play “Endgame” shows a “locked system” for the human, where the characters’ behaviors are always repeated and cyclical, that reflecting their unavoidable nature of their condition. He also stated that Beckett’s Theatre produces a profoundly analysis of the thematic interests in “Endgame”, particularly emphasize on stagnation and futility.

Cohn confirms how Beckett’s simple stage design and scattered dialogue mirror the characters’ existential stagnation. The repeated

dialogues and repetitive actions show their inability to escape their predicament. Cohn also explained that the characters' attempts to have meaning and purpose as ultimately useless. (Cohn, 1980)

J.M. Coetzee, has concentrated on the power dynamics and the relationships of master – slave inside the play, especially between Hamm and Clov . Coetzee describes how Beckett uses these relationships to show themes of control, dependency and searching for meaning in a chaotic world. The tension between Hamm and Clov which characterized by dependency and resentment, is as a scale model for the boarder existential struggles that visualized by the play.

Coetzee explains that the characters' interactions embody a conflict for control and dominance, and this can be found with Hamm asserting his authority by using the commands and Clov showing up with his hesitant obedience. (Coetzee 1992)

David Pattie, in “The Complete Critical Guide to Samuel Beckett” discusses how the themes of control and dependency could be the central for understanding the play “Endgame”. He points out that Hamm needs for control over Clov and the environment which is a desperate attempt to assure the meaning in a world that devoid of it. (Pattie,2000)

Allen Warren Friedman, produces a wide view and perspective on the themes of the play. He says that the dependency and control in “Endgame” are as mirror for Beckett’s point of view on human

relationships and the deep – rooted power conflicts within them. (Friedman, 2013)

Jonathan Boulter, provides a contemporary analysis of Beckett's works. He suggests that the themes of dependency and control in the play "Endgame" reflects the deep – rooted conflicts of the characters and existential crisis. Boulter adds that the characters' interactions mirror their tries to treat with their bitter reality, that leads to show the tension between their desire for independence and their necessity for contact and support. (Boulter, 2006)

Michael Y. Bennett, re-evaluates Beckett's work, and asserting how the play "Endgame" doubts the nature of reality and human existence. Bennett states that Beckett who used an ambiguous language, tried to force his audience to face the uncertainties of existence, and this method makes the sense of reliable reality is unstable and also reinforce the themes of absurdity existential doubts which are the main subjects in Beckett's plays. (Bennett, 2011)

Steven Connor, states that the repetition emphasizes the characters fall into the trap of their routines, highlights the meaninglessness of the characters' existence, and stop any sense of progression. The repetition structure reflects the belief that life is just a series of duplication, with meaningless activity. (Connor, 1988)

Katharine Worth, concentrates on how the characters move in the play and its dark reality, trying to find aim and meaning. Worth focuses on the interactions between the characters whom reflect a wide existential theme, like the searching for meaning, the sureness of death and fighting against despair. (Worth, 1999)

3.1. The Psychological Perspectives on Beckett's "Endgame"

(Freudian's Perspective Readings of "Endgame")

Steven Connor:

Connor enlarges in his analysis of "Endgame" how this play mirrors Freudian ideas just like the unconscious intellect, the symbolic performances of the characters' psychological conditions and repression. He explains the two characters' (Hamm and Clov) relationship by examining their interactions and how they are revealing the fundamental psychodynamic struggles. (Connor, 1994)

Lance St. John Butler:

Butler presents the Freudian themes in "Endgame" and focuses in it on the Oedipal complex, the dead drive and power dynamics. He produces Hamm as the father's character and how the father has the control over his son "Clov". Butler also explores on the psychological basis of the characters'

dependency and the conflict for dominance, depending on Freud's theories of psychosexual progression and the human psyche. (Butler, 2000)

William Hutchings:

Hutchings produces his concept on “Endgame”, as that there is a death drive (Thanatos) and he explains the characters' desire of death, decay and the end of their existence through a Freudian lens. He discusses Hamm and Clov's repetitive behaviors and how their speech mirrors the psychological activity towards self-destruction and the life – stopping. (Hutchings, 1980)

Thomas S. Hibbs:

Hibbs concentrates on the characters' feelings of hopelessness and their conflicts to have meaning in their life in a meaningless world. He produces existential psychology to get an understanding study on the characters' behaviors, which help to examine how the characters' interactions mirror a deep existential crisis. (Hibbs, 2007)

Elizabeth Barry:

Barry applies Lacan's psychoanalytic theory to the play “Endgame”, concentrating on the ideas like the mirror stage, the symbolic and real order. She presents the characters' conflicts and their segmental identities for connectedness and how they mirror the Lacanian concepts about human psyche.

Barry explores the characters' interactions and how can be viewed as attempts for moving on the symbolic and the real sides of their existence. (Barry,2001)

John Pilling:

Pilling explains the psychological dynamics of dependency and control. He produces that Hamm and Clov's relationship as a reflection broader psychological theme of power and interdependence. He introduces in his paper “Dependency and Control in Beckett's Endgame”, the exchanging dependency of the characters and the power conflicts on the authority that limit their interactions and reflecting the psychological struggles. (Pilling, 1979)

Shoshana Felma:

Felma's analysis presents how shocking and memory are portrayed in the “Endgame”. She introduces the psychological theories of shocking so as to understand the character's repetitive behaviors and incapability of leaving the past experiences.

In his paper “Trauma and Memory in Beckett's Endgame”, Felma states how the characters' actions and dialogues mirror a progressive re-living of traumatic happiness, and effect of outstanding psychological trauma that highlights on the characters' present existence. (Felma,1992)

Thus, the play “Endgame” portrays the human condition through the lens of suffering and endurance, reflects Beckett’s exploration of pain and the search for meaning. The characters endure physical and emotional suffering that reflect the human spirit and the search for meaning in a world seems to be indifferent.

4.1. Conclusion

Beckett’s play “Endgame” is a deep finding of human existence. This exploration is characterized by its simple setting and spare dialogue as well as deeply symbolic characters.

One of the main themes in the play is the interaction between immobility and movement. This reflects the character’s existential paralysis and their conflicts to find meaning in a meaningless world.

Hamm’s condition is represented by inertia, both literary and figuratively. He cannot see or move and he always depends on Clov for his necessities; therefore, he seems to be incapable of breaking free from his routine, and unable to have any change. It is as if he is caught in a cycle of information.

Beckett describes brilliantly the themes of inertia and action. He presents a grim commentary on the human condition. The repetitive and useless actions of the play’s characters coupled with physical and psychological paralysis, highlight the absurdity of existential.

The play's exploration of themes invites the readers to think and produce their experiences of immobility and action, searching for significance of things in an indifferent world.

The play "Endgame" argues that there is no meaning for life if there is no tomorrow. So, if people are closer to death than life, they will stop planning their life into any order. The play focuses the audience's attention on the characters and their existential distress.

4.2. Suggestions for Further Discussions

- Further studies should concentrate on each character in the play and make a detailed psychological analysis in the context of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis.
- Using the symbolism and metaphor elements may disclose new layers of meaning such as the ladder, the wheelchair or windows, and may these images contribute to add new information to the play's themes.
- The modern technology, good directors and actors may reflect new analysis or interpretation for the play.
- Further studies on how Beckett's personal experiences and the historical context of post-World War II in Europe influence the themes of the play.

- Exploring how the characters past experiences deconstruct their present actions and psychological states could offer new insights into their behavior and the play's meaning.

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