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## **Waiting for a Nihilistic Godot in a Godless World: A Critical and Speculative Quest for the Highly Absurdist Character 'Godot'**

**Sumit Saha**

M.A (English), B.Ed. (Pursuing),  
Independent Researcher & Faculty of English,  
Boithoki Educational Institution.

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### **Abstract:**

Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is an icon of absurdist theatre that examines the existential nihilism, hopelessness, and human condition in a godless universe from the play's subtext. The play follows Vladimir and Estragon in their ceaseless wait for the titular Godot, whose absence symbolizes the futility of existence. From a Nietzschean perspective, the analysis contrasts nihilistic ideas such as *ressentiment* and *asceticism* with passive endurance in characters and features their cyclical suffering and fictitious salvation. The essay unpicks grounded meaning by comparing Godot's elusive identity—divine surrogate, panoptic authority, postmodern construct—against Derridean deconstruction. Beckett's ironic and absurdist mastery highlights the play's defiance of definitive meaning and reflects the post-war chaos of modernity. Overall, *Waiting for Godot* captures the essence of the absurdity found within human endurance in a world that has no reason.

**Keywords:** Absurdism, Nihilism, Existentialism, Samuel Beckett, Deconstruction.

POZZO: ... what happens in that case to your  
appointment with this ... Godet...Godot...Godin...  
anyhow, you see who I meant... (Beckett 29)

Similar homomorphic, ambiguously repetitive phrases, absurdism, and vacuous activities are predominant in Beckett's magnum opus *'Waiting for Godot'* (French *'En Attendant Godot'*). The play revolves around two characters, Vladimir (Didi) and Estragon (Gogo), and their eternal waiting for a mysterious entity, 'Godot', who eventually never comes forth. Critical theories will be juxtaposed to decrypt the extremely cryptical 'Godot.'

A country road. A tree. Evening (Beckett 8)

Although the above-quoted excerpt from the play mentions a prevalent setting, it fails to specify a singular date or year of a particular place of land from a particular city, town or village. Consequently, the land depicted in the play could belong to any country irrespective of any cultural or geological boundaries, and the time the entire play was enacted could be any century. Their waiting for Godot seems to be a perpetual one, which is futile, as the reason behind their waiting never turns up during the entire play. Hypothetically, it can justly be stated that the time of the play is a time when 'God is dead' (Nietzsche 2) and everything is being settled in an utterly nihilistic state.

VLADIMIR: Yes, in this immense confusion, one thing alone is clear. We are  
waiting for Godot to come- (Beckett 80)

'Nihil' is of Latin origin, meaning 'nothing,' and 'ism' refers to an ideology. When we attempt to add these things together, to combine them, this combination, in that instant, seems to refute itself, again, as the notion that nihilism is the 'ideology of nothing.' In order to delve

deeper into the doctrine of nihilism, two categories are to be considered: *ressentiment* and *asceticism*. What arises instead is a kind of passivity: *ressentiment*. In Nietzsche, the most basic socio-psychological differentiation is that of active and passive forces to the 'noble' or the 'base,' of their 'strong' to the 'weak' (Nietzsche 852). Activity and passivity — as we have seen — is the first refinement of the primitive opposition: Every person, in and of himself, contains a relation of active and reactive forces. Thus, in principle, the 'Man of *ressentiment*' is an inaction (Diken 16). In the play, although in ubiquitous absence, Godot is still acting nothing and has attracted all our attention by his passively activist forces. Even the trust that Vladimir and Estragon have in the coming of the Man of *ressentiment* is reflected when Vladimir says: "He won't come this evening but surely tomorrow" (Beckett 50)

