No Repetition Where None Intended : A Stylistic Study Of Repetition as a Cohesive Signal In Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot

Dr. Professor Majeed H. Jasim

Assistant Lecturer Miss.Fatima H. Aziz

University of Basrah
College of Education

Typically , in any text, every sentence except the first exhibits some form of cohesion with a preceding sentence ….Any piece of language that is operational, functioning as a unity in some context of situation, constitutes a text . It may be spoken or written, in any style or genre…(Halliday & Hassan,1976:293).

Abstract

Samuel Beckett seems to be possessed by the idea of repetition to the extent that it becomes one of the principal traits which distinguishes his work. 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 relations to the theme of the playwright. Thus , the cohesive function of repetition is to achieve certain dramatic purposes so as 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 suggestion can be substantiated by discussing and examining the ideas of Beckett and how repetition becomes of a great significance in

presenting the settings , action and dialogue in a symbolic way in "**Waiting for Godot** " *(henceforth, **WFG**).

1. ***Introduction***

It is , however , a fact , that even where there is grammatical inaccuracy , communication can still take place successfully . The reason behinds this is to be found in the natural repetition of speech (Widdowson, 1978: 22-56). It frequently happens that contextual information also duplicates what is proved linguistically (Wilkins, 1976: 56).Because of the natural repetition of language , it does not often happen that the occurrence of a grammatical , lexical or phonological mistake causes a major breakdown of communication , even an addresser who has made a mistake is often understood (Clark & Clark, 1977:273-75).The fact that all human speech is repetitious , in this sense , suggests that repetition is necessary for the effective communication of messages (Kress ,1976:9).

Repetition is said to be one aspect out of tow that constitute cohesion (cf.Hoey,1991).Cohesion is the eye of the beholder. However , just as individuals can try to make themselves lovely , one can try to make one's utterances seem coherent .In fact , one aspect of the art of conversation is the ability to one's contributions appear to be inevitable and appropriate next step. In other words ,when people gather to start a conversation , they create or refer to a (philosophical ,ideological , cosmological , etc.).common ground , or a set of common grounds . Cohesion is the relationship between the current proposition and the common ground (s)(Widdowson ,19 78: 26). and appropriate next step. In other words ,when people gather to start a conversation , they create or refer to a (philosophical ,ideological , cosmological , etc.).common ground , or a set of common grounds . Cohesion is the relationship between the current proposition and the common ground (s)(Widdowson,19 78: 26).

Accordingly ,much of the extensive literature on the textual cohesion assumes a view of cohesion as largely deriving .

- from the logical connections made by readers between units of propositional content in what they read (cf. Leech,1974 ; Winter, 1974;1977;Halliday & Hassan ,1976 ;Widdowson,1987 ;Hoey ,1983 a;b;c;1991;Cook, !994, etc.) .

2. Cohesion as the Interactive Element

There is a conventional interaction between the elements of textual meaning (Hoey ,1991: 43). This interaction or linking , is realized mainly through coherence as the ordering and relation of the functional components in text (Halliday , 1994). We can conceive cohesion as the element which gives unity to a text , as well as the crucial axis of discourse . Let us review some opinions about cohesion . Cook (1994: 25) defines cohesion as the '' purposeful , meaningful , connected perception of discourse , which variable depending on the perceivers and as individuals or groups and on the context .'' In the same direction, Brown & Yule (1983: 198) regard cohesion as a result of the interaction of the text and the receiver in a given context of situation , the ''Semantic relations … exploited by the authors (of communication :senders and receivers) to achieve a particular effect . Those semantic relations affect the

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- Undoubtedly, **WFG** is regarded a typical play of the absurd drama (cf. Duckworth , 1967). The word absurd literally means "out of harmony " within a musical context " .This disharmony springs from the awareness of man of his purposeless plight in an existence out of harmony with its surrounding in which modern man " cries out in the frustration of his humanity "(Eliopulos, 1975 : 116). Modern man , according to the absurd theatre , lacks his space . Space has tow important aspects : Social location , that involves a vacation , social relationship and a meaningful milieu of values . The second is Physical Location that 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 (see,McDermott, 2001).All attempts of such a man to impose rational forms upon the world in which he lives in ,are equally absurd and lead to nothing ; all his efforts are useless and absurd .