*Asceticism*, in contrast, is a process through which pain is generated while internalized as guilt, fear, and punishment (Diken 20). As they wait, Didi and Gogo undergo an ascetic ordeal of their own, as their waiting leads to nothing but a dismal view of the world. Vladimir and Estragon do not have a choice because they do not have the passion and will be required to get real stature. Instead, they sit around waiting for an unknown entity that never shows up. Godot seems to be a fictional character; he only exists in the minds of the two tramps and not in real Life; their tentative claim is that he is one of their colleagues: "Oh, he's a...he's a kind of acquaintance ... Nothing of the kind, we hardly know him" (Beckett 23) emphasizes that. Dissatisfied and disturbed psychologically, someone tries desperately to cling to someone or something as a hope of salvation or to end his/her Life to find peace, just like the tramps. They think Godot can rescue them, but the truth is much different. They have been so tortured by trauma and pain that they no longer remember the systems governing Life and take solace in haphazard ways of surviving. They have long found happiness to be extinct but are stitching on a fake smile, yearning for a genuine moment of them.

VLADIMIR: Wait... We embraced, we were happy... happy... what do we do now that.... ah! The tree! (Beckett 64)

They have been trapped in a cycle of suffering forever. They are so blistered, and so tired that there is nothing but death so comforting to them. The other characters of the play, Pozzo and Lucky, are the ones who break the wait of the vagabonds with their presence in the first act, particularly Lucky, who suffers from the very early moment of his presence on the stage as is pushed forward by his master, Pozzo, giving us an idea of the burden Lucky has to walk, expecting his lash:

Enter Pozzo and Lucky. Pozzo drives Lucky by  
Means of a rope passed round his neck, so that  
Lucky is the first to appear (on the stage) ... before  
Pozzo appears. Lucky carries a heavy bag, a folding  
Stool, a picnic basket and a greatcoat. Pozzo a whip. (Beckett 21)

This very scenario of such a life crisis is poetically expressed in Wallace Steven's famous poem 'Sunday Morning':

She says, "But in contentment, I still feel  
The need of some imperishable bliss."  
Death is the mother of beauty; hence, from her,  
Alone, shall come fulfilment to our dreams  
And our desires... (Stevens)

VLADIMIR: Do you remember? We nearly hanged ourselves from it"  
(Beckett 61)

This very scenario reminds us of the infamous saying of Nietzsche:

"In every age, the wisest have passed the identical judgment on life: it is  
worthless. Even Socrates said as he died: 'To live- that means to be a long time  
sick" (Nietzsche 9)

While linking Beckett's play to nihilistic philosophy suggests something much narrower, behind it lies something far more panoramic. It is something in the Zeitgeist of our lousy war-torn century: more specifically, the Nietzschean formulation that 'God is dead,' something which tints a great deal more than a great deal of modern literature. This thesis belittles the idea of defining Man under the transcendental vision of the meaning of Life, which is lost in the utilitarian purpose of existing and leads only to death, while at the same time forces Man to become an island, left to rely only on its resources to satisfy the void it left behind. Eugene O'Neill places the "sickness of our time" at the feet of:

The death of the old God and the incapacity of science and materialism to give  
a new god to the still living religious instinct. (O'Neill 7)

It may be an oxymoron to say that we do encounter the shadowy and allusive presence of God in such a godless universe. In fact, while Vladimir and Estragon are on stage, Godot — off the stage, just out of audience sight — is also symbolically significant in the play. Their relationship shows that of God and Man. The pronunciation of 'Godot' is identical to that of 'God,' and that is enough to lead to the audience's association with God. However, many other

representations of Godot throughout the play can also incentivize the audience to assume he's the Christian God. Then, in terms of Appearance, Godot is similar to God. In the play, the boy, a messenger, is from Godot's place and is the only one who has seen Godot. The two tramps once inquired about the color of Godot's beard. They have a conversation with each other.

Vladimir: Has he a beard, Mr. Godot?

Boy: Yes, sir.

Vladimir: Fair or...or black?

Boy: I think it's white, sir.

Vladimir: Christ have mercy on us! (Beckett 92)

So, Godot has a long white beard, like God in the Bible. John declares in Revelation that he has witnessed the risen Christ. He added, "He got a golden belt in his waist. His hair is white like wool white as snow. His eyes are shimmering with fire, and his feet with copper. His voice is flood roaring when he speaks" (Zeng 696). God's beard and God's hair are white as snow, as well as Godot's beard in that case. It is a representation of Godot as a godlike God. It's described as Godlike in nature, not just physically. God, in turn, can punish and try to care for the men. The tramps in the play think that if Godot ever shows up, they will be redeemed. If they fail to wait for Godot, he will punish them. The messenger boy told them he and his brother keep the sheep for Godot. His brother takes care of the sheep; he tends to the goats. In Matthew in the Bible, we read about a similar situation:

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him. He will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the

sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. (The Holy Bible 2196)

But, what would Man be like in that? Modern Man has been estranged from God for a long time. They found themselves in a world ravaged by war where they had lost their religious heritage and were wandering a desert of souls. The two tramps are what we call the human beings. They are the contemporary version of those who are not a part of a particular religion. There are a few words in the play that can be used to demonstrate this point. They go like this-

In this place, at this moment, all humanity is us, whether we like it or not. Let us make the most of it before it is too late! Let us represent worthily for once the foul brood to which a cruel fate consigned us! (Beckett 79)

In the play, the two tramps are in a very awkward position. They wait for Godot from beginning to end, but Godot never comes, so those waiting for him suffer greatly. If Nietzsche succeeds in showing that what he calls 'power' really is good, then he will thus show that suffering, an ingredient sine qua non of power, is also good and is not the object of a legitimate wholesale condemnation. (Reginster 12-13)

Despite all these, human beings will be patient to wait on, wait for Godot's arrival, and wait for the realization of salvation in a world where the existence of God is itself a matter of dispute. This has made the quest for the canonical character (Godot) exceedingly substantive.

However, what meaning can we make out of the play? Thus, being so rational, we try to explain the absurdity, irrationality and meaninglessness of human Life. However, to perceive meaning in a sea of nonsense, one introspection should not shift from the genre of the play, and one must apprehend the words 'Absurdity', & 'Meaninglessness' in their actual



connotation. Some readers of Beckett will suggest that he is an absurdist writer and an absurdist playwright, as will a host of dramatists with whom he is often lumped (Jean Genet, Eugene Ionesco, Edward Albee, Arthur Adamov, Harold Pinter) as they disturbingly join hands, based on the premise that Man's plight on this planet is wholly meaningless, which is the a priori proposition of The Theatre of the Absurd, a term introduced by the Hungarian critic Martin Esslin in his study of the contemporary playwright The Theatre of the Absurd (1962). Beckett and other absurdist playwrights tried to show how, as a generation was born into the aftermath of the terrible Second World War, modern Man's Life became worthless and meaningless from a growing sense of despair and the chaos and disorder of Life.

'Absurd' originally means out-of-harmony in music. Hence its dictionary definition: 'out of harmony with reason or propriety; incongruous, unreasonable, illogical.' The play uses the word 'absurd' in a sense that may at times be synonymous 'with ridiculous' (Common)--but that was not how Camus used the word and the way we use it in talking of the Theatre of the Absurd (Insider). In an essay on Kafka, Ionesco defined his use of the term: 'Absurd is what is without any purpose... separated from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, Man is lost: all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless (Madan 19). The proverbial absurdity of Man, of the waiting for itself to get to Godot with Beckett's perverse humor of denying the presence of Godot in the play, is unique to the work that critics have based its quality upon as "the patient hopefulness (of two tramps) demonstrates the absurdity of hope itself, and likewise the absurdity of reason." But it has this Kierkegaardian absurdity, not Sartrean, as Sartre later came to define the term. "In Sartre, 'the absurd' which (...) for Kierkegaard, meant 'that which cannot be reduced to rule' has come to mean that which is abysmally meaningless and irrational". (Sharma 1)

Godot, the subject of much waiting throughout Beckett's play, appears to be a Kierkegaardian 'absurd.' Unlike Sartre's perspective, he is the 'other' in the play, but this 'other' is not a threat or a menace (Sharma 3). From the outset of the play, the audience is given the idea that Godot is the central character, not a threat or a menace, but someone who is most welcome even when he is not present. His unseen presence is cordially humanized throughout the play, and he becomes a participant and one of the *dramatis personae* in the play. Beckett uses a masterstroke of irony to make Vladimir and Estragon subjectively realize the objective reality of Godot:

VLADIMIR: Let's wait and see what he says.