organization or structure of the language , not only at the level of surface text , but also at the level of the text world (through cohesion). Brown & Yule (ibid.) say that the reader bases the interpretation of discourse on the connection of the elements of the massage ,which is not always a linguistic connection . There are principles of analogy , local interpretation , and general features of context ,…regularities of discourse structure …, regular features

of information structure organization '' ,…and some common socio-cultural knowledge ''(ibid.:225). These elements of connection generate conventional structures of communicative interaction .the lack of linguistic connection or cohesive gaps can be filled with conventional connection of other kind(analogy, situation , discourse information , socio-cultural knowledge). Language can be seen as a consequence of communicative action , where the participants take their roles to interact . It is the way they establish the interact that makes a particular genre of interaction (Hoey,1991:65). The conventional sequencing of interaction creates coherent types of discourse . That is why , it is assumed that cohesion is primarily realised by repetition and conjunction (ibid.). In very broad terms , repetition in propositions through the text signals that there is some kind of connection among the propositions , while conjunction the propositions signals the type of connection being set up (Halliday & Hassan ,1976:Halliday, 1994).Repetition may be effected by means of grammatical features such as references and substitution (ibid.), or more pervasively by lexical repetition (Hoey, 1991). Conjunction , which depends largely on co-ordinates and subordinators within the clause complex , can be signaled beyond the sentence by conjuncts and by unspecific nouns (Winter , 1977).

There is no absolute division , between these tow aspects of cohesion , since on the one hand the relationship between an unspecific noun and its specific lexicalizations in the broadest sense one of the repetitions , and on the other hand , repetition may in itself indicate the type of conjunction (Hoey ,1991).

2.1. Repetition as a Cohesive Signal

It is worth noting that in speech , intonation can signal that a proposition is being put forward only concussively , predicating to the hearer that an assertion will follow that the speaker regards as more valid ; but in writing there may be nothing in the first proposition itself , apart from repetition , which signals this clearly (Leech ,1974: 226-7).

Cohesion , then , in text can only be adequately understood if the concept of propositional

Cohesion is complemented by that of evaluative cohesion , and that , among others , this involve the recognition of the cohesive function of

repetition (Hoey , 1991). The kind of link between repetition and conjunction is inherent in the clause –relations (ibid.).By taking a wider view of conjunction that encouraged by focus on traditional '' linking words '',(cf.Hoey & Winter ,1986) , have shown that cohesion is not restricted to objective logical connection and that cohesion embraces a broader range of signal than usually allowed for . For Hoey & Winter (1986)all conjunction is a matter of negotiation between writer and reader (See , Hoey , 1983c ; 1988a ; 1988 c) . Among the relations that discussed are a number which rely particularly heavily on repetition : Hoey (1991:60)describes it as the basic text structure which we use to repot our response to the perceived truth of somebody else's , or our own statements. A further area where repetition appears to serve a cohesive function , though perhaps less clearly so , is when two or more clauses or phrases are to be interpreted as alternative possible interpretation of the same event(ibid.).

2.2. Repetition

Heoy(1991)stipulates that :

…it is assumed that all repetition is anaphoric (that is , backward looking)…,it should be noted that when a lexical item occurs , it is deemed to form a repetition link with every one of its previous occurrence, not just with its immediate predecessor in the text,(P.81).

Repetition , is primarily a method used to achieve emphasis , or rhythm in the presentation of idea(cf. Winter , 1974; 1977). But , used in a certain way , it can also serve as a method of developing idea . achieving the proper emphasis , rhythm , and clarity may be a matter of repeating just a single word, (Hoey , 1991) , (See Figure No. 1) :

1. Nothing happens , nobody comes , nobody goes , it's awful. (WFG,P. 41).

2. Help me . (WFG,P.10).

3. Help me .(WFG,P.63).

4. Help. (WFG,P.77).

What this diagram maintains is that whenever links have been established between one item , eg. (a) , and any tow other items , eg (b) and (C) , in a text , there is another link between

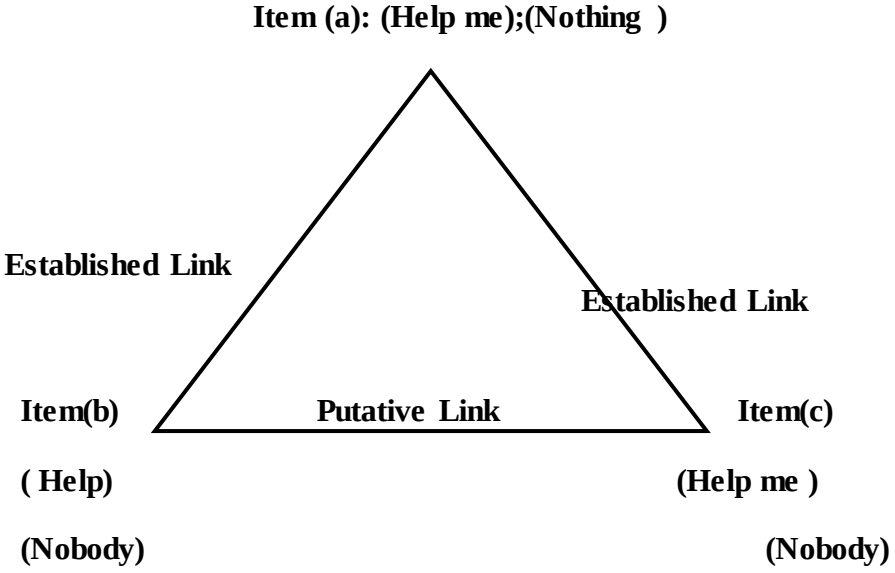

Figure No.(1)

Taken From Hoey (1991:65)

the tow other items (ibid.) . The putative link can as easily be between items (a) and (b) , and established by the existence of links between (a), (b) , and (c).

Repetition , then can enforce an association of one idea with another or create a frame or centre for unifying the association of several ideas . That is,

The repetition is controlled in such away that it serves as a frame for the gradual increase of story and idea ; it is itself contributes to the development of the meaning and drama of the situations, the mood , tone and idea . Sometimes , a writer may want to repeat an entire situation to give the proper emphasis to a main idea . Thus , repetition of words , and phrases may be an integral part of a larger syntactical pattern or situation or even setting (ibid.):

5. Forgive me . (WFG,P. 17).
6. Forgive me . (WFG,P. 34).
7.Forget all I said. (WFG,P. 34).

8. Forgive me . (WFG,P. 74).
9. Wait. (WFG,P. 17).
10.Wait for Godot. (WFG,P.60).
11. Wait for Godot. (WFG,P.63).

3. The Stylistic Analysis of *WFG*

As with all great literature , there rarely exists anything extraneous in the text , for
something that is unneeded may cause the work to be less effective than it would otherwise be .As such ,almost every repetition in Samuel Beckett's **WFG** serves a purpose , be it for reasons involving the strengthening of a character's profile , thematic support or audience reaction. Beckett implements repetition in the text whenever he deems it necessary and beneficial to the overall work(See Table No. 1).

Table No. (1)
Types of Repetition in WFG

Types of Repetition	No.	Total Utterances
1.Repetition of Setting	**2**	**2554**
2. Repetition of Situations	**3X2***(1)	**2554**
3. Repetition of Ideas	**4x5***(2)	**108**
4.Repetition of Phrases	**782***(3)	**782**
Total		

Accordingly , the play is a repetition of circular motions , echoes , actions and gestures which moves within a prescribed circumference .In a way , every work of art echoes and repeats acts , attitudes and emotions . Then , **WFG** has a structure that never defines a larger circle outside of the simple factual assertions and haunting epistemic questions which It makes .

3. 1. Repetition of the Setting

The theme of circularity is perpetually insinuated , if not in the action of the play , then by the bleak setting and background . The setting ,

***(1)** Here , we have (**3**)situations ,each one is repeated for(**2**) times.
***(2)** Here , we have (**4**) ideas ,each one is repeated for(**5**) times.
***(3)** Here , we have (**782**) phrases repeated .

therefore , on longer suggests only time and place of the action of the play , rather , it becomes an integral part of the whole movement of **WFG** . Here , the setting of both Acts of the play is "**A country road** ,"that does not give a specific location , with a single tree . We quickly discover , due to the desolation of the environment,(again this symbolic setting of isolation suits the absurd theme (Causineau,1990:25), that the characters are , quite literally , in the middle of nowhere , a figurative limbo where no type of actions or decisions are made.