ESTRAGON: Who?

VLADIMIR: Godot.

ESTRAGON: Good idea.

(...)

ESTRAGON: And what did he reply?

VLADIMIR: That he'd see.

ESTRAGON: That he couldn't promise anything.

VLADIMIR: That he'd have to think it over.

ESTRAGON: In the quiet of his home.

VLADIMIR: Consult his family.

ESTRAGON: His friends.

VLADIMIR: His agents. (Beckett 18)

Vladimir and Estragon can be called solitary figures since they have been held in confusing solitary captivity by Beckett, desiring to be released by an external force beyond the self, which

the alleged Godot represents. They are attached to an isolated spot in a closed world, and Beckett makes them adhere not only to a desolate place where they lament that "Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful" (Beckett 41) but also to themselves because they are alone and "it wouldn't be better for us to part" (Beckett 16). They seem to want to move to find a purpose in Life, but they lack the will to do so, as they frequently ask each other to leave, but "they do not move" (Beckett 54). In Act 1, even the neighboring tree is bare and fruitless, implying death and despair, as is the Life of the two tramps in this parched environment. Furthermore, the tree's shape symbolizes death since it resembles the cross, the most important Christian symbol on which Jesus Christ was crucified. Besides, as the tree is naked and dry, it stands for the collapse of the European economy in the aftermath of the war. As a consequence, the presence of the tree in Act 1 is essential in demonstrating the tramp's ennui and dissatisfaction with Life. Thus, Estragon depicts the landscape as a "muckheap" (Beckett 61), a heap of dung or refuse. However, then, in Act II, the tree sprouts fresh green leaves, symbolizing new Life and hope, and Vladimir is astounded because it happened in a "single night" (Beckett 66), leading him to wonder, "But yesterday evening it was all black and bare. And now it's covered with leaves" (Beckett 66).

Time for the tramps is so long and uninteresting that Vladimir believes "time has stopped" (Beckett 36). Time is long merely because the tramps' lives are meaningless, miserable, and futile. They have nothing to do but try to pass the time to relieve the boredom from their constant waiting. The tramps' future appears to be uncertain and unpredictable. Thus, any attempt to evade time by shifting locations is shortly met with the same adversity. As a result, any "effort to escape time by changing place...is a foolish and impossible idea" (Ibrahim 9). In the play, Beckett rightfully deforms the image of modern Man, making Man synonymous with the ancient concept of humanity. Even though the protagonist in Sophocles' dramatic works, such as Oedipus, is strong, he is weak and helpless in the face of a dictatorial entity known as

"Fate." In Sophocles' drama, men are just the puppets in fate's hand and vehemently lack free will. On the opposite side of the spectrum, Renaissance thinkers and authors have liberated Man from the constraints of Destiny and mystical forces, providing him with complete free will because they believe in Man's ability to transcend all adversities. Sidney, Spencer, Marlowe, Shakespeare, and other playwrights of the day lauded and glorified Man. This has been boldly expressed in Shakespeare's one of the finest tragedies, Hamlet:

What a piece of work it is, Man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculties!  
In form and moving, how expressive and admirable! In action, how like an  
angel! In appreciation, how like a god! The beauty of the world.... (Shakespeare  
75)

However, Beckett's portrayal of the modern Man has dehumanized and decentralized what the Renaissance pioneers had strongly centralized. Beckett is more concerned about the futile existence of Man than about glorifying attributes. This reminds us of the Greek myth of Sisyphus, where Sisyphus is condemned to roll a rock up to the top of a mountain, only to have the rock roll back down to the bottom every time he reaches the top. In his 'The Myth of Sisyphus' (1842), Camus suggests that the Gods were wise in perceiving that an eternity of futile labor is a hideous punishment (Sparknotes). However, Sisyphus could abandon his rock at the foot of the mountain instead of rolling it all the way to the summit, which he chose. Camus does not step back to praise the protagonist's tenacity. In his essay, he relates that in defiance of the worthlessness of his mission, Sisyphus defined superiority. Hence, to some extent, it is clear that the Kierkegaardian subjective thinker in the personae of Vladimir and Estragon has not lost all meanings and hope: "They do not move" (Beckett 54) from the stage

and have already decided to come "tomorrow" and again, to continue their quest, unless "Godot comes." (Beckett 14)

We have reached the point where Godot's true identity is significant. We revolve around the question, 'Who is Godot?' but end up getting various ambiguous answers. Godot seems to be nothing more than a mirage in a desert. Godot has been snatching all our attention from the beginning of the play. Thus, Godot's identity serves as the play's central axis, just like the Sun or the God, and we, as well as Vladimir or Estragon, are the mere planets or the followers revolving around the center with or without consciousness. As Gautama Buddha has rightfully preached, "Do not dwell in the past, do not dream of the future, concentrate the mind on the present moment" (The Teaching of Buddha 191). We ought to shift our faculty of interpretation from the age-old beliefs to the postmodern interpretation of Godot. Only then will the identity validity of the character be relevant to us. Godot, till now, is enjoying the central position of the play. However, in a postmodernist context, the idea of decentring is important, and as a consequence, we might end up opening portals to the multiverse where we can witness Godot(s) from different perspectives.

Before delving into the textual references to Godot, it is important to review some of Jacques Derrida's fundamental concepts, particularly 'Decentring', which he has written extensively about. Derrida explores the concepts of 'centre' and 'rupture' in his seminal lecture 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences.' Philosophers have established their discourses around some 'centre' or 'logos' since the beginning of time. God, for example, has been placed as the centre of the cosmos in theological discourses and belief systems. The concept of a center, on the other hand, is a 'necessary hypothesis because it is impossible to verify the existence of the centre. However, it is a crucial hypothesis, enabling humans to organize their lives and create a cosmos out of chaos. Derrida credited three thinkers in his seminal lecture: Nietzsche, Freud, and Heidegger. The idea of realism and rationalism was

turned upside down, and a new form of an artistic movement emerged as Surrealism, which arose due to Freud's critique of reason and sense-perception as ways to describe the reality around us and stresses the irrational domain of the human mind. Heidegger, too, pointed out how our idea of being is always already mediated by interpretation. The truth about being is non-being, as all Life's purpose is nothing but death. Life has no meaning; people give it significance in their own unique ways. To put it another way, while Life in itself is devoid of meaning, it is given many meanings by humans in order for them to exist. The concept of plurality can also be perceived as a lack of a universal meaning to Life. Derrida emphasizes that existing interpretations or philosophical paradigms (which, for example, have prioritized the concept of 'center') must precisely investigate what Derrida's philosophy of deconstructions entails. The idea of a multiplicity of centers, the absence of any absolute centres, or the thought that the center is a myth serve as the hallmarks of postmodernism. (Das)

In order to understand what Godot stands for, it would be helpful to examine the various textual references to Godot throughout the text of 'Waiting for Godot'. The step-by-step explanation of Godot's multiple identities and the denial of these absolute identities are crucial to a Derridean critique of the idea of the center. We have already tried to relate Godot to the almighty God. The narrative also portrays Godot as a man who has a family, a comfortable home, books, bank accounts, correspondents, and agents:

ESTRAGON: What exactly did we ask him for?

VLADIMIR: Were you not there?

ESTRAGON: I can't have been listening.

VLADIMIR: Oh...Nothing very definite.

ESTRAGON: A kind of prayer.

VLADIMIR: Precisely.

ESTRAGON: A vague supplication.

VLADIMIR: Exactly.

ESTRAGON: And what did he reply?

VLADIMIR: That he'd see.

ESTRAGON: That he couldn't promise anything.

VLADIMIR: That he'd have to think it over.

ESTRAGON: In the quiet of his home.

VLADIMIR: Consult his family.

ESTRAGON: His friends.

VLADIMIR: His agents.

ESTRAGON: His correspondents.

VLADIMIR: His books.

ESTRAGON: His bank account.is

VLADIMIR: Before taking a decision.