Then , the image of the road , paralleling and reinforcing the leitmotive of Estragon's boots , symbolizes life's journey (Roberts,1980: 19). Thus , the characters of the play, having found themselves at the end of life's travels , are now waiting for further instructions as to where to go or what to do :

12. What do we do now ? (WFG,P.:17:63:68:83:76).

13. What do we do ? (WFG.P.:18:81).

14. What'll we do ,…? (WFG,P.84a:b).

We can say that , the hopeless routine of life is seen throughout the play , in the sense that the characters are literally going round in repeated circles. However , what is intended here is the repetition of the same setting of Act I in Act II with a little change ,i.e. the tree in Act I is leafless , whereas in Act II it has :

15.But yesterday evening it was all black and bare . And now it's covered with leaves . (WFG,P. 66).

The symbolic significance of the tree demands an interpretation so as to comprehend the cohesive function of this repetition of the same setting . It is arguable that the tree may be constructed as being the representative of the "**Garden of Eden**" (Cousineau , 1990 : 25). Yet, this would be an ironic vision of the characters of the play that seems to be waiting for a figure much like "**God** " of which they have no definitive proof of his existence(ibid.). This Christian association is further reinforced by Vladimir and Estragon repeating that **Godot** stated that he and Estragon where to meet :

16. He said by the tree . (WFG,P. 14).

As a consequence , we can say that , although very existentialist in its characters , **WFG** is primarily about hope . The play revolves around Vladimir and Estragon and their pitiful wait for hope (**Godot**) to arrive. At various times during the play hope is constructed as a form of "Salvation", in the personages of Pozzo and Lucky , or even death :

17. We'll hang ourselves tomorrow. (WFG,P. 94).

The theme of the play , then is set by the very beginning :

18.Nothing to be done . (WFG,P. 9).

19. I'm beginning to come round to that opinion . (WFG ,P.9).

20. .Nothing to be done . (WFG,P. 11a:b: 21:23).

21. Nothing happens , nobody comes , nobody goes ,it's awful ! (WFG,P.41).

22.Nothing is certain . (WFG,P.53).

23.I see nothing . (WFG ,P. 65).

24 .There's nothing to do . (WFG ,P. 74).

The setting fits the theme , although , the first phrase is used in connection to Estragon's boots .Yet , it is also later used by Vladimir with respect to his hat . Essentially , it describes the hopelessness of their lives . This is understandable , for the setting is bare except for a tree . There is no sense of life . The tree is black and bare ,too. These details of the same setting are understandable , in the sense that they go with the absurd theme of the play .

In short , the tree , which is the essential part of the whole setting , and the theme are inseparable . Any attempt deals with any of them in isolation will inevitably lead to a great misunderstanding . Time in both Acts ,(viz .**Act I** and **Act II**), is the evening , Although the time of **Act II** is supposed to be the next day , we do not observe any

change in the direction of the action or in the characters' development. This simply refers to the stability of life , and to reinforce the impression of repetition throughout the action within the play . There is no difference between today of **Act II** and yesterday of **Act I**. Neither of the main tow characters knows which day of the it is . So , it may not be the right day of waiting for **Godot** .

As a consequence to the above analysis of Beckett's cohesive signal of the repetition of the setting and its connection with the theme of the play , one may venture to say that since man lacks his physical and social location in life , it is natural then to create such a setting which is divested of any specific location any touch of active life . It is a " **world in which time and space do not have their normal significance**," (Hayman,1970: 19). Assuredly , to enhance this sense of monotony the same setting is repeated in Act II , i. e. the setting reflects the same notion of the lack of communication among human being . Thus , the cohesive function of the repetition of the setting shows itself as an essential and an integral part of the play . It is used to focus on the monotony of life regardless of any apparent things that may give a deceptive touch of a hopeful and a fertile action.

3.2 . Repetition of Situation

The emphasis in Beckett's **WFG** is on technique , on the medium itself , but he still has to use words when he talks to us . Yet , as anyone can see by just looking at the text of **WFG** , Beckett is primarily interested in presenting action as an instrument of communication instead of language as an act of communication (Roberts ,1980: 38) . Thus , the same direction toward repetition we have witnessed in the setting can be observed in the situations . That is , the representation of essentially the same situations twice in the two Acts ,(See Table No. 2), is the most important form of repetition in the play ,i.e. Act II of **WFG** seems merely a repetition of Act I . Perfectly , the same situations and actions are repeated . We observe the same dialogue uttered in most cases by the same characters and oftentimes quoted verbatim from the previous Act . We observe the appearances and exists ,as well as similar action (and inaction) and sometimes , by the same characters at approximately the same time as they had occur in the previous Act (**Act I**).