ESTRAGON: It's the normal thing. (Beckett 18)

Uncertainty and ambiguity concerning Godot and the tramps' relationship with Godot dominate Estragon and Vladimir's dialogue. The phrase 'Vague supplication' (Beckett 18) may allude to the class distinction between Godot and the tramps as Godot functions similarly to their boss, utilizing agents. Even if Godot appears to be a wealthy businessman, we cannot know who he is in reality.

An identical phrase appears later in the text when the tramps are unsure whether or not they are 'tied' to Godot.

Estragon: (chews, swallows). I'm asking you if we're tied.

Vladimir: Tied?

Estragon: Ti-ed.

Vladimir: How do you mean tied?

Estragon: Down.

Vladimir: But to whom? By whom?

Estragon: To your Man.

Vladimir: To Godot? Tied to Godot! What an idea! No question of it. (Pause.) For the moment. (Beckett 20-21)

Nevertheless, we can be assured that the tramps are waiting for Godot and will keep returning to the exact location until they see him.

Estragon's remark to Vladimir about their ties to Godot ironically foreshadows the arrival of Pozzo and Lucky, who are bound to each other. Pozzo's deliberate mastery over his subservient slave is eerily similar to Estragon and Vladimir's relationship with Godot. The mystery surrounding Godot's identity is heightened when Estragon misidentifies Pozzo as Godot. Pozzo's arrogance is a perfect complement to Estragon and Vladimir's conception of Godot:

Pozzo: I present myself: Pozzo

Vladimir: (to Estragon). Not at all!

Estragon: He said Godot.

Vladimir: Not at all!

Estragon: (timidly, to Pozzo). You're not Mr. Godot, Sir?

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? (Beckett 22)



As Pozzo fiercely interrogates them about Godot, the situation becomes unclear. They still do not know much about him, as evidenced by the following:

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 23)

Their answers were riddled with gaps, hesitations and silences, emphasizing their precarious position. Because the names Godot and Pozzo sound similar, and for the reasons stated previously, Godot could be mistaken for Pozzo, Beckett himself dismisses this possibility. In answer to the question "Is Godot Pozzo?" Beckett retorts, "No. It is just implied in the text but is not true". (Busi 4) Though Pozzo is not Godot, he is "one who gives Lucky a sense of purpose, a place in the world order ... Lucky is luckier than Vladimir and Estragon because he has found a better way of feeling time than go through the unbearable anxiety and tedium of waiting". (Prasad) Some readers have posited a less firm interpretation by linking Godot with a useless boot of a person as, according to Graver, some common French words and phrases begin with 'god.' 'Godillot' in French for old shapeless boots; 'Godasses' are military boots. In the play, Estragon is seen busy with his boots. But instead of symbolizing any rational entity, it symbolizes nothing to be done for the two men in a less pensive and more active way. Regarding futility, putting on and off one's hat and keeping an eye on the central Godot have similar effects.

What is firm here is the idea of Godot being omniscient, and it is linked with Foucault's idea of a Panopticon. The French philosopher interpreted Jeremy Bentham's plans for a new type of prison, whose goal was rehabilitation via awareness of the human intellect and soul rather than

physical restraint. The prisoners are forced to perform appropriately because they must assume they are continuously being watched, as Foucault (1977) writes in his book 'Discipline and Punish.' This is clear throughout the entire play of *Waiting for Godot*. The characters know Godot's existence and authority to rule over the world they inhabit. Their own thinking, therefore, constrains them because of this.

Estragon: Well, shall we go?

Vladimir: Yes, let's go.

They do not move. (Beckett 54)

This emphasizes the parallels between the Panopticon prison and the world of *Waiting for Godot*. The characters are suddenly in charge of themselves and are constrained by their thoughts. Furthermore, Godot turns into an authority that governs the main characters' actions rather than just a belief. As revealed in the dialogue:

Vladimir: To Godot? Tied to Godot? What an idea!