Table No. (2)

Repetition of Situations in *WFG*

Acts	Situations	No.
Act I	1.Vladimir & Estragon	1
	2.Vladimir ,Estragon Pozzo & Lucky	1
	3.Vladimir ,Estragon, Pozzo, Lucky & a boy	1
Act II	1.Vladimir & Estragon	1
	2.Vladimir ,Estragon & Pozzo	1
	3.Vladimir ,Estragon, Pozzo, & a boy	1
Total	3x2	6

Apparently , both Acts begin with the same situation , i.e. the beginning of each Act establishes Vladimir & Estragon 's relationship . This means that both of them seem interchangeable , as we can see when one of the characters often repeats an utterance that the other has previously said . This happens in the very beginning when the two characters switch utterances in the dialogue , with each asking the other :

25. Vladimir : It hurts ?

Estragon : Hurts ! He wants to know if it hurts ! (WFG,P. 10).

And :

26. Estragon : It hurts ?

Vladimir: Hurts ! He wants to know if it hurts ! (WFG,P. 10).

In addition to demonstrate the way that the tow characters can be seen as interchangeable , this cohesive signal of repetition will be found throughout the play as an indicator of the repetitiveness of life in general . In other words, to stress the dominant boredom and dullness of behaviour in life the same situations with their exact words are repeated :

27. So there you are again. (WFG,P. 9).

28.You again ! (WFG,P.58).

29. There you are again…(Indifferent .)There we are again …(Gloomy.) There I am again. (WFG,P. 59).

It is easy to interpret this as the representative of the mundane , monotonous , existential nature of existence (Roberts,1980:43-5).

3.3. Repetition of Ideas

The play makes sense of certain mundane ideas . These ideas are repeated to the extent that they work as motifs in the play (See Table No. 3).

Table No.(3)

Repetition of Ideas in *WFG*

Types of Ideas		No.	Total
1.The Idea of waiting	Salvation	5	5
2. The Idea of hanging		5	5
3. The Idea of passing the time		5	5
4. The Idea of "Nothing to be done"		5	5
Total		4x5	20

In both Acts Vladimir and Estragon are enslaved and tell us about birth and death , salvation , the act of waiting , the fleeting nature of

time . The significance of repeating such certain ideas as much as the same time means that Beckett wants to reinforce the fact that neither character is speaking with the aspiration to communicate , but merely to be engaged in an activity that momentarily preoccupies the characters 's thoughts from themselves , therefore , " they remain unknown and unknowable to one another but prefer to continue a relationship which repeatedly stresses their inviolable isolation rather than separate and endure the inescapable self- perception of life alone."(Robinson ,1969:251).Beckett tries to reflect the spiritual vacuum and nakedness of the characters 's situations in life . The repetitive signal , (Equal Proportions), here functions as a reminder of this triviality of life as a whole . This too obvious in Act I :

30 . Vladimir : Well? What do we do ?

Estragon : Don't let's do anything . It's safer .

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

Estragon : Who?

Vladimir : Godot .

Estragon : Good idea .

Vladimir : Let's wait till we know exactly how we stand . (WFG,P. 18).

Throughout the play the same idea is repeated :

31. Estragon : Let's go .

Vladimir : We can't .

Estragon : Why not ?

Vladimir :We're waiting for Godot . (WFG ,P. 14:68:71: 78:84).

Failing to do anything at all ,**Estragon** and **Vladimir** sit and wait for Godot ,(**Savior**), to come and save them . Thus , Beckett makes

the exact repetition of each idea each time to reinforce the fact that the same action ,(any action), occurs over and over again and again to suggest that these actions happen more times than the play presents . Then , the repetitiveness of the play is best illustrated by Estragon's repeated requests to leave , which are followed each time by Vladimir telling him that they cannot leave because they are waiting for Godot , as in (**31**) above.

Accordingly , the subject of the play quickly becomes an example of how to pass the time in a situation that offers no hopes :

32. It'll pass the time . (WFG,P.12).

33.That passed the time . (WFG,P. 48).

34. It'd pass the time . (WFG,P. 69:89).

35. That pass the time . (WFG, P. 90).

A direct result of this hopelessness is the daily struggle to pass the time . Hence , most of the play is dedicated to devising games that will help them pass the time . This mutual desire also addresses the question of why they stay together ? both Vladimir and Estragon admit to being happier when apart :

36. Vladimir : I missed you …and at the same time I was happy .

Estragon : You see, you feel worse when I'm with you . I feel better alone ,too. (WFG,P.59).

One of the main reasons that they repeat their relationship is that they need one another to pass the time . This suggests that man is subjected to torture . Consequently , they contemplate suicide as another way of escaping from the hopelessness . Estragon wants them to hang themselves ,(**WFG, P.17 : 53: 61: 75: and 93**), but they found that it would be too risky . That is why they resolve not to hang themselves since the bough might break and it is safer to do nothing . Yet , the same idea is repeated near the end of the play :

37. 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 .

Vladimir : We'll hang ourselves tomorrow . (WFG , P. 93-4).

And again , they are waiting. The importance of repeating the idea of hanging is that the tow men do not rely on themselves to change their life , but on some extraordinary power ,(**Godot : Savior**), that will change it for them .

3.4. Repetition of Phrases :

To stress the dominant boredom and dullness of behaviour , idea or situation , the same phrases are repeated . Therefore , repetition seems to be a very suitable means to achieve the mentioned purposes . A repeated phrase , (782 out of 2554), reflects the nature and absurd futility of the world :

38: I don't know . (WFG,P. 9:14:34:48:53:66:67:73a:b:78:80:82:86:87:90: 92a:b:93).

Yet , the difficulty for Beckett of keeping a dialogue repeating for so long is overcome by making his characters forget everything . For instance , Estragon cannot remember anything past what was said immediately prior to his own utterances :

39: Estragon : I've forgotten . (WFG,P.20).

Estragon :Forget it . (WFG , P. 48).

Estragon : I don't know why I don't know . (WFG ,P. 67).

Vladimir , although possessing a better memory , distrust what he remembers. And since Vladimir cannot rely on Estragon to remind him of things , he too exists in a state of forgetfulness :

40. Vladimir : Is it possible that you've forgotten already ? (WFG , P. 61).

Vladimir : He's forgotten everything ! (WFG ,P. 61).

Vladimir : Wait …we embraced …we were happy …happy …what do we do now that we're happy … go on waiting …waiting …let me think …it's coming go on waiting … now that we're happy …let me see …ah! … (WFG,P.65).

The exact repetition of a word or phrase each time reinforces the fact that futility of existence lies not in the fact that life is perpetual repetition without any change , but that we are unable to make the first lap of this repetition without having to backtrack (Graver ,1990:59):

41. Estragon : Well,shall we go ?

Vladimir : Yes , let's go .

(They do not move).

The End of Act I (WFG,P.54).

And :

42.Vladimir : Well ?Shall we go ?

Estragon : yes , let's go .

(They do not move).

The End of Act II (WFG,P.94).

The play , then , becomes a tale about humanity's universal plight in which nothing is doomed to repeatedly (not) occur .

4. Concluding Remarks

In the light of the previous stylistic analysis of the play in accordance with the significance of repetition as a cohesive signal in the text , we come to the following perceptions :

1. The play defines a circular structure , a circle of limited and precise size . Every time a spark of suggested meaning is about to make a connection with a larger concentric circle the spark is grounded by comic understanding .

2.Beckett's **WFG** is not a representative of mass attitudes . It is an oversimplification to assume that any age presents a homogeneous pattern. Ours being , more than most others , an age of transition . It displays a bewilderingly stratified picture . Thus , there are numerous interpretations of" **Waiting for Godot** ," and a few are :

a. Religious interpretations posit Vladimir and Estragon as humanity waiting for the elusive return of a "Savior" (See Cousineau,1990).

b. Political interpretations are also abound . Some reviewers hold that the relationship between Pozzo and Luck is that of a Capitalist to his labours. This Marxist interpretation is understandable given that in the second Act Pozzo is blind to what is happening around hi m (cf.Cronin,1999).

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