No questions about it. (Pause.) For the moment. (Beckett 21)

Thus, Godot is Estragon and Vladimir's belief, salvation, ideology and, therefore, their 'grand narrative' in postmodern terms. (Mark Taylor-Batty)

Beckett's work always transcends singular explanations. Thus, asking about the creation (Godot) from the creator (dramatist) Beckett would be best. Whenever Beckett was asked about the exact identity of Godot, he tended to render a thoroughly neutral answer: 'If I knew, I would have said so in the play' (Busi). When a prominent actor, Ralph Richardson (a potential Vladimir in the first London production), asked Beckett if Godot is God, Beckett replied that if he meant God, he would have said 'God' and not 'Godot' (Busi). But, the defense from Beckett's end lacks face value. He might have delayed Godot's explanation to hold the interest

of the readers/audience from the beginning to the end. From the beginning, we anticipate meeting the titular character as early as the next scene begins. If Godot had appeared in the first scene, the play's dramatic essence would have been lost. The same is the case with the Shakespearean drama 'Hamlet.' Where would the drama be if Hamlet had killed his opponents initially and got control of marrying Ophelia? Hamlet is considered to be one of the greatest tragedies of all time just because Hamlet did not kill the people in the beginning.

In 1931, very early in his career and more than twenty years before the publication of *Godot*, Beckett wrote an essay on Proust in which he begins to explain, without perhaps explicitly knowing it, the situation of *Godot*. "The creation of the world," he declares, "did not take place once and for all time, but takes place every day" (Proust 8); one could even say that this "creation" takes place every moment. Due to this state of perpetual flux, "the individual is a succession of individuals" who must constantly adjust to the world, found to be continually rising. This is where habit enters, as that faculty smoothes the transitions between moments so individuals can function in a turbulent world. "Habit then is the generic term for the countless treaties concluded between the countless subjects that constitute the individual and their countless correlative objects" (Proust 8).

The time between adaptations is the peril of being, the dangerous, precarious, painful, mysterious, fertile zone in the individual's Life, a way for him to live that, for a moment, gives up boredom and seeks suffering. (Proust 8). As habit ceases to satisfy, the individual becomes aware of the "real" (Proust 16) – an experience that is naturally distressing and painful. What is revealed here is the perception of an emptiness at the core of human experience. The things, the people, and the space that we "normally" see to be stable structures are, in fact, devoid of angry, eternal quality; they do not rest on a transcendental structure, metaphysics or ethics. This is also true for persons; the individual's identity tenuously hovers between moments. As Camus suggested, this lack of stability is painful for the person who desires to experience

solidity and surety in the world and the self. The identity of Godot is 'Nothing' in front of the vast realm of an utterly empty human existence. Hence, Vladimir and Estragon's tiresome waiting leads to nothing.

Waiting for Godot is full of suggestions, but it is not reducible to exact allegorical correspondence. Beckett described it as 'Striving all the time to avoid definition.' The play will not be pinned down or located, and a clear meaning will not arrive for us, just as Godot does not arrive for Vladimir and Estragon. The elusive theme keeps us in a state of interpretative suspension. The question of what or who Godot might be is only one of the perplexities in the play, replete with meanings withheld and explanations denied.

It would be erroneous to conceive Godot as someone existing outside of the text or appearing after the play has ended. This is because Godot cannot be an extratextual entity or a 'transcendental signified,' as Derrida describes it. Godot can most likely have multiple implications only in the way that a signifier in the process of *Différance* refers to other signifiers or diverse signifiers, never pointing to a single fixed signified, because in Derrida, there is no such thing as a signified; what is considered to be a signified is just another signifier.

Even after such a prolonged rollercoaster ride of critical theories and interpretations, we are still unable to unravel the cryptic singular identity of Godot. We commenced this absurd journey in the middle of nothing and ended up in the midst of nowhere. The identity will vary from generation to generation, and we, being irrational, endeavor to interpret in the realm of nihilism and if initially, we fail, we will keep on interpreting in a loop just like the way Estragon and Vladimir did:

Estragon: And if he doesn't come?

Vladimir: We'll come back tomorrow.

Estragon: And then the day after tomorrow. (Beckett 14)

